



# Collaboration

WINTER 1977-78

Mt. Tremper, NY 12457, U.S.A.

Vol. IV, No. 2

● Our lead article in this issue focuses on art and its value to the life of a people. Today art is generally looked upon, as Sri Aurobindo points out, as a luxury, an entertainment, an excrescence upon life, not a necessity. Consequently when, for instance, financial cuts are made in school budgets, art courses are among the first to go.

When the value of art and aesthetic training is fully recognized, there is the possibility of a more integral education. Sri Aurobindo particularly stresses the power of aesthetic education and the appreciation of the beautiful, which is there in essence in the being but must be nurtured and developed, to purify conduct and help in the moral development of a human being.

Outcries are made today over the rising violence and vandalism on the part of youth everywhere. The press is full of cases of young people (and older ones, too) who seem almost hypnotized by the ugly, the cruel, the indulgence of all the lower and baser instincts. The normal trend of the human consciousness is downward and outward; yoga seeks to reverse that normal trend. All human seeking for perfection tends to move in the opposite direction. Our societies today have in large part yielded to this normal trend of consciousness and so encourage what is so deplored, violence, vandalism and all that is ugly to us.

Art, among other things, helps to develop the higher emotions and refine the senses and plays a great role in the development of self-control and a finer, more human expression in feeling and action. All this has profound implications for such problems as violence and even what are known as cases of possession, in which people seem helplessly seized by perverse forces. An integral aesthetic training can do much to alleviate these problems, reduce their occurrence in a society, not just by providing another outlet for youthful energies but by developing a higher outlet, nurturing aspirations and aesthetic sense over the satisfaction of lower impulses and desires, developing, in other words, the higher vital nature, the seat of more idealistic love, heroism and nobility of character; this aspect of the human nature can bring a truer control and a richer personal expression.

But the aesthetic training itself must be properly directed—not just “arts and crafts,” but a development of taste and a deepening sense of the beautiful. Art is not self-expression, it is Self-expression, not the expression of all that is low and superficial and dark in us (however strongly felt), but what is deepest and highest, opening us up to more subtle ranges and levels of our being. And Art, the Mother says, is not skill; art is vision, a vision of the senses and feelings. The importance of art in the further evolution of the race cannot be ignored.

## THE NATIONAL VALUE OF ART

*Sri Aurobindo*

There is a tendency in modern times to depreciate the value of the beautiful and overstress the value of the useful, a tendency curbed in Europe by the imperious insistence of an age-long tradition of culture and generous training of the aesthetic perceptions; but in India, where we have been cut off by a mercenary and soulless education from all our ancient roots of culture and tradition, it is corrected only by the stress of imagination, emotion and spiritual delicacy, submerged but not yet destroyed in the temperament of the people. The value attached by the ancients to music, art and poetry has become almost unintelligible to an age bent on depriving life of its meaning by turning earth into a sort of glorified ant-heap or beehive and confusing the lowest, though most primary in necessity, of the means of human progress with the aim of this great evolutionary process. The first and lowest necessity of the race is that of self-preservation in the body by a sufficient supply and equable distribution of food, shelter and raiment. This is a problem which the oldest communistic human societies solved to perfection, and without communism it cannot be solved except by a convenient but inequitable arrangement which makes of the majority slaves provided with these primary wants and necessities and ministering under compulsion to a few who rise higher and satisfy larger wants. These are the wants of the vital instincts,... which go beyond and

dominate the mere animal wants, simple, coarse and indiscriminating, shared by us with the lower creation. It is these vital wants, the hunger for wealth, luxury, beautiful women, rich foods and drinks, which disturbed the first low but perfect economy of society and made the institution of private property, with its huge train of evils, inequality, injustice, violence, fraud, civil commotion and hatred, class selfishness, family selfishness, and personal selfishness, an inevitable necessity of human progress. The Mother of All works through evil as well as good, and through temporary evil she brings about a better and lasting good. These disturbances were complicated by the heightening of the primitive animal emotions into more intense and complex forms. Love, hatred, vindictiveness, anger, attachment, jealousy and the host of similar passions,—the... mind-stuff suffused by the vital wants..., that which the Europeans call the heart—ceased to be communal in their application and, as personal wants, clamoured for separate satisfaction. It is for the satisfaction of the vital and emotional needs of humanity that modern nations and societies exist, that commerce grows and Science ministers to human luxury and convenience. But for these new wants, the establishment of private property, first in the clan or family, then in the individual, the institution of slavery and other necessary devices, the modern world would never have come into ex-

istence; for the satisfaction of the primary economic wants and bodily necessities would never have carried us beyond the small commune or tribe. But these primary wants and necessities have to be satisfied universally, or society becomes diseased and states convulsed with sedition and revolution....

Above the *buddhi* are other faculties which are now broadly included in the term spirituality. This body of faculties is still rarer and more imperfectly developed even in the highest than the thought-organ. Most men mistake intellectuality, imaginative inspiration or emotional fervour for spirituality, but this is a much higher function, the highest of all, of which the others are coverings and veils. Here we get to the fountain, the source to which we return, the goal of human evolution. But although spirituality has often entered into humanity in great waves, it has done so merely to create a temporary impetus and retire into the souls of a few, leaving only its coverings and shadows to compose and inform the thing which is usually called religion. Meanwhile the thought is the highest man has really attained and it is by the thought that the old society has been broken down. And the thought is composed of two separate sides, judgment or reason and imagination, both of which are necessary to perfect ideation. It is by science, philosophy and criticism on the one side, by art, poetry and idealism on the other, that the old state of humanity has been undermined and is now collapsing, and the foundations have been laid for the new. Of these science, philosophy and criticism have established their use to the mass of humanity by ministering to the luxury, comfort and convenience which all men desire and arming them with justification in the confused struggle of passions, interests, cravings and aspirations which are now working with solvent and corrosive effect throughout the world. The value of the other side, more subtle and profound, has been clouded to the mass of men by the less visible and sensational character of its workings.

The mass of humanity has not risen beyond the bodily needs, the vital desires, the emotions and the current of thought-sensations created by these lower strata. This current of thought-sensations is called in Hindu philosophy the *manas* or mind, it is the highest to which all but a few of the animals can rise, and it is the highest function that the mass of mankind has thoroughly perfected. Beyond the *manas* is the *buddhi*, or thought proper, which, when perfected, is independent of the desires, the claims of the body and the interference of the emotions. But only a minority of men have developed this organ, much less perfected it. Only great thinkers in their hours of thought are able to use this organ independently of the lower strata, and even they are besieged by the latter in their ordinary life and their best thought suffers continually from these lower intrusions. Only developed Yogins have a...thought-organ cleared of the interference of the lower strata by ... purification of the ... mind-stuff, from the *prana* [vital force] full of animal, vital and emotional disturbances. With most men the *buddhi* is full of *manas* and the *manas* of the lower strata. The majority of mankind do not think, they have only thought-sensations; a large minority think confusedly, mixing up desires, predilections, passions, pre-judgments, old associations and prejudices with pure and disinterested thought. Only a few, the rare aristocrats of the earth, can really and truly think. That is now the true aristocracy, not the aristocracy of the body and birth, not the aristocracy of vital superiority, wealth, pride and luxury, not the aristocracy of higher emotions, courage, energy, successful political instinct and the habit of mastery and rule,—though these latter cannot be neglected,—but the aristocracy of knowledge, undisturbed insight and intellectual ability. It emerges, though it has not yet emerged, and in any future arrangement of human society this natural inequality will play in important part.

The activity of human thought divides itself broadly into two groups of functions, those of the right hand, contemplation, creation, imagination, the centres that see the truth, and those of the left hand, criticism, reasoning, discrimination, inquiry, the centres that judge the truth when it is seen. In education the latter are fostered by scientific and manual training, but the only quality of the right hand that this education fosters is observation. For this reason a purely scientific education tends to make thought keen and clear-sighted within certain limits, but narrow, hard and cold. Even in his own sphere the man without any training of the right hand can only progress in a settled groove; he cannot broaden the base of human culture or enlarge the bounds of science. Tennyson describes him as an eye well practised in Nature, a spirit bounded and poor, and the description is just. But a cultivated eye without a cultivated spirit makes by no means the highest type of man. It is precisely the cultivation of the spirit that is the object of what is well called a liberal education, and the pursuits best calculated to cultivate the growth of the spirit are language, literature, the Arts, music, painting, sculpture, or the study of these, philosophy, religion, history, the study and understanding of man through his works and of Nature and man through the interpretative as well as through the analytic faculties. These are the pursuits which belong to the intellectual activities of the right hand, and while the importance of most of these will be acknowledged, there is a tendency to ignore Art and poetry as mere refinements, luxuries of the rich and leisurely rather than things that are necessary to the mass of men or useful to life. This is largely due to the misuse of these great instruments by the luxurious few who held the world and its good things in their hands in the intermediate period of human progress. But the aesthetic faculties entering into the enjoyment of the world and the satisfaction of the vital instincts, the love of the beautiful in men and women, in food, in things, in articles of use and articles of pleasure, have done more than anything else to raise man from the beast, to refine and purge his passions, to ennoble his emotions and to lead him up through the heart and the imagination to the state of the intellectual man. That which has helped man upward, must be preserved in order that he may not sink below the level he has attained. For man intellectually developed, mighty in scientific knowledge and the mastery of gross and subtle nature, using the elements as his servants and the world as his footstool, but undeveloped in heart and spirit, becomes only an inferior kind of *Asura* [a titanic egoist] using the powers of a demigod to satisfy the nature of an animal....

The first and lowest use of Art is the purely aesthetic, the second is the intellectual or educative, the third and highest the spiritual. By speaking of the aesthetic use as the lowest, we do not wish to imply that it is not of immense value to humanity, but simply to assign to it its comparative value in relation to the higher uses. The aesthetic is of immense importance and until it has done its work, mankind is not really fitted to make full use of Art on the higher planes of human development. Aristotle assigns a high value to tragedy because of its purifying force. He describes its effect as *katharsis*, a sacramental word of the Greek mysteries, which, in the secret discipline of the ancient Greek *Tantrics*, answered precisely to our *cittasuddhi*, the purification of the *citta* or mass of established ideas, feelings and actional habits in a man either by *samyama*, rejection, or by *bhoga*, satisfaction, or by both. Aristotle was

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speaking of the purification of feelings, passions and emotions in the heart through imaginative treatment in poetry but the truth the idea contains is of much wider application and constitutes the justification of the aesthetic side of art. It purifies by beauty. The beautiful and the good are held by many thinkers to be the same and, though the idea may be wrongly stated, it is, when put from the right standpoint, not only a truth but the fundamental truth of existence. According to our own philosophy the whole world came out of *ananda* [bliss] and returns into *ananda*, and the triple term in which *ananda* may be stated is Joy, Love, Beauty. To see divine beauty in the whole world, man, life, nature, to love that which we have seen and to have pure unalloyed bliss in that love and that beauty is the appointed road by which mankind as a race must climb to God.... But the bliss must be pure and unalloyed, unalloyed by self-regarding emotions, unalloyed by pain and evil. The sense of good and bad, beautiful and unbeautiful, which afflicts our understanding and our senses, must be replaced by ... undifferentiated and unabridged delight in the delightfulness of things, before the highest can be reached. On the way to this goal full use must be made of the lower and abridged sense of beauty which seeks to replace the less beautiful by the more, the lower by the higher, the mean by the noble.

