



Collaboration

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A scene at Matagiri on August 15, 1980, at the gathering in observance of Sri Aurobindo's birthday. In the center background seated on the table are Jean and Gordon Korstange giving a concert of Indian flute and devotional music.

The year 1980 was one of turmoil and upheaval throughout the world. One has only to recall the earthquakes in Italy and elsewhere, the eruption of Mount St. Helena in the U.S., and such "man-made" events as the hostage crisis in Iran and the Iran-Iraq war. It is also the year in which the first volume of *Mother's Agenda* appeared in English in America (and England). In India upheavals of all kinds are regarded as the work of Mahakali, the "terrible Mother," the Mother in her aspect of warrior and overturner. The Mother is the Divine Energy which has created the worlds and is leading all to its divine fulfilment, the Great Perfection

which the Supreme sees within Himself and the seeing unleashes His divine energy, Shakti, the Divine Mother.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have opened a new way for man's evolution, indeed for the evolution of the world, the seat or focal point of evolution. The mighty yoga they undertook in themselves has its effects everywhere. The Mother's journey into a new area of sadhana, of yoga, of the divine work, within the very cells of her body, was recorded in her conversations with Satprem and called *Mother's Agenda*. In it Mother lays waste all man's preconceived ideas, the whole mental structure he has erected for

everything—from death and illness to the spiritual life—as she moves steadily forward to bring “something else” into manifestation. Her *Agenda* is indeed a “force in action,” and to read it is to be part of her overwhelming stride through the world. It is a radioactive, or perhaps better, “Shaktiactive,” work. That it has now begun to appear in America is not insignificant given the role both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother said America has to play in the evolution.

Many of the pieces we have chosen for this issue of *Collaboration* touch upon the great “yoga of self-perfection” which Sri Aurobindo outlined in his *Synthesis of Yoga* and Mother undertook to live out in her life. We have also included an extract from the first volume of her *Agenda* which gives some hint of the extraordinary “inner life” she had as well as something of her nature in this embodiment. Also included are an interview with Satprem which also reveals something of the Mother and her working, and Nolini’s “Great Holocaust,” which has appeared in these pages previously but which seems to be apropos now too.

We are beginning also to publish extracts from a diary kept by a disciple which throw some light on a particular phase in the history of the Ashram as well as on how one sadhak at least was caught “between two worlds.”

Readers are invited to submit material for *Collaboration*. We are interested in poetry and nonfiction, particularly articles or “reflections” on Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga, etc.

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THE YOGA OF SELF-PERFECTION Sri Aurobindo

The principle in view is a self-surrender, a giving up of the human being into the being, consciousness, power, delight of the Divine, a union or communion at all the points of meeting in the soul of man, the mental being, by which the Divine himself, directly and without veil master and possessor of the instrument, shall by the light of his presence and guidance perfect the human being in all the forces of the Nature for a divine living. Here we arrive at a farther enlargement of the objects of the Yoga. The common initial purpose of all Yoga is the liberation of the soul of man from its present natural ignorance and limitation, its release into spiritual being, its union with the highest self and Divinity. But ordinarily this is made not only the initial but the whole and final object: enjoyment of spiritual being there is, but either in a dissolution of the human and individual into the silence of self-being or on a higher plane in another existence. The Tantric system makes liberation the final, but not the only aim; it takes on its way a full perfection and enjoyment of the spiritual power, light and joy in the human existence, and even it has a glimpse of a supreme experience in which liberation and cosmic action and enjoyment are unified in a final overcoming of all oppositions and dissonances. It is this wider view of our spiritual potentialities from which we begin, but we add another stress which brings in a completer significance. We regard the spirit in man not as solely an individual being traveling to a transcendent unity with the Divine, but as a universal being capable of oneness with the Divine in all souls and all Nature and we give this extended view its entire practical consequence. The human soul’s individual liberation and enjoyment of union with the Divine in spiritual being, consciousness and delight must always be the first object of the Yoga; its free enjoyment of the cosmic unity of the Divine becomes a second object; but out of that a third appears, the effectuation of the meaning of the divine unity with all beings by a sympathy and participation in the spiritual purpose of the Divine in humanity. The individual Yoga then turns from its separateness and becomes a part of the collective Yoga of the divine Nature in the human race. The liberated individual being, united with the Divine in self and spirit, becomes in his natural being a self-perfecting instrument for the perfect outflowing of the Divine in humanity.