At a certain stage of human development the aesthetic sense is of infinite value in this direction. It raises and purifies conduct by instilling a distaste for the coarse desires and passions of the savage, for the rough, uncouth and excessive in action and manner, and restraining both feeling and action by a striving after the decent, the beautiful, the fit and seemly which received its highest expression in the manners of cultivated European society, the elaborate ceremonious life of the Confucian, the careful *acar* [rules of conduct] and etiquette of Hinduism. At the present stage of progress this element is losing much of its once all-important value and, when overstressed, tends to hamper a higher development by the obstruction of soulless ceremony and formalism. Its great use was to discipline the savage animal instincts of the body, the vital instincts and the lower feelings in the heart. Its disadvantage to progress is that it tends to trammel the play both of the higher feelings

of the heart and the workings of originality in thought. Born originally of a seeking after beauty, it degenerates into an attachment to form, to exterior uniformity, to precedent, to dead authority. In the future development of humanity it must be given a much lower place than in the past. Its limits must be recognised and the demands of a higher truth, sincerity and freedom of thought and feeling must be given priority. Mankind is apt to bind itself by attachment to the means of its past progress forgetful of the aim. The bondage to formulas has to be outgrown, and in this again it is the sense of a higher beauty and fitness which will be most powerful to correct the lower. The art of life must be understood in more magnificent terms and must subordinate its more formal elements to the service of the master civilisers, Love and Thought.

### III

The work of purifying conduct through outward form and habitual and seemly regulation of expression, manner and action is the lowest of the many services which the artistic sense has done to humanity, and yet how wide is the field it covers and how important and indispensable have its workings been to the progress of civilisation! A still more important and indispensable activity of the sense of beauty is the powerful help it has given to the formation of morality. We do not ordinarily recognise how largely our sense of virtue is a sense of the beautiful in conduct and our sense of sin a sense of ugliness and deformity in conduct. It may easily be recognised in the lower and more physical workings, as for instance in the shuddering recoil from cruelty, blood, torture as things intolerably hideous to sight and imagination or in the aesthetic disgust at sensual excesses and the strong sense, awakened by this disgust, of the charm of purity and the beauty of virginity. This latter feeling was extremely active in the imagination of the Greeks and other nations not noted for a high standard in conduct, and it was purely aesthetic in its roots. Pity again is largely a vital instinct in the ordinary man associated with ... the loathing for the hideousness of its opposite..., disgust at the sordidness and brutality of cruelty, hardness and selfishness as well as at the ugliness of their



Self-portrait and Sri Aurobindo's portrait by the Mother. Courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

actions.... But even on a higher plane the sense of virtue is very largely aesthetic and, even when it emerges from the aesthetic stage, must always call the sense of the beautiful to its support if it is to be safe from the revolt against it of one of the most deep-seated of human instincts. We can see the largeness of this element if we study the ideas of the Greeks, who never got beyond the aesthetic stage of morality....

The third activity of aesthetic faculty, higher than the two already described, the highest activity of the artistic sense before it rises to the plane of the intellect, is the direct purifying of the emotions. This is the *katharsis* of which Aristotle spoke. The sense of pleasure and delight in the emotional aspects of life and action, this is the poetry of life, just as the regulating and beautiful arrangement of character and action is the art of life. We have seen how the latter purifies, but the purifying force of the former is still more potent for good. Our life is largely made up of the eight *rasas* [essential taste or delight]. The movements of the heart in its enjoyment of action, its own and that of others, may either be directed downwards, as is the case with the animals or animal men, to the mere satisfaction of the ten sense-organs and the vital desires which make instruments of the senses in the average sensual man, or they may work for the satisfaction of the heart itself in a predominantly emotional enjoyment of life, or they may be directed upwards through the medium of the intellect, rational and intuitional, to attainment of delight through the seizing on the source of all delight, the Spirit.... When the heart works for itself, then it enjoys the poetry of life, the delight of emotions, the wonder, pathos, beauty, enjoyableness, loveliness, calm, serenity, clarity and also the grandeur, heroism, passion, fury, terror and horror of life, of man, of Nature, of the phenomenal manifestation of God. This is not the highest, but it is higher than the animal, vital and externally aesthetic developments. The large part it plays in life is obvious, but in life it is hampered by the demands of body and the vital passions. Here comes in the first mighty utility, the triumphant activity of the most energetic forms of art and poetry. They provide a field in which these pressing claims of the animal can be excluded and the emotions, working disinterestedly for the satisfaction of the heart and the imagination alone, can do the work of *katharsis*, emotional purification.... The purification of the heart is the appointed road by which man arrives at his higher fulfilment, and, if it can be shown that poetry and art are powerful agents towards that end, their supreme importance is established. They are that, and more than that. It is only one of the great uses of these things which men nowadays are inclined to regard as mere ornaments of life and therefore of secondary importance.

#### IV

We now come to the kernel of the subject, the place of art in the evolution of the race and its value in the education and actual life of a nation. The first question is whether the sense of the beautiful has an effect on the life of a nation. It is obvious, from what we have already written, that the manners, the social culture and expression which are so large a part of national prestige and dignity and make a nation admired like the French, loved like the Irish or respected like the higher-class English, are based essentially on the sense of form and beauty, of what is correct, symmetrical, well-adjusted, fair to the eye and pleasing to the imagination. The absence of these qualities is a source of national weakness. The rudeness, coarseness and vulgar violence of the less cultured Englishman, the overbearing brusqueness and selfishness of the Prussian have greatly hampered those powerful nations in their dealings with foreigners, dependencies and even their own friends, allies, colonies. We all know what a large share the manner and ordinary conduct of the average and of the vulgar Anglo-Indian has had in bringing about the revolt of the Indian, accustomed through ages to

courtesy, dignity and the amenities of an equal community, against the mastery of an obviously coarse and selfish community. Now the sense of form and beauty, the correct, symmetrical, well-adjusted, fair and pleasing is an artistic sense and can best be fostered in a nation by artistic culture of the perceptions and sensibilities. It is noteworthy that the two great nations who are most hampered by the defect of these qualities in action are also the least imaginative, poetic and artistic in Europe. It is the South German who contributes the art, poetry and music of Germany, the Celt and Norman who produce great poets and a few great artists in England without altering the characteristics of the dominant Saxon. Music is even more powerful in this direction than Art and by the perfect expression of harmony insensibly steeps the man in it. And it is noticeable that England has hardly produced a single musician worth the name. Plato in his Republic has dwelt with extraordinary emphasis on the importance of music in education; as is the music to which a people is accustomed, so, he says in effect, is the character of that people. The importance of painting and sculpture is hardly less. The mind is profoundly influenced by what it sees and, if the eye is trained from the days of childhood to the contemplation and understanding of beauty, harmony and just arrangement in line and colour, the tastes, habits and character will be insensibly trained to follow a similar law of beauty in the life of the adult. This was the great importance of the universal proficiency in the arts and crafts or the appreciation of them which was prevalent in ancient Greece, in certain European ages, in Japan and in the better days of our own history. Art galleries cannot be brought into every home, but, if all the appointments of our life and furniture of our homes are things of taste and beauty, it is inevitable that the habits, thoughts and feelings of the people should be raised, ennobled, harmonised, made more sweet and dignified.

A similar result is produced on the emotions by the study of beautiful or noble art.... Painting and sculpture work in the same direction by different means. Art sometimes uses the same means as poetry but cannot do it to the same extent because it has not the movement of poetry; it is fixed, still, it expresses only a given moment, a given point in space and cannot move freely through time and region. But it is precisely this stillness, this calm, this fixity which gives its separate value to Art. Poetry raises the emotions and gives each its separate delight. Art stills the emotions and teaches them the delight of a restrained and limited satisfaction.... Music deepens the emotions and harmonises them with each other. Between them music, art and poetry are a perfect education for the soul; they make and keep its movements purified, self-controlled, deep and harmonious. These, therefore, are agents which cannot profitably be neglected by humanity on its onward march or degraded to the mere satisfaction of sensuous pleasure which will disintegrate rather than build the character. They are, when properly used, great educating, edifying and civilising forces.

#### A VISION

*Nolini Kanta Gupta*

The Mother says: "Just see. Look at me. I am here, come back in my new body,—divine, transformed and glorious. And I am the same mother, still human. Do not worry. Do not be concerned about your own self, your progress and realisation, nor about others. I am here, look at me, gaze into me, enter into me wholly merge into my being, lose yourself into my love, with your love. You will see all problems solved, everything done. Forget everything, forget the world. Remember me alone, be one with me, with my love." [From *Mother India*, July 1977.]

The value of art in the training of intellectual faculty is also an important part of its utility. We have already indicated the double character of intellectual activity, divided between the imaginative, creative and sympathetic or comprehensive intellectual centres on the one side and the critical, analytic and penetrative on the other. The latter are best trained by science, criticism and observation, the former by art, poetry, music, literature and the sympathetic study of man and his creations. These make the mind quick to grasp at a glance, subtle to distinguish shades, deep to reject shallow self-sufficiency, mobile, delicate, swift, intuitive. Art assists in this training by raising images in the mind which it has to understand not by analysis, but by self-identification with other minds; it is a powerful stimulator of sympathetic insight. Art is subtle and delicate. It is suggestive, and the intellect habituated to the appreciation of art is quick to catch suggestions, mastering not only, as the scientific mind does, that which is positive and on the surface, but that which leads to ever fresh widening and subtilising of knowledge and opens a door into the deeper secrets of inner nature where the positive instruments of science cannot take the depth or measure. This supreme intellectual value of Art has never been sufficiently recognised. Men have made language, poetry, history, philosophy agents for the training of this side of intellectuality, necessary parts of a liberal education, but the immense educative force of music, painting and sculpture has not been duly recognised. They have been thought to be by-paths of the human mind, beautiful and interesting, but not necessary, therefore intended for the few. Yet the universal impulse to enjoy the beauty and attractiveness of sound, to look at and live among pictures, colours, form, ought to have warned mankind of the superficiality and ignorance of such a view of these eternal and important occupations of human mind. The impulse, denied proper training and self-purification, has spent itself on the trivial, gaudy, sensuous, cheap or vulgar instead of helping man upward by its powerful aid in the evocation of what is best and highest in intellect as well as in character, emotion and the aesthetic enjoyment and regulation of life and manners. It is difficult to appreciate the waste and detriment involved in the low and debased level of enjoyment to which the artistic impulses are condemned in the majority of mankind.

But beyond and above this intellectual utility of Art, there is a higher use, the noblest of all, its service to the growth of spirituality in the race. European critics have dwelt on the close connection of the highest developments of art with religion, and it is undoubtedly true that in Greece, in Italy, in India, the greatest efflorescence of a national Art has been associated with the employment of the artistic genius to illustrate or adorn the thoughts and fancies or the temples and instruments of the national religion. This was not because Art is necessarily associated with the outward forms of religion, but because it was in the religion that men's spiritual aspirations centred themselves. Spirituality is a wider thing than formal religion and it is in the service of spirituality that Art reaches its highest self-expression. Spirituality is a single word expressive of three lines of human aspiration towards divine knowledge, divine love and joy, divine strength, and that will be the highest and most perfect Art which, while satisfying the physical requirements of the aesthetic sense, the law of formal beauty, the emotional demand of humanity, the portrayal of life and outward reality, as the best European Art satisfies these requirements, reaches beyond them and expresses inner spiritual truth, the deeper not obvious reality of things, the joy of God in the world and its beauty and desirableness and the manifestation of divine force and energy in phenomenal creation. This is what Indian art alone attempted thoroughly and in the effort it often dispensed, either deliberately or from impatience, with the lower, yet not negligible perfections which the more material European demanded. Therefore Art has flowed in two

separate streams in Europe and Asia, so diverse that it is only now that the European aesthetic sense has so far trained itself as to begin to appreciate the artistic conventions, aims and traditions of Asia. Asia's future development will unite these two streams in one deep and grandiose flood of artistic self-expression perfecting the aesthetic evolution of humanity.

But if Art is to reach towards the highest, the Indian tendency must dominate. The spirit is that in which all the rest of the human being reposes, towards which it returns and the final self-revelation of which is the goal of humanity. Man becomes God, and all human activity reaches its highest and noblest when it succeeds in bringing body, heart and mind into touch with spirit. Art can express eternal truth, it is not limited to the expression of form and appearance. So wonderfully has God made the world that a man using a simple combination of lines, an unpretentious harmony of colours, can raise this apparently insignificant medium to suggest absolute and profound truths with a perfection which language labours with difficulty to reach. What Nature is, what God is, what man is can be triumphantly revealed in stone or on canvas...

To suggest the strength and virile unconquerable force of the divine Nature in man and in the outside world, its energy, its calm, its powerful inspiration, its august enthusiasm, its wildness, greatness, attractiveness, to breathe that into man's soul and gradually mould the finite into the image of the Infinite is another spiritual utility of Art. This is its loftiest function, its fullest consummation, its most perfect privilege. [From *The National Value of Art.*]



"Mountains and waters have a melodious voice." Painting by F.C. Hsu.  
Courtesy of Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

We must watch over our thoughts. A bad thought is the most dangerous of thieves. — *The Mother*

## BEAUTY AND LIFE

### *The Mother*



Let beauty be your constant ideal. Beauty of the soul, beauty of sentiments, beauty of thoughts, beauty of action, beauty in work, so that nothing comes out of your hands which is not an expression of pure and harmonious beauty. And the Divine help will be always with you. [From *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Beauty.*]

Someone has said that drama is greater than any other art and art is greater than life. But it is not quite like that. The mistake of the artist is to believe that artistic production is something that stands by itself and for itself, independent of the rest of the world. Art as understood by these artists is like a mushroom on the wide soil of life, something casual and external, not something intimate to life; it does not reach and touch the deep and abiding realities, it does not become an intrinsic and inseparable part of existence. True art is intended to express the beautiful, but in close intimacy with the universal movement. The greatest nations and the most cultured races have always considered art as a part of life and made it subservient to life. Art was like that in Japan in its best moment; it was like that in all the best moments in the history of art. But most artists are like parasites growing on the margin of life; they do not seem to know that art should be the expression of the Divine in life and through life. In everything, everywhere, in all relations truth must be brought out in its all-embracing rhythm and every movement of life should be an expression of beauty and harmony. Skill is not art, talent is not art. Art is a living harmony and beauty that must be expressed in all the movements of existence. This manifestation of beauty and harmony is part of the Divine realisation upon earth, perhaps even its greatest part.

For from the supramental point of view beauty and harmony are as important as any other expression of the Divine. But they should not be isolated, set up apart from all other relations, taken out from the ensemble; they should be one with the expression of life as a whole. People have the habit of saying, "Oh, he is an artist!" as if an artist should not be a man among other men, but must be an extraordinary being belonging to a class by himself, and his art too something extraordinary and apart, not to be confused with the other ordinary things of the world. The maxim, "Art for Art's sake," tries to impress and emphasise as a truth the same error. It is the same mistake as when men place in the middle of their drawing rooms a framed picture that has nothing to do either with the furniture or the walls, but is put there only because it is an "object of art."

True art is a whole and an ensemble; it is one and of one piece with life. You see something of this intimate wholeness in ancient Greece and ancient Egypt; for there pictures and statues and all objects of art were made and arranged as part of the architectural plan of a building, each detail a portion of the whole. It is like that in Japan, or at least it was so...before the invasion of a utilitarian and practical modernism.... In India, too, painting and sculpture and architecture were one integral beauty, one single movement of adoration of the Divine.

There has been in this sense a great degeneration since then in the world. From the time of Victoria and in France from the Second Empire we have entered into a period of decadence. The habit has grown of hanging up in rooms pictures that have no meaning for the surrounding objects; any picture, any artistic object could be put anywhere and it would make small difference. Art now is meant to show skill and cleverness and talent, not to embody some integral expression of harmony and beauty in a home.

But latterly there has come about a revolt against this lapse into bourgeois taste. The reaction was so violent that it looked like a complete aberration and art seemed about to sink down into the absurd. Slowly, however, out of the chaos something has emerged,

something more rational, more logical, more coherent to which can once more be given the name of art, an art renovated and perhaps, or let us hope so, regenerated.

Art is nothing less in its fundamental truth than the aspect of beauty of the Divine manifestation. Perhaps, looking from this standpoint, there will be found very few artists; but still there are some and these can very well be considered as Yogis. For like a Yogi an artist goes into deep contemplation to await and receive his inspiration. To create something truly beautiful, he has first to see it within, to realise it as a whole in his inner consciousness; only when so found, seen, held within, can he execute it outwardly.... A man like Leonardo da Vinci was a Yogi and nothing else....

Music too is an essentially spiritual art and has always been associated with religious feeling and an inner life. But, here too, we have turned it into something independent and self-sufficient, a mushroom art, such as is operatic music. Most of the artistic productions we come across are of this kind and at best interesting from the point of view of technique. I do not say that even operatic music cannot be used as a medium of a higher art expression; for whatever the form, it can be made to serve a deeper purpose. All depends on the thing itself, on how it is used, on what is behind it. There is nothing that cannot be used for the Divine purpose—just as anything can pretend to be the Divine and yet be of the mushroom species.

Among the great modern musicians there have been several whose consciousness, when they created, came into touch with a higher consciousness. Cesar Franck played on the organ as one inspired; he had an opening into the psychic life and he was conscious of it and to a great extent expressed it. Beethoven, when he composed the Ninth Symphony, had the vision of an opening into a higher world and of the descent of a higher world into this earthly plane. Wagner had strong and powerful intimations of the occult world; he had the instinct of occultism and the sense of the occult and through it he received his greatest inspirations. But he worked mainly on the vital level and his mind came in constantly to interfere and mechanised his inspiration. His work for the greater part is too mixed, too often obscure and heavy, although powerful. But when he could cross the vital and the mental levels and reach a higher world, some of the glimpses he had were of an exceptional beauty, as in *Parsifal*, in some parts of *Tristan and Isolde* and most in its last great act.

Look again at what the moderns have made of the dance.... The dance was once one of the highest expressions of the inner life; it was associated with religion.... In some countries it reached a very high degree of beauty and an extraordinary perfection.... It is true that in our days there have been attempts to resuscitate the ancient Greek and other dances; but the religious sense is missing...and they look more like rhythmic gymnastics than dance.

Today Russian dances are famous, but they are expressions of the vital world.... Like all that comes to us from that world, they may be very attractive or very repulsive, but always they stand for themselves and not for the expression of the higher life....

There is a domain far above the mind which we could call the world of Harmony and, if you can reach there, you will find the root of all harmony that has been manifested in whatever form upon earth. For instance, there is a certain line of music, consisting of a few supreme notes, that was behind the productions of two artists...one a concerto of Bach, another a concerto of Beethoven. The two are not alike on paper and differ to the outward ear, but in their essence they are the same.... Beethoven caught a larger part, but in him it was more mixed with the inventions and interpolations of the mind; Bach received less, but what he seized of it was purer. The vibration was that of the victorious emergence of consciousness, consciousness tearing itself out of the womb of unconsciousness in a triumphant uprising and birth. [From *Conversations.*]



*[In the third installment of our examination of Sri Aurobindo's system of psychology, we continue down the steps of consciousness. The closer we draw to the human range, the more complex things become. What may appear to be repetition on the part of Sri Aurobindo will turn out to be the result of his viewing an aspect of consciousness from several different sides, to*

*give a fuller picture of it. But not only are we now descending the ladder of consciousness, but becoming aware of concentric rings of consciousness around the embodied being, not only planes and levels, but sheaths, like ripples on a pond.]*

### *Sheaths and Planes*

There are in fact two systems simultaneously active in the organisation of the being and its parts: one is concentric, a series of rings or sheaths with the psychic at the centre; another is vertical, an ascension and descent, like a flight of steps, a series of superimposed planes with supermind-overmind as the crucial nodus of the transition beyond the human into the Divine. For this transition, if it is to be at the same time a transformation, there is only one way, one path. First, there must be a conversion inwards, a going within to find the inmost psychic being and bring it out to the front, disclosing at the same time the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical parts of the nature. Next, there must be an ascension, a series of conversions upwards and a turning down to convert the lower parts. When one has made the inward conversion, one psychicises the whole lower nature so as to make it ready for the divine change. Going upwards, one passes beyond the human mind and at each stage of the ascent, there is a conversion into a new consciousness and an infusion of this new consciousness into the whole of the nature. Thus rising beyond intellect through illuminated higher mind to the intuitive consciousness, we begin to look at everything not from the intellect range or through intellect as an instrument, but from a greater intuitive height and through an intuitivised will, feeling, emotion, sensation and physical contact. So, proceeding from Intuition to a greater overmind height, there is a new conversion and we look at and experience everything from the overmind consciousness and through a mind, heart, vital and body surcharged with the overmind thought, sight, will, feeling, sensation, play of force and contact. But the last conversion is the supramental, for once there—once the nature is supramentalised, we are beyond the Ignorance and conversion of consciousness is no longer needed, though a farther divine progression, even an infinite development is still possible.