This outflowing has its two terms; first, comes the growth out of the separative human ego into the unity of the spirit, then the possession of the divine nature in its proper and its higher forms and no longer in the inferior forms of the mental being which are a mutilated translation and not the authentic text of the original script of divine Nature in the cosmic individual. In other words, a perfection has to be aimed at which amounts to the elevation of the mental into the full spiritual and supramental nature. Therefore this integral Yoga of knowledge, love and works has to be extended into a Yoga of spiritual and gnostic self-perfection. As gnostic knowledge, will and Ananda are a direct instrumentation of spirit and can only be won by growing into the spirit, into divine being, this growth has to be the first aim of our Yoga. The mental being has to enlarge itself into the oneness of the Divine before the Divine will perfect in the soul of the individual its gnostic outflowing. That is the reason why the triple way of knowledge, works and love becomes the keynote of the whole Yoga, for that is the direct means for the soul in mind to rise to its highest intensities where it passes upward into the divine oneness. That too is the reason why the Yoga must be integral. For if immergence in the Infinite or some close union with the Divine were all our aim, an integral Yoga would be superfluous, except for such

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greater satisfaction of the being of man as we may get by a self-lifting of the whole of it towards its Source. But it would not be needed for the essential aim, since by any single power of the soul-nature we can meet with the Divine; each at its height rises up into the infinite and absolute, each therefore offers a sufficient way of arrival, for all the hundred separate paths meet in the Eternal. But the gnostic being is a complete enjoyment and possession of the whole divine and spiritual nature; and it is a complete lifting of the whole nature of man into its power of a divine and spiritual existence. Integrality becomes then an essential condition of this yoga . . .

* * * * *

A divine perfection of the human being is our aim. We must know then, first, what are the essential elements that constitute man's total perfection; secondly, what we mean by a divine as distinguished from a human perfection of our being. That man as a being is capable of self-development and of some approach at least to an ideal standard of perfection which his mind is able to conceive, fix before it and pursue, is common ground to all thinking humanity, though it may be only the minority who concern themselves with this possibility as providing the one most important aim of life. But by some the ideal is conceived as a mundane change, by others as a religious conversion.

The mundane perfection is sometimes conceived of as something outward, social, a thing of action, a more rational dealing with our fellow-men and our environment, a better and more efficient citizenship and discharge of duties, a better, richer, kinder and happier way of living, with a more just and more harmonious associated enjoyment of the opportunities of existence. By others again a more inner and subjective ideal is cherished, a clarifying and raising of the intelligence, will and reason, a heightening and ordering of power and capacity in the nature, a nobler ethical, a richer aesthetic, a finer emotional, a much healthier and better-governed vital and physical being. Sometimes one element is stressed, almost to the exclusion of the rest; sometimes, in wider and more well-balanced minds, the whole harmony is envisaged as a total perfection. A change of education and social institutions is the outward means adopted or an inner self-training and development is preferred as the true instrumentation. Or the two aims may be clearly united, the perfection of the inner individual, the perfection of the outer living.

But the mundane aim takes for its field the present life and its opportunities; the

SELF-PERFECTION

The Mother

Disciple: "To know oneself is to control oneself": What does it mean?

Mother: This means to be conscious of one's inner truth, conscious of the different parts of one's being and of their respective working. One must know why one does this, why one does that; one must know one's thoughts, know one's feelings, know all one's activities, all one's movements, what one is capable of, etc. And to know oneself is not sufficient; this knowledge must lead to conscious control. To know oneself perfectly means to control oneself perfectly.