If we regard the gradation of worlds or planes as a whole, we see them as a great connected complex movement; the higher precipitate their influences on the lower, the lower react to the higher and develop or manifest in themselves within their own formula something that corresponds to the superior power and its action. The material world has evolved life in obedience to a pressure from the vital plane, mind in obedience to a pressure from the mental plane. It is now trying to evolve supermind in obedience to a pressure from the supramental plane. In more detail, particular forces, movements, powers, beings of a higher world can throw themselves on the lower to establish appropriate and corresponding forms which will connect them with the material domain and, as it were, reproduce or project their action here. And each thing created here has, supporting it, subtler envelopes or forms of itself which make it subsist and connect it with forces acting from above. Man, for instance, has, besides his gross physical body, subtler sheaths or bodies by which he lives behind the veil in direct connection with supraphysical planes of consciousness and can be influenced by their powers, movements and beings. What takes place in life has always behind it pre-existent movements and forms in the occult vital planes; what takes place in mind presupposes pre-existent movements and forms in the occult mental planes. That is an aspect of things which becomes more and more evident, insistent and important, the more we progress in a dynamic yoga.

But all this must not be taken in too rigid and mechanical a sense. It is an immense plastic movement full of the play of possibilities and must be seized by a flexible and subtle tact or sense in the seeing consciousness. It cannot be reduced to a too rigorous logical or mathematical formula. Two or three points must be pressed in order that this plasticity may not be lost to our view.

First, each plane, in spite of its connection with others above and below it, is yet a world in itself, with its own movements, forces, beings, types, forms existing as if for its and their own sake, under its own laws, for its own manifestation without apparent regard for the other members of the great series. Thus, if we regard the vital or the subtle physical plane, we see great ranges of it, (most of it), existing in themselves, without any relation with the material world and with no movement to affect or influence it, still less to precipitate a corresponding manifestation in the physical formula. At most we can say that the existence of anything in the vital, subtle physical or any other plane creates a possibility for a corresponding movement of manifestation in the physical world. But something more is needed to turn that static or latent possibility into a dynamic potentiality or an actual urge towards a material creation. That something may be a call from the material plane, e.g., some force or someone on the physical existence entering into touch with a supraphysical power or world or part of it and moved to bring it down into the earth-life. Or it may be an impulse in the vital or other plane itself, e.g., a vital being moved to extend his action towards the earth and establish there a kingdom for himself or the play of the forces for which he stands in his own domain. Or it may be a pressure from above; let us say, some supramental or mental power precipitating its formation from above and developing forms and movements in the material world. Or it may be all these things acting together, in which case there is the greatest possibility of an effective creation.

Next, as a consequence, it follows that only a limited part of the action of the vital or other higher plane is concerned with the earth-existence. But even this creates a mass of possibilities which is far greater than the earth can at one time manifest or contain in its own less plastic formulas. All these possibilities do not realise themselves; some fail altogether and leave at the most an idea that comes to nothing; some try seriously and are repelled and defeated and, even if in action for a time, come to nothing. Others effectuate a half manifestation, and this is the most usual result, the more so as these vital or other supraphysical forces come into conflict and have not only to overcome the resistance of the physical consciousness and of matter, but their own internecine resistance to each other. A certain number succeed in precipitating their results in a more complete and successful creation, so that if you compare this creation with its original in the higher plane, there is something like a close resemblance or even an apparently exact reproduction or translation from the supraphysical to the physical formula. And yet even there the exactness is only apparent; the very fact of translation into another substance and another rhythm of manifestation makes a difference. It is something new that has manifested and it is that that makes the creation worth while. What for instance would be the utility of a supramental creation on earth if it were just the same thing as a supramental creation on the supramental plane? It is that, in principle, but yet something else, a triumphant new self-discovery of the Divine in conditions that are not elsewhere.

## *Overmind and Intuition*

The true defect of the overmind, the limitation in it which gave rise to a world of ignorance is seen fully only when one looks at it from the physical consciousness, from the result (Ignorance in Matter) to the cause (overmind division of the Truth). In its own plane overmind seems to be only a divided, many-sided play of the Truth, so can easily be taken by the Mind as a supramental province. Mind also when flooded by the overmind lights feels itself living in a surprising revelation of divine Truth. The difficulty comes when we deal with the vital and still more with the physical. Then it becomes imperative to face the difficulty and to make a sharp distinction between overmind and supermind—for it then becomes evident that the overmind Power (in spite of its lights and splendours) is not sufficient to overcome the Ignorance because it is itself under the law of Division out of which came the Ignorance. One has to pass beyond and supramentalise overmind so that mind and all the rest may undergo the final change.

Intuition is above illumined Mind which is simply higher Mind raised to a great luminosity and more open to modified forms of intuition and inspiration.

The Intuition is the first plane in which there is a real opening to the full possibility of realisation—it is through it that one goes farther—first to overmind and then to supermind.

Intuition sees the truth of things by a direct inner contact, not like the ordinary mental intelligence by seeking and reaching out for indirect contacts through the senses etc. But the limitation of the Intuition as compared with the supermind is that it sees things by flashes, point by point, not as a whole. Also in coming into the mind it gets mixed with the mental movement and forms a kind of intuitive mind activity which is not the pure truth, but something in between the higher Truth and the mental seeking. It can lead the consciousness through a sort of transitional stage and that is practically its function.

There are mental, vital, subtle physical intuitions as well as intuitions from the higher and the illumined Mind.

### *Central Being, Psychic Being, Soul*

The phrase “central being” in our yoga is usually applied to the portion of the Divine in us which supports all the rest and survives through death and birth. This central being has two forms—above, it is Jivatman, our true being, of which we become aware when the higher self-knowledge comes,—below, it is the psychic being which stands behind mind, body and life. The Jivatman is above the manifestation in life and presides over it; the psychic being stands behind the manifestation in life and supports it.

The natural attitude of the psychic being is to feel itself as the Child, the Son of God, the Bhakta [devotee]; it is a portion of the Divine, one in essence, but in the dynamics of the manifestation there is always even in identity a difference. The Jivatman, on the contrary, lives in the essence and can merge itself in identity with the Divine; but it too, the moment it presides over the dynamics of the manifestation, knows itself as one centre of the multiple Divine....

The soul, representative of the central being, is a spark of the Divine supporting all individual existence in Nature; the psychic being is a conscious form of the soul growing in the evolution—in the persistent process that develops first life in Matter, mind in life, until finally mind can develop into overmind and overmind into the supramental Truth. The soul supports the nature in its evolution through these grades, but is itself not any of these things.

The lower Nature...is this external objective and superficial subjective apparent Nature which manifests all these minds, lives and bodies. The supreme Nature...concealed behind it is the very nature of the Divine—a supreme Consciousness-Force which manifests the multiple Divine as the Many. These Many are in themselves eternal selves of the Supreme in his supreme Nature.... Here in relation to this world they appear as the Jivatmas supporting the evolution of the natural existences...in the mutable Becoming.... The natural existences...are the creatures of Nature. Man, bird, beast, reptile are natural existences, but the individual Self in them is not even for a moment characteristically man, bird, beast or reptile; in its evolution it is the same through all these changes, a spiritual being that consents to the play of Nature.

What is original and eternal for ever in the Divine is the Being, what is developed in consciousness, conditions, forces, forms, etc. by the Divine Power is the Becoming.... In the psychic...there are two aspects, the psychic existence or soul behind and in front the form of individuality it takes in its evolution in Nature.

The soul or psyche is immutable only in the sense that it contains all the possibilities of the Divine within it, but it has to evolve them and in its evolution it assumes the form of a developing psychic individual evolving in the manifestation the individual Prakriti [nature] and taking part in the evolution. It is the spark of the Divine Fire that grows behind the mind, vital and physical by means of the psychic being until it is able to transform the Prakriti of Ignorance into a Prakriti of Knowledge. This evolving psychic being is not therefore at any time all that the soul or essential psychic existence bears within it; it temporalises and individualises what is eternal in potentiality, transcendent in essence, in this projection of the spirit.

The central being is the being which presides over the different births one after the other, but is itself unborn, for it does not descend into the being but is above it—it holds together the mental, vital and physical being and all the various parts of the personality and it controls the life either through the mental being and the mental thought and will or through the psychic, whichever may happen to be most in front or most powerful in nature. If it does not exercise its control, then the consciousness is in great disorder and every part of the personality acts for itself so that there is no coherence in the thought, feeling or action.

The psychic is not above but behind—its seat is behind the heart, its power is not knowledge but an essential or spiritual feeling—it has the clearest sense of the Truth and a sort of inherent perception of it which is of the nature of soul-perception and soul-feeling. It is our inmost being and supports all the others, mental, vital, physical, but it is also much veiled by them and has to act upon them as an influence rather than by its sovereign right of direct action, its direct action becomes normal and preponderant only at a high stage of development or by yoga. It is not the psychic being which, you feel, gives you the intuition of things to be or warns you against the results of certain actions; that is some part of the inner being, sometimes the inner mental, sometimes the inner vital, sometimes, it may be, the inner or subtle physical Purusha [spirit]. The inner being—inner mind, inner vital, inner or subtle physical—knows much that is unknown to the outer mind, the outer vital, the outer physical, for it is in a more direct contact with the secret forces of Nature. The psychic is the inmost being of all; a perception of truth which is inherent in the deepest substance of the consciousness, a sense of the good, true, beautiful, the Divine, is its privilege.

The true inner being—the true mental, the true vital, the true physical represent each on its plane and answer to the central being, but the whole of the nature and especially the outer nature does not, nor the ordinary mental, vital or physical personality. The psychic being is the central being for the purposes of the evolution—it grows and develops; but there is a central being above of which

the mind is not aware, which presides unseen over the existence and of which the psychic being is the representative in the manifested nature.

The psychic being is a spiritual personality put forward by the soul in its evolution; its growth marks the stage which the spiritual evolution of the individual has reached and its immediate possibilities for the future. It stands behind the mental, the vital, the physical nature, grows by their experiences, carries the consciousness from life to life. It is the psychic Person.... At first it is veiled by the mental, vital and physical parts, limited in its self-expression by their limitations, bound to be the reactions of Nature, but, as it grows, it becomes capable of coming forward and dominating the mind, life and body. In the ordinary man it still depends on them for expression and is not able to take them up and freely use them. The life of the being is animal and human, not divine. When the psychic being can by sadhana [discipline] become dominant and freely use its instruments, then the impulse towards the Divine becomes complete and the transformation of mind, vital and body, not merely their liberation becomes possible.

The true being may be realised in one or both of two aspects—the Self or Atman and the soul or Antaratman, psychic being.... The difference is that one is felt as universal, the other as individual supporting the mind, life and body. When one first realises the Atman one feels it separate from all things, existing in itself and detached, and it is to this realisation that the image of the dry coconut fruit may apply. When one realises the psychic being, it is not like that; for this brings the sense of union with the Divine and dependence upon It and sole consecration to the Divine alone and the power to change the nature and discover the true mental, the true vitals, the true physical being in oneself. Both realisations are necessary for this yoga.

The "I" or the little ego is constituted by Nature and is at once a mental, vital and physical formation meant to aid in centralising and individualising the outer consciousness and action. When the true being is discovered, the utility of the ego is over and this formation has to disappear—the true being is felt in its place.

The word "soul," as also the word "psychic," is used very vaguely and in many different senses in the English language. More often than not, in ordinary parlance, no clear distinction is made between mind and soul and often there is an even more serious confusion, for the vital being of desire—the false soul or desire-soul—is intended by the words "soul" and "psychic" and not the true soul, the psychic being. The psychic being is quite different from the mind or vital; it stands behind them where they meet in the heart. Its central place is there, but behind the heart rather than in the heart; for what men call usually the heart is the seat of emotion, and human emotions are mental-vital impulses, not ordinarily psychic in their nature. This mostly secret power behind, other than the mind and the life-force, is the true soul, the psychic being in us. The power of the psychic, however, can act upon the mind and vital and body, purifying thought and perception and emotion (which then becomes psychic feeling) and sensation and action and everything else in us and preparing them to be divine movements.

The "tragi-ridiculous" inconsistency you speak of comes from the fact that man is not made up of one piece but of many pieces and each part of him has a personality of its own. That is a thing which people yet have not sufficiently realised—the psychologists have begun to glimpse it, but recognise only when there is a marked case of double or multiple personality. But all men are like that, in reality. The aim should be in yoga to develop (if one has it not already) a strong central being and harmonise under it all the rest, changing what has to be changed. If this central being is the psychic, there is no great difficulty. If it is the mental Being,... then it is more difficult—unless the mental being can learn to be always in contact with and aided by the greater Will and Power of the Divine.

What you experience is the first condition of the yogic consciousness and self-knowledge. The ordinary mind knows itself only as an ego with all the movements of the nature in a jumble and, identifying itself with these movements, thinks "I am doing this, feeling that, thinking, in joy or in sorrow etc." The first beginning of real self-knowledge is when you feel yourself separate from the nature in you and its movements and then you see that there are many parts of your being, many personalities each acting on its own behalf and in its own way.

The European mind, for the most part, has never been able to go beyond the formula of soul + body—usually including mind in soul and everything except body in mind. Some occultists make a distinction between spirit, soul and body. At the same time there must be some vague feeling that soul and mind are not quite the same thing, for theirs is the phrase "This man has no soul," or "he is a soul" meaning he has something in him beyond a mere mind or body. But all that is very vague. There is no clear distinction between mind and soul and none between mind and vital and often the vital is taken for the soul.

But that [the belief that the body is a temporary residence of the self for one life] is just what is disputed by the Western scientific mind or was up till yesterday and is still considered as unverifiable today. It is contended that the idea of self is an illusion—apart from the body. It is the experiences of the body that create the idea of a self and the desire to live prolongs itself illusorily in the notion that the self outlasts the body. The West is accustomed besides to the Christian idea that the self is created with the body—an idea which the Christians took over from the Jews who believed in God but not in immortality—so the Western mind is dead set against any idea of reincarnation. Even the religious used to believe that the soul was born in the body, God first making the body then breathing the soul into it... It is difficult for Europeans to get over this past mental inheritance. [All the above extracts are from Letters on Yoga, Vol. 1, pp. 251-305.]



Abundance of Beauty Rhododendron, including Azalea

## REPORT ON THE MATRIMANDIR GARDENS (Part 3)

[Following is the third installment of a report prepared by Narad and other Matrimandir Gardens workers on the development of the Gardens and the nursery from inception to March 1977.]

*Aspects of Life and Work* (continued)

**Auro-Future:** The work of designing and planning the vast area of the Matrimandir Gardens with the surrounding lake has taken a positive and accelerated turn at the writing of this report. In collaboration with the chief architect of Auroville, many members of of the Auro-Future designing office are contributing their efforts in preparing scale models, drawings, topographical surveys and technical studies to help in completing the project.

**The French Institute, Pondicherry:** The warm and generous attitude of the staff of the French Institute has enabled us to make significant progress in difficult areas such as plant identification, nomenclature, afforestation and collection. All their facilities have been extended to Auroville including the loan of meteorological instruments, preparation of herbarium specimens and combined collecting trips and studies of indigenous species of the mountains and plains. Research data is available to us at any time and mutual visits are frequent. In the future our contribution to their research might hopefully be the story of the rebuilding of a devastated land whose degeneration has been observed in detail but whose renaissance will be even more extraordinary. To this study could be added the introduction of exotic flora and their compatibility with endemic species, the recharging of the water table and a gradual but perceptible change in climate and the advent of a unique micro-climate.

**Experiments in Living:** In keeping with the Mother's statement that individuals should not prepare food for themselves, the nursery built a community kitchen that accommodates 12 to 16 people. Presently we are on a raw-food diet with emphasis on fruits, nuts and vegetables. Experiments with food will not be complete until Auroville can develop the food of the future. Until that time we continue our collective study (individual studies are comparatively easy) to reduce emphasis on individual preferences and prejudices of the palate and aspire to find exactly that which the body needs, thereby reducing the mental and vital attention usually given to the preparation of food.

Like many other aspects of the nursery and in fact like much of the development in other areas of Auroville, the type of housing has evolved in an organic way rather than being preplanned. When the nursery came into being there were two bamboo structures on the land, both built in 1969. These two houses remain, one still much like the original and one changed only recently in an experiment in making a pleasing, functional living space from easily available materials at the lowest cost and with the least amount of labor. Another building, one with a long history, has a foundation laid for one purpose in 1969, walls up to 5 feet which were the beginning of a storeroom in 1971, the finished walls and a small room on top for one person completed in 1972, the ground floor changed into living space for another person in 1973, another room added above and a storeroom and bath below in 1974, both completed and the storeroom rebuilt to become a library in 1976! Structural materials for the various houses (7 buildings in all and one capsule) range from bamboo and thatch to plastered cement block and an experimental ferrous-cement roof with various combinations of all of these. Each dwelling has its own uniqueness and seems to satisfy the needs of its inhabitant until a more general collective experiment in housing is developed for all of Auroville.

**Assistance to Auroville Projects and Surrounding Villages:** The Matrimandir Gardens Nursery is a living laboratory of plant adaptation, compatibility, culture and performance. In addition to the major work of plant introduction (discussed separately), the nursery has been instrumental in the initial efforts of afforestation by the Green Belt communities of Auroville. More than 22,000 saplings in more than 150 species have been contributed to the afforestation projects. Exchanges of data, seeds, plants and ideas with the Green Belt foresters are a continuing part of our work. The resources of the nursery library are open to all as are the results of our introduction trials, germination tests and accumulated research data on composting, pond ecology, drought tolerance, disease resistance and other areas of plant studies.

The nursery and Green Belt communities work closely with the forest service of the Government of India. Exchange of correspondence and visits to Auroville and government nurseries are frequent and always informative. The research forest in Marakanam, about 25 kilometres from Auroville, is an excellent example of the mutual benefits shared by the Matrimandir Gardens, the Green Belt communities and the forest department of the Government of India. More than 35 species of eucalyptus and acacia are under permanent study at the Research Range in Marakanam. At the request of the Matrimandir nursery, all of the records of the past 7 years were loaned to us to copy any data that could be of use in our work. Since this close collaboration began we have exchanged considerable amounts of plant material and exotic seeds for the enrichment and expansion of both projects. Mutual visits, shared meals, occasions to discuss ecological conditions, erosion control and personal interests—especially how to encourage the return of birds—are part of the common sharing and inner closeness life in Auroville awakens.



Bridge over a canyon in Auroville leading to Utility. Photo by Cliff Gibson.

In 1973 the Matrimandir Gardens Nursery began distribution of ornamental plants free of charge to members of all communities of Auroville interested in beautifying the land. Hundreds of beautiful flowering shrubs, trees, vines and shade plants were propagated to supply the numerous requests from all areas of Auroville. The program was discontinued this year due to the intensive development of the park area surrounding the Matrimandir and the need to devote our full energies to this work. The Green Belt communities have now taken up the work of raising plants for all communities. During 1973 we also made the same offer of plants to the local villages around Auroville and this offer was gradually accepted. We have at times supplied bullock carts filled with plants to villagers who wished to beautify their grounds, were aware of the need for beautification and were willing to care for flowering plants as well as they care for those of economic value.

Lastly, the members of the nursery have devoted much of their time to teaching other Aurovilians practical gardening techniques such as pruning, propagation, general maintenance and control of insects and disease. For the past two years the Auroville school has sent interested children to a weekly class at the nursery with special emphasis on studying the significance of flowers as given by the Mother as well as horticultural practices. There is a keen interest among the children to understand the balance of nature and to observe birds and animals as well as doing physical work such as planting seeds.

**Beautification Projects—India:** The Matrimandir Gardens staff has received numerous requests for assistance in the beautification projects of the Pondicherry, Madras and Bangalore governments. We have acted as consultants to the government of Pondicherry at the request of the former lieutenant governor. Our advice was sought on such projects as the annual flower show at the Botanic Garden, the planting of the canal streets, beautification of the Pondicherry park and tree planting for Vana Mahatsova. Garden members have presented a slide show entitled "Beautiful Flowering Trees for South India" at the Governor's residence in Pondicherry and have provided displays of flowers from the Matrimandir nursery for the yearly flower show. A member of the nursery staff was chosen as a judge for the second annual flower show this year. A detailed landscape design of rare and beautiful flowering trees to be planted along the canal was given free of charge to the Public Works Department and the trees were provided from selected stock at the nursery.

For the beautification of the historic area around Mammallapuram the Matrimandir Gardens was asked to supply 23 kilometres of beautiful flowering trees to line both sides of the road from Mammallapuram to Madras. Personal visits were made to the site and exact instructions were supplied regarding the size and depth of pits, soil and compost mixtures, frequency and quantity of water, and when and how to prune. Attributes of hardiness and overall resistance, moderate to rapid growth, shade-giving qualities, fragrance and year-round color were important factors in designing this major tourist area.

The Corporation of the City of Bangalore, after seeing our handmade flower pots on display at the yearly Lal-Baugh Flower Show, requested us to beautify some of the traffic circles in the city. The first circle has been completed, near Mahatma Gandhi Road. We designed special pots of reinforced white cement studded with marble chips and filled these with a colorful display of bougainvilleas, an almost perennially flowering shrub in the Bangalore area. The entire work of design and construction was completed by the staff of the Matrimandir Gardens Nursery. The execution of the design was personally supervised so that the work might be done as perfectly as possible and inspire further beautification efforts in the city.