But one must have an aspiration every moment of one's life.

religious aim, on the contrary, fixes before it the self-preparation for another existence after death, its commonest ideal is some kind of pure sainthood, its means a conversion of the imperfect or sinful human being by divine grace or through obedience to a law laid down by a scripture or else given by a religious founder. The aim of religion may include a social change, but it is then a change brought about by the acceptance of a common religious ideal and way of consecrated living, a brotherhood of the saints, a theocracy or kingdom of God reflecting on earth the kingdom of heaven.

The object of our synthetic Yoga must, in this respect too as in its other parts, be more integral and comprehensive, embrace all these elements or these tendencies of a larger impetus of self-perfection and harmonise them or rather unify, and in order to do that successfully it must seize on a truth which is wider than the ordinary religious and higher than the mundane principle. All life is a secret Yoga, an obscure growth of Nature towards the discovery and fulfilment of the divine principle hidden in her which becomes progressively less obscure, more self-conscious and luminous, more self-possessed in the human being by the opening of all his instruments of knowledge, will, action, life to the Spirit within him and in the world. Mind, life, body, all the forms of our nature are the means of this growth, but they find their last perfection only by opening out to something beyond them, first, because they are not the whole of what man is, secondly, because that other something which he is, is the key of his completeness and brings a light which discovers to him the whole high and large reality of his being. [From *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1971), pp. 586-91.]

It is never too soon to begin, never too late to continue. That is to say, even when you are quite young, you can begin to study yourself and to know yourself and little by little to control yourself. And even when you are what people call "old," when old many many years, it is not too late to make the effort to know yourself better and better and to control yourself better and better. That is the science of living.

To perfect yourself, you must first of all become conscious of yourself. I am sure, for example, that the following incident must have happened to you many times in your life. All of a sudden someone asks you, "Why have you done that?" Well, the spontaneous answer is "I do not know." If someone asks you, "What were you thinking about?" you answer, "I do not know." "Why are you tired?"—"I do not know." "Why are you glad?"—"I do not know," and so on. I may take indeed fifty persons and ask them all of a sudden without preparation, "Why have you done that?," and if they are not "awake" within, all will reply, "I do not know" (naturally, I do not speak of those who have undergone a discipline for knowing themselves and for following their movements to the extreme limit; they of course can collect themselves and concentrate and give the right answer, but only after a time). You will see that it is like that, if you look at your whole day. You say something and you do not know why you say so—it is only when the words have gone out of your mouth that you perceive that it was not quite what you wanted to say. For example, you go to see someone, you prepare in advance the words you are going to say, but once before the person in question, you say nothing or it is other words that come out of your mouth. Are you able to say to what extent the atmosphere of the other person has influenced you and prevented you from saying what you had prepared? How many people are able to say that? They do not perceive even that the person was in such or such a state and that was why they could not tell him what they had prepared. Naturally there are obvious cases when you find people in such bad humour that you can ask them nothing. I do not speak of that. I speak of a clear perception of mutual influences, what acts and reacts upon your nature—it is this that one doesn't have. For example, you are suddenly uneasy or happy, but how many people can say, "It is like that"? And it is difficult to know, it is not at all easy. One must be "awake" very much;

one must be constantly in a state to observe with great attention.

There are people who sleep twelve hours daily and say the rest of the time, "I am awake"! There are people who sleep twenty hours per day and the rest of the time half awake!

To be in this state in which you observe attentively you must have so to say antennae everywhere that are in constant contact with your centre of true consciousness. You record everything, you organise everything and, in this way, you cannot be taken unawares, you cannot be deceived, mistaken, and you cannot say any other thing than what you wanted to say. But how many people live in this state normally? That is what I mean to say exactly when I speak of "becoming conscious." If you want to derive the greatest profit out of the conditions and circumstances in which you find yourself, you must be fully awake; you must not be taken by surprise. You must not do things without knowing why, you must not say things without knowing why. One must be constantly awake.