Aurocreation. Aurovillian teaching a Tamil woman. Photo by Cliff Gibson.

### *Staff of the Matrimandir Gardens Nursery*

A glance down the list of the nursery staff [omitted here] shows an international roster with 9 countries represented. The various kinds of work are fully covered in accompanying articles as is the history of the involvement of the Tamil workers, but here a word may be said about general and specific work.

Aurovilians, or aspiring Aurovilians, who are with us now or who have worked with us in the past have come to the nursery and gardens for a wide variety of reasons or just because of a feeling that this was where they belonged. Though there are a few exceptions, very often there is no past experience or specific knowledge about plants. At first one usually does whatever is needed most at the time but gradually a special interest in certain aspects of the work or a feeling for certain groups of plants begins to grow from within and energies are directed into more specific areas. In this way progress in the gardens has always continued and the structure of the staff is flexible enough to diminish or expand naturally.

**Tamil Workers—Elangarkal:** "They are your brothers in spirit—this should never be forgotten" (The Mother, July 1972).

The history of the initial years of the development of the Matrimandir Gardens and nursery is in large part the story of our relations with the Tamil villagers. Their contribution has encompassed all aspects of its growth. Our Tamil brothers have brought the fullness of their strength to the labour of moving earth, digging pits for trees and shrubs, mixing soil and compost with a determination and cheerfulness of spirit that is an encouragement to all.

In this climate the demands on the physical body are enormous. Working side by side with these slightly built men, through months of intense and unrelenting suns, one quickly develops a profound respect for the ability of their bodies to endure the extreme heat and hard physical labor, often on a diet that could be considered little more than subsistence level.

Men and boys from the nearest village, Kottakarai, were the first to join the nursery, in 1970, and are still with us today. They have shared fully in the challenges and difficulties Auroville has been through and many have had the courage and faith to remain with us in times of inner and outer hardship.

A conscious attempt at decentralization coupled with close guidance has given the most sincere and interested young men an opportunity to assume a large share of the responsibility of the work. All the details of the daily schedule of watering, weeding and general maintenance are entrusted to them. Even the organization of much of the work, daily attendance records and weekly payroll are in their care.

Efforts by Aurovilians in the nursery to share skills and knowledge have been exceptionally fruitful. After two years of English classes, many of the boys and some of the men have developed a fair working knowledge of the language. This, combined with the efforts of Aurovilians to learn Tamil, has made communication no longer much of a problem.

During the first two years of the nursery's development, our work was often looked upon with scorn and ridiculed by many of the villagers. Of what value were plants that could not be eaten or turned to some economic use? What of the waste of water used to grow grains and fruits? These questions had to be faced by the nursery workers on their return to the village each evening. In order to awaken a higher aesthetic appreciation in an immediate way, men and boys who were interested were taken on visits to the finest botanical gardens in South India. Training programs were arranged with these gardens so that the basic techniques of plant propagation such as air layering, budding, grafting, etc., could be learned from men experienced in these climatic conditions and problems and questions answered in the local vernacular. Exposure to new plants and flowers, majestic trees, fellow workers in the profession and the growing beauty of the Matrimandir Gardens have changed the entire attitude of workers and villagers.

## BOOK REVIEW

*Mere ou L'Espece Nouvelle*, by Satprem. Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1976. 568 pp.

This is the second volume of the 3-volume *Mere*, the first of which was reviewed in the last issue. This volume picks up the Mother's life, both inner and outer, where the first left off. It deals at length with the period 1962, when the Mother had one of her physical "crises" and retired to her rooms (though she continued to see people daily), until 1968, another transitional year (Auroville was founded in that year).

Sri Aurobindo has made it clear that the Mother's purpose on earth was to effect the transformation, and Satprem provides abundant extracts from his talks with her to make it clear that her consciousness was absorbed in this work. Even when she was dealing fully and effectively with outer things (and she was besieged with letters and people daily), her consciousness made use of all experiences, inner and outer, to find and tread the way. To Satprem she entrusted (by allowing him to tape-record their talks) the record of her progress through the "forest" (the allusion is to *Savitri*, since *Savitri's* great confrontation and struggle with Death takes place in the forest). She has noted even the most minute experiences as the supramental force, to which she had opened not only the higher ranges of her embodied consciousness, but the very cells of her body, descended into her and did its work. She records what the experience was (is) like, how her very physical consciousness felt this descent and working, and how its (the physical consciousness') "view" of life changed. For the Mother came to bring the highest consciousness (and force) down into the most material, to embody

The harvest of fruits from the numerous jackfruit, mango and lemon trees in the nursery is shared by all. Medical treatment is available to workers and Aurovilians alike at the health clinics and dispensaries of Auroville. Small booklets about the vision of Auroville and the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are printed in Tamil and distributed to those who request information.

Sports programs and exercises have been regular features of our life together. Communal dining has been attempted with not very successful results, mainly due to problems of taste and preference. There are some promising signs, however, but it is an area that has to be approached slowly.

The most serious attempt at a shared way of life in the nursery is the project Elangarkal. Elangarkal, a Tamil word symbolizing youth, was conceived as an alternative living situation for the boys working in the gardens. A new residential building has been completed in the nursery and was financed by the Tamil Fund for Rural Development of West Germany. Elangarkal will be supervised by a Tamil Aurovillian and the young men living there will have an opportunity to view Auroville from a middle perspective as it were, away from the often narrow and restrictive consciousness of village life and at the same time free from having to make a decision to leap from the village to full status as Aurovilians. Residents of Elangarkal will live under the same conditions as Aurovilians and receive exactly the same benefits. They will no longer be laborers with a weekly salary but will be able to participate in the work of their choice. It is an experiment and we must await the results. The Mother's words of 8/2/72 express our innermost feelings: "From the spiritual point of view, India is the foremost country in the world. Her mission is to set an example of spirituality. Sri Aurobindo came on earth to teach this to the world. This fact is so obvious that a simple and ignorant peasant here is, in his heart, closer to the Divine than the intellectuals of Europe." [To be continued.]

that consciousness. It is not a question of the inner being or soul having some inner experience of Bliss or the Divine; it is a matter of body itself, its very cells, living in, being one with, expressing fully the Divine. The path had never been traced out before (though it is suggested in the Vedas); this remarkable being known as The Mother trod the path illuminated by Sri Aurobindo.

Her experience in this crucial phase of physical transformation parallels to a remarkable degree the last portion of Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*, "The Yoga of Self-Perfection." The parallels were so striking that it was pointed out to Satprem, who replied that the Mother had often said to him that "everything" was contained in the last part of the *Synthesis*. But the Mother's experience of the way is illuminating, for the experience of the body itself is not all what the mind might have projected. In a sense the two books (the *Synthesis* and Vol. 2 of *Mere*) go together, text and workbook, so to say.

Some passages from the book (all translations by the reviewer):

- "They [critics of the Ashram] are still working in the way of eliminating all obstacles—just the opposite of what Sri Aurobindo did. Sri Aurobindo took everything, like that, with open arms, and then He acted on them so that they were no longer obstacles... Eliminate, eliminate, so eliminate from life all that doesn't respond to the Divine, then what will remain? They even say that there are people who 'should not be' in the Ashram. I answered that everyone must be in the Ashram! And as I cannot contain the whole world, I must at least contain a representative of every type."

• "This suffering, this general misery is something that is almost unbearable. It has been *put* on me, like a sort of acute anguish—which is certainly a necessity in order to get out. To get out, that is, to cure, to change—not to escape. I do not like escape. That was my big objection to the Buddhists: Everything they advise you to do is simply to give you the possibility of escaping—it is not pretty. But to change, yes."

• "Certain persons speak to me, I absolutely don't hear anything. With others, I hear the rumbling of a sound which has no sense. And certain persons, I hear all that they say. It is the vibration of their thought which I hear and which makes it very clear... For a very long time, for years, I have had the impression that when people do not think clearly, I cannot hear. But it is not completely that: it is when their consciousness is not *living* in what they say—it is not so much a question of 'thinking,' it is their consciousness which does not live in what they say; it is a mental machine; then I hear nothing at all, nothing. When their consciousness is living, that touches me. And I have noticed, for example, people whom I don't hear believe that it is because I am deaf in the ordinary way and they start to shout—that is even worse, it becomes as if they were throwing pebbles in my face."

• "It is that which the body is learning: to replace the mental government of the intelligence by the spiritual government of the Consciousness, and that makes (it has the air of nothing, one cannot perceive it), that makes a formidable difference. When the body submits to rules, even if they are wide, even if they are comprehensive, it is the slave of the rules, and its possibilities are limited by those rules. But when it is governed by the Spirit and the Consciousness, that gives it an incomparable possibility and flexibility. And it is that which will give it the capacity to prolong its life.... The 'necessities' have lost their authority: one can adapt oneself like this, adapt oneself like that—all the laws, those laws which were the laws of Nature, have lost all their despotism, one could say. It is enough to be always supple, attentive, and 'responsive' to the influence of the Consciousness—Consciousness in all its power—in order to pass through all that with an extraordinary suppleness. That is the discovery that is being made more and more. It is marvellous, isn't it, it is a marvellous discovery. It is like a progressive victory over the imperatives. Then all the laws of Nature (naturally all the human laws), all the habits, all the rules, all that, that becomes manageable (supple) and ends by being nonexistent. And finally, one sees: in the measure that the process becomes more and more perfect (perfect, that means integral, total, leaving nothing behind), it is necessarily, inevitably the victory over death. Not that this dissolution of the cells no longer exists, but that it would exist only when it was necessary: not like an absolute law, but like *one* of the processes, when it is necessary."

• "But you know, it is not a joke, the transformation! I had such an impression yesterday that all constructions, all habits, all the ways of seeing, all the ordinary reactions, all were collapsing. That I was suspended in something—completely different. Something...I don't know."

The French edition of all three volumes in this series is available from Société de Développement d'Auroville, 4461 St. André, Montreal, Que. H2J 2Z5, Canada, or Auroville International—France, 67 rue de Rome, 75008 Paris, France. An English translation is in preparation but is not likely to be released in the United States for at least a year. Readers interested in being notified when it is available may write to Matagiri.

[A conflict has been going on for more than two years between Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Society revolving primarily around the issue of self-determination in Auroville. The latest crisis in this conflict erupted in August. Anyone wishing a copy of a summary history of this conflict, the issues involved and a report on the August confrontation may obtain one by writing to Matagiri.]

• The fourth wall of the inner chamber of the Matrimandir has been completed. The Italian marble (see report in last issue) is en route to Auroville. An appeal is made for funds to pay for the marble; about \$6,000 has been raised (as of the end of September). Contributions may be made payable to "Matrimandir Account" and mailed either to Sri Aurobindo Verlag, Seestrasse 34, CH-8072 Zollikon bei Zurich, Switzerland, or to Matagiri.

• A new office has been opened in Auroville: Clarity, Auroville Information and Communication Service. It will collect and disseminate to centers abroad and wherever necessary news and information about Auroville.

• Auroville still has a severe shortage of internal transportation vehicles. Abri Workshop is so busy with vehicle repairs it has set priorities: (1) Water—overhauling pump motors, maintaining windmills and their pumps, doing emergency extractions and replacements; (2) utility vehicles—vans, tractor, bullock cart, tire repairs; (3) motorcycles.

• The 6:00 p.m. Sunday meditations under the central Banyan Tree have been replaced by 6:15 silent meditations at the Nursery (8:45 a.m. Eastern time).

• Two bakeries are now functioning in Auroville. Located in Aspiration and Kottakarai, they are so situated so that each meets the needs of about half of Auroville.

• Abri Electrical Service is now able to fulfill all requests for the wiring of new buildings and pump sets in Auroville. All necessary licences have been granted and Abri can now execute and certify high-tension installations. It already has a list of projects to be undertaken when funds are available for them, including renewal of underground cables and rewiring of some huts in Aspiration and enhancement of the Centre transformer.

• The guest facilities at Auro-Ami have been improved over the last 2 years. Four brick rooms capable of housing 2 or 3 people have replaced the old bamboo and keet capsules. Roofs are generally asbestos sheeting with thatch laid over for coolness. Total capacity of Auro-Ami is about 10 people; charges are Rs. 18 (about \$3.00) a day for board and lodging (excluding lunch, which can be taken in one of the communal dining rooms). Arrangements can be made to meet visitors arriving by plane in Madras. Anyone hoping to stay at Auro-Ami in February 1978 should make reservations at once. Contact Dawn, Auro-Ami, Auroville 605101.

• Auroson's community continues to expand at the perimeter of Auroville's residential zone. Twelve single-room units are currently under construction and another large house is being finished.

• An article on Auroville appears in the current issue (due out in late October) of *Source Magazine*, a New Age publication dealing with all aspects of life and aspiration. Anyone who would like a copy may obtain one for a donation of any amount by writing to Source Magazine, Wrightwood, CA 92397.

• A recent issue of *Auroville Notes* brought up the idea of an organization more comprehensive than Pour Tous:

"The nine-year experience of Auroville has shown that it is undesirable to centralise decision-making functions in the hands of

one individual or group of individuals.... Since the restructuring of Pour Tous in Dec. 1975 the principle has been clear: until there is a re-emergence in Auroville of the kind of spiritual authority that we all recognised in The Mother—the power of administrating Auroville should not be centralised in the hands of one or a few.

"Nevertheless, it is possible to see how an administrative body *could* function *within* our present decentralised power structure, how this would involve little change in the organisation of Auroville, and how it could actually increase the efficiency of our present way of functioning.

"1. There is no such thing as 'decisions in general.: ... Every action is unique and involves a unique set of associations. Each problem needs a unique solution....

"2. In the context of Auroville's present structure, an administrative body would not be a decision-making body...; it would, however, administrate, or 'oversee,' the decision-making process.

"When a proposal is placed before such a group it would (a) determine which areas of interest are affected by the proposed action (including necessary technical resources), (b) contact directly those people concerned and with them evaluate the situation further, (c) formulate tentative observations, (d) call a meeting comprised specifically of the concerned individuals for the purpose of making a decision. This meeting would be chaired by a member of the administrative group, and the previously prepared 'tentative observations' would provide some structure for discussion.

"For each problem (or bloc of closely related issues) the administration would create a unique decision-making body (naturally, a *temporary* body for a *specific* purpose)....

"3...(i). In order to insure a decentralised power structure, the persons who comprise this administration should not at the same time have significant responsibility in areas of work involving such vital services as finance, visas, food distribution, etc.

"(ii). The collective Pour Tous meetings are necessary for the proper functioning of such a group....

"(iii). The persons who are in the administrative group do not themselves have to be especially knowledgeable, but they must know where knowledge and information are to be found. All records would be open to them. They would be able to co-opt the help of fellow Aurovilians when their special skills were required...." (Submitted by Constance.)

**To help Auroville:** Auroville needs funds, equipment, books, clothing, educational and craft materials and tools, etc. For more specific information write to Matagiri or one of the centers listed at the end of this issue.

Tax-exempt contributions may be sent to Auroville Association or the East-West Cultural Center (addresses at end of this issue).

For further information on specific projects in Auroville, write directly to (all addresses in India):

*Matrimandir:* Piero, Peace, Centre, Auroville 605101.

*Green Belt:* Dennis, Fertile, Auroville, South Arcot District.

*Matrimandir Gardens:* Narad, The Nursery, Centre, Auroville 605101.

*Tamil Fund for Rural Development:* Ruud Lohman, Centre, Auroville 605101.

*Pour Tous:* Alain Bernard or Yussuf, Aspiration, Auroville 605104.

*Education:* Shradhdhavan or Shanti, Aspiration, Auroville 605104.

*Children's Centre School:* Michelle, Centre, Auroville 605101.

*Fraternity (handcrafts):* Minou, Kottakuppam, Auroville 605104.

*Aurocreation (handcrafts):* Lise or Jocelyn, Aspiration, Auroville 605104.

*Ayurvedic Dispensary:* Angela, Kottakarai, Auroville 605101.

**To visit Auroville:** Write to Secretary, Unity, Auroville 605101, or Service, Aspiration, Kottakuppam 605104.

When writing to Auroville, please include International Reply Coupons, available from most post offices, to cover the cost of return postage.

Note: Any person planning to go to Auroville or the Ashram and who would be willing to carry small items needed by various departments, please write to Matagiri. We usually have such items ready to be taken.

• Dr. Vasant Merchant of the Humanities Dept. of Northern Arizona University presented "A New Experiment in Education: The Integral Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo" on Nov. 10 at the College of the Desert (Desert Palms, Calif.) and at Yoga World (Palm Springs, Calif.). Three films, on Sri Aurobindo, the Ashram and the International Centre of Education, were shown.

George Nakashima, the internationally known architect-designer and woodworker of New Hope, Pa., delivered the 4th Mies Van Der Rohe Lectures at the Illinois Institute of Technology in October. His subjects included form and actuality, alternative answers to design and construction realism; Dance of Shiva, destruction and dissolution, the dawn of a new age; search for a moral reason to make things beautiful. In spring 1978 an exhibition of Nakashima's work will be held at Odakyu HALC, Shinjuku, Tokyo. In November 1977 his furniture was exhibited at Full Circle in Alexandria, Va. The Smithsonian Institution has also shown his work. Nakashima helped in the design and construction of Golconde, a guest facility in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

He has also hosted M.P. Pandit for a series of talks on Sri Aurobindo in New Hope as well as a performance of Seyril Schochen Rubin's dramatic reading "Savitri: Woman of the Future."

Interface, a membership association (63 Chapel St., Newton, MA 02158) involved with a variety of programs for the New Age, including awareness training and healing, has developed a project called Karass designed "to link centers devoted to the evolution of planetary culture." It focuses on enhancing the processes found in new communities that are intentionally creating new cultural expressions for humanity. Presently it is operating as an active "and nomadic" communications network between Paolo Soleri's Arcosanti in Arizona, Findhorn in Scotland and Auroville.

• The Center for Continuing Education of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver presented a series of lectures Oct. 12-19 on "Stirrings of a New Age." Auro Arindam participated by speaking on Auroville and showing the film *The India Trip*, which he helped to organize for the National Film Board of Canada; a portion of the film highlights a part of the Auroville project.

A slide show on videotape was being prepared by Auro Arindam for both the Centre for Human Settlements and the U.N. Audio Visual Information Centre at U.B.C.; it will contain material on Auroville.

Sol Kort of the Centre for Continuing Education also participated in the "Stirrings of a New Age" program. Mr. Kort recently visited several New Age communities, including Auroville. From Oct. 6 to Nov. 24 Mr. Kort was chairman of a course of introductory lecture/discussions at C.C.E. entitled "New Spiritual Impulses in the 20th Century: The Hidden Wisdom of Rudolf Steiner, Sri Aurobindo and J. Krishnamurti." Participating instructors included Gopal Krishnan of the Sri Aurobindo Circle in Vancouver.

• Scholarship funds, to be known as the Lois Kellogg Duncan Scholarship Awards, have been established in the following 3 institutions: Mesa Community College, Mesa, Ariz.; Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Ariz.; and California Institute of Asian Studies, San Francisco, Calif. These funds were created by the board of directors of the Sri Aurobindo Center, near Sedona, Ariz., from the assets of its corporation upon its closing on 26 June 1977. The funds, and the subsequent awards from these funds, are named for one of the founders of the center, Lois Kellogg Duncan. Since Mrs. Duncan's death in 1970, this center has been maintained by her husband, Nicholas Duncan, the board of directors, and members of the center. As the scholarship awards will be derived from interest from the funds, they can be given year after year to students pursuing studies in philosophy. The directors feel that such awards further the purpose for which the Sri Aurobindo Center was founded in 1962 and nurture the seeds planted there.

*Two Centers Close*

The Sri Aurobindo Society of Minneapolis and the Sri Aurobindo Book Store of Boston both closed in September. This brings to three the number of centers that have closed this year. The Sri Aurobindo Center near Sedona, Ariz., closed in June.

- **Future Child**, published by Discovery Train (Box 1419, Salmon Arm, BC V0E 2T0, Canada) was not able to bring out issue no. 2 as planned on Aug. 15. Instead, an interim newsletter was issued. Dorothy Bohme of the center attended a conference at Iowa State University where she learned of the suggestopedic method of concentration and relaxation developed by Dr. Lozanov of Bulgaria. The method is reported to stimulate learning markedly.

Construction has been resumed on the Discovery Building. Classrooms, auditorium and playground were expected to be ready by this fall.

A large number of wooden toys from Europe and elsewhere has been gathered by the center, and they hoped to issue a catalog by Christmas.

- **Sri Aurobindo Circle of Vancouver** has moved its bookstore and meditation center into new quarters. The new address is: 115-163 W. Hastings St., Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1H5, Canada. They observed last August 15 at the Canadian Immigration Reception Centre, where Judge Perry S. Millar gave a talk on Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future, describing him as "the future spiritual leader of humanity." Dr. Mukesh Eswaran of the University of British Columbia presided and explained the significance of August 15. For further information on activities of the center, contact the secretary, G. Krishnan, at the above address.

- **Aurora-Zentrale** (8033 München-Planegg, Elisabethweg 34, West Germany) reports it now has approximately 200 members. It houses the Auroville-Verlag (publisher), the Filmaur-Archive, and now an organization to import products from Auroville for sale in West Germany. For 21 February 1978 they announce two new films in the series "Meditations on *Savitri*."

- **Auroville International—U.K.** (82 Bell St., London, NW 1, England) reports that A.B. Patel, the general secretary of World Union, spent most of July in England after attending the World Constitutional Assembly in Innsbruck (Austria). At that meeting a draft constitution for the Federation of the Earth was presented, after 20 years of preparation by an international team of experts. The constitution was ratified by the World Citizens Assembly in Paris. Sri Patel was elected co-president of the World Constitution and Parliament Assoc. and has since announced his intention to devote the rest of his life to working for a federal world government as advocated by Sri Aurobindo in *The Ideal of Human Unity*.

In August Marguerite Smithwhite of the Sri Aurobindo group in Billerica returned to Pondicherry to help prepare for an Education Research Workshop to be held 2 to 16 November on "Education for the Future."

Jayantilal Patel of the Integral Yoga Center in Colchester is arranging for 5 seminars on Integral Yoga to be held from November 1977 to July 1978.

Regular meetings are held Sundays at 5:00 p.m. at 12 Gosberton Road, Balham, with Suryakant and Savitriben Patel in charge. Prithwish Patel, a grandson of A.B. Patel, hopes to move into the ground-floor apartment. An upstairs room will be used for meditation.

A series of Integral Yoga Seminars has begun at the Mary Ward Centre, 9 Tavistock Place, London, at the invitation of Alan Babington, director of the Albion Yoga Movement. These are held Saturdays at 7:00 p.m. and are open to the public.

(We are grateful to the Auroville International—U.K. Newsletter for these items as well as some under News of Auroville.)

• **Robert McDermott** of the Philosophy Department of Baruch College and editor/author of *The Essential Aurobindo* will participate in a conference "Vedantism and Whitehead on the Problem of the One and the Many" at the Center for Process Studies in Claremont, Calif., Jan. 8-12, 1978. Prof. McDermott will focus on Whitehead and Sri Aurobindo.

Also participating in the conference will be Arabinda Basu, of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, who is teaching a course on Hinduism at the School of Theology in Claremont for the fall term; Dr. June O'Connor of the University of California, Riverside, author of *The Quest for Political and Spiritual Liberation: A Study in the Thought of Sri Aurobindo Ghose*; and Dr. J. Bruce Long of Cornell University, who has also written on Sri Aurobindo

- **The California Institute of Asian Studies** (3494 21st St., San Francisco, CA 94110) has instituted Integral and Interdisciplinary Studies, a graduate program which seeks to integrate Eastern and Western thought and experience and to apply this knowledge in practical ways throughout society. The program offers a core series of seminars in the areas of Integral World View, Integral Philosophy, Integral View and the Individual, Integral View and Society, Integral Education, Art and Integral Aesthetics, Integral Methodology, and others. Seminars in other areas can also be developed as need and interest arise. Students may also freely choose from course offerings of other departments of the Institute.

In addition to classes and seminars, the program sponsors a variety of cultural and educational events to explore both the theory and practice of integral consciousness. Recent public events included "What Is the Integral View?," "Spectrum of Spiritual Music," "Transformation, Truth and the Arts," and "Evolution of Integral Consciousness."

- **Arvind Devalia** of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram gave several talks to the Lions Club, colleges, and the Ramakrishna Center in Lusaka, Zambia recently. He also gave a 25-minute television interview touching on Sri Aurobindo's teaching, the Ashram and Auroville, and World Union. Mr. Devalia was formerly general secretary of the U.N. Assoc. of Zambia and a representative of World Union and Sri Aurobindo's Action. For the past 7 years he has been living in Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

*M.P. Pandit to Return to the United States*

M.P. Pandit, secretary to the Mother for many years and author of more than 80 works on Sri Aurobindo and the spiritual traditions of India, will return to the United States next spring. He toured this country for 3 months in the spring of 1977. His schedule as far established includes a talk to an Indian religious class at Haverford College at the invitation of Dr. Ashok Gangadean on 2 March; March 5-8, Mr. Pandit will be in Detroit, Mich., March 9-15, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind., March 16-18, in Woodside, Calif. From March 19 to the end of May he will be teaching at the Krotona Institute in Ojai, Calif.

The first week in June (June 1-5) he will spend at Matagiri for a "sadhana in life" experience. Anyone who would like to participate in this should let us know as soon as possible. It will last about 4 days and will involve talks and meditations with Sri Pandit and full participation in the daily activities at Matagiri, which will include work, meals and common meditations. Ample time will be provided for various kinds of meeting with Sri Pandit for discussions of sadhana and questions and answers. Those who cannot participate for the full four days but who would like to meet with Sri Pandit, please let us know. In such cases, accommodations will have to be made at area motels for those who will stay overnight. All of Matagiri's accommodations will be reserved for those participating in the 4-day program.

• **Auroville International—France** (67 rue de Rome, 75008 Paris, France) reports that it continues to send regularly 1,500 francs a month (about \$375) to Pour Tous.

The association also reported on the recent visit of Satprem to Paris in connection with the publication there of the 3-volume *Mere* (see Book Review elsewhere in this issue). While in Paris, Satprem was interviewed on the radio, on *France Culture* program and another program with the theme "The End of Time." Tapes of these programs were played by the association at various of its regular meetings this fall. In addition, the review *Question de...* (No. 20) reported on Satprem, the Ashram and Satprem's 3 books, which are reportedly selling well in France.

Auromica (77 rue de Charonne, 75011 Paris) has recently been opened by Aurovilians working in Paris to import and sell panels and wall hangings of mica. The sheets of mica are almost entirely made by hand in Auroville. Their aim is to achieve a sales volume sufficient to provide Auroville with another source of income.

• **Matagiri** (Mt. Tremper, NY 12457) observed Sri Aurobindo's birthday on August 15, with a special program. More than 60 people were present over the 3-day weekend. On August 14, Seyril, an Aurovillian, gave a reading of passages from *Savitri* in her program "Savitri: The Woman of the Future." The reading was accompanied by the music of Sunil which he has composed for the epic. Seyril gave two more performances of the program, one at George Nakashima's in New Hope, Penna., and one at Paolo Soleri's Arcosanti, in Scottsdale, Ariz.

On August 15 there was a morning meditation. In the afternoon a musical program was presented. Jim Bonino, who came from North Carolina, played a tape of two of his original compositions. Bill Naccari, an actor from New York, played the guitar and sang. Some poetry of Sri Aurobindo was read, and the program concluded with meditation and chanting led by Anie Nunnally. Among those attending the program were Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Dwivedi (formerly with the Government of India).

Vasanti Golikere, a singer and secretary to M.P. Pandit, has given a set of the *Arya* to Matagiri. The *Arya* is the philosophical journal brought out by Sri Aurobindo, the Mother and Paul Richard from 1914 to 1920 in which Sri Aurobindo serialized his major works. The set was formerly at the Sri Aurobindo Center near Sedona, Ariz. Some 20 tape recordings of lectures delivered in the United States by A.B. Purani, an early disciple of Sri Aurobindo, were also given to Matagiri by the Sri Aurobindo Center.

Work done in the true spirit is meditation. — *The Mother*



Part of the August 15 program at Matagiri. Bill Naccari shown with guitar.

21 February 1978

This is the Mother's Centenary. The Ashram, Auroville and centers throughout the world will have special programs in observance of the day.

At Matagiri there will be a meditation beginning at 10:00 a.m., a luncheon, and an afternoon program not yet finalized. Anyone wishing to attend is welcome to do so, but should notify Matagiri at least 2 weeks in advance. Limited accommodations are available for those wishing to stay overnight. Visitors should make their own arrangements for transportation. No other announcement will be made.

## SRI AUROBINDO CENTERS

### United States

#### ARIZONA:

¶Paradise Tau, 4335 N. 36th St., Phoenix, AZ 85018 (tel. 602-955-7398).

CALIFORNIA: ¶Atmaniketan' Ashram, 785 Alcott Ave., Pomona, CA 91766 (tel. 714-629-8255).

¶Auroville Association, 212 Farley Dr., Aptos, CA 95003 (tel. 408-688-4173).

¶Cultural Integration Fellowship, 2650 Fulton St., San Francisco, CA 94118 (tel. 415-648-3949 or 386 9590).

¶East-West Cultural Center, 2865 W. 9th St., Los Angeles, CA 90006 (tel. 213-480-8325).

¶Sadhana Sri Aurobindo, % Aspen, 13774 E. Teague, Clovis, CA 93612 (tel. 209-298-8293).

COLORADO: ¶Sri Aurobindo's Action Center, P.O. Box 1977, Boulder, CO 80306 (tel. 303-447-0982).

ILLINOIS: ¶Sri Aurobindo Center, % Dr. Lakshman Sehgal, 2851 Dr. Martin L. King Dr., Apt. 1217, Chicago, IL 60616 (tel. 312-842-5351).

MARYLAND: ¶Sri Aurobindo Society % Raichura, 2322 Glenmont Circle, Apt. 212, Silver Spring, MD 20902 (tel. 301-942-6168).

NEW YORK: ¶Matagiri, Mt. Tremper, NY 12457 (tel. 914-679-8322).

¶Sri Aurobindo Library, % 140 W. 58th St., Apt. 8B, New York, NY 10019 (tel. 212-757-7584).

PENNSYLVANIA: ¶Arya, % Naren Bhatt, 5132 Haverford Rd., Harrisburg, PA 17109.

### Canada

BRITISH COLUMBIA: ¶Discovery Train (Future Child), Box 1419, Salmon Arm, BC V0E 2T0 (tel. 604-832-2369).

¶Sri Aurobindo Circle and Auro-Book Store, 115-163 West Hastings St., Vancouver, BC V6B 1H5.

¶Sri Aurobindo Society, % Auro-Book Store, 319 W. Pender St., Apt. 203, Vancouver, BC.

QUEBEC: ¶Centre Sri Aurobindo, 4127 Rue St. Denis, Montreal, Que., H2W 2M7 (tel. 514-844-7675).

¶Société pour le Développement d'Auroville, 4461 St. André, Montreal, Que. H2J 2Z5 (tel. 514-524-7445).

¶O-Pti-Zoizo, 1596 St. Laurent Blvd., Montreal, Que.

## CAVERN-TEMPLE

*Richard Hartz*

In a cavern-temple sealed from common sight  
A goddess figure sheds enchanted light,  
Pouring a splendor from her form of gold  
Whose warmth and beauty all the air enfold.

Upon an altar in that temple burns  
A living flame whose tongue forever yearns  
To taste the rapture of the sacred wine  
That flows so sweet and pure from her lips divine.

A youthful priest dwells in that paradise,  
Absorbed in contemplation of those eyes,  
From whose deep pools of beauty fathomless  
He ever draws his life and happiness.

He worships her with joyful offerings  
Of all his thoughts, which to her feet he brings,  
Intoning blissfully the rhythmic lines  
In which his adoration he enshrines.