You must understand also that you are not separate individualities, and that life is a ceaseless exchange of forces, of consciousness, of vibrations and of movements of all kinds. It is as in a crowd; where everyone pushes, everyone goes forward, and when all go backward, everyone goes backward. It is the same thing in the inner world, in your consciousness. Constantly there are forces and influences that act and react upon you, it is like a gas in the atmosphere, and unless you are quite awake, these things enter into you and it is only when they have entered well into you and come out as if they were from you that you are aware of them. How often do men meet people who are nervous, full of anger and bad mood, like that, without knowing why. How is it that when you play against some persons you play very well, and when you play against others you are unable to play? And people who are quiet, not wicked, who suddenly become furious when they are in the midst of a furious crowd? And one does not know who started the thing; it is a thing that passed by and swept the consciousness. There are people who are capable of releasing vibrations like that and others respond without knowing why. Everything is like that, from the smallest to the biggest.

To be individualised in a collectivity, one must be absolutely conscious of oneself. And of what self? The Self above all mixture, that is to say, what I call the Truth of your being. And so long as you are not conscious of the Truth of your being, you are moved by all sorts of things

THE MOTHER'S NIGHTS AND HER "CENSOR"

The Mother

My nights contain so many things that I don't always do the necessary work to remember—that takes up a lot of time. Sometimes I get up during the night and sit there recalling precisely everything that has already happened, but that sometimes takes half an hour!—and as urgent work still calls, I don't take the time to remember and it gets erased. But then you know, with all that's coming you could write volumes!

From a documentary standpoint, my nights are getting quite interesting. In the "Yoga of Self-Perfection" [in *The Synthesis of Yoga*], Sri Aurobindo describes precisely this state you reach in which all things assume meaning and a quality of inner significance, clarification of various points, and help. From this point of view, my nights have become extraordinary. I see infinitely more things that I saw before. Before, it was very limited to a personal contact with people. Now . . . In my nights, each thing and each person has the appearance, the gesture, the word or the action that describes *exactly* his condition. It's becoming quite interesting.

Of course, I much prefer being in my great currents of force—from a personal standpoint, such immensity of action is much more interesting. But these documentary things are also valuable. It is so tremendously different from the dreams and even the visions you have when you enter certain representative realms of the mind (which is what I used to do). It is so different, it has another content, another life altogether: it carries its light, its understanding, its explanation within itself—you look, and everything is explained.

without being aware of it at all. Collective thought, collective suggestions is a formidable influence, acting constantly on individual thought. And what is extraordinary is that one is not aware of it. You think that you are thinking *like that*, but in reality it is the collectivity that thinks like that. The mass is always inferior to the individual. Take individuals of like category, well, when they are alone, they are at least two degrees higher than people of the same category that are in a crowd. There is a mixture of things obscure and unconscious and you slip inevitably into the unconscious. To escape from that, there is only one means; to become conscious of oneself, more and more conscious and more and more attentive.

Try to do this little exercise: at the beginning of the day, say, "I will not speak without thinking of what I say." You be-

lieve, do you not, that you think all that you say! It is not at all the case, you will see that so many times the word you do not want to say is ready to come out, but you are obliged to make a conscious effort to stop it from coming out.

It always gives me the feeling that I am shrinking a little, but it's interesting. And it's useful, for I am constantly moving about and doing things with people; it indicates to me what I have to say and do with each one. It's useful. But all the same, I miss the fullness and joy of the more impersonal Movement of forces.

Before going to bed, sometimes I say to myself, "I will do what is necessary to spend my night in these great currents of force (because there is a way to do it). And then I think, "Oh, what an egotist you are, my girl!" So sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't—when there's something important to do, it doesn't happen. But all I have to do is concentrate in a certain way before going to sleep to spend my whole night in these . . . very far from here, very far . . . I can't say very far from the earth, for surely it's in an intermediate zone between the forces from above and the earth's atmosphere. That's what it mainly is, in any case. It's a great universal current as well, but mainly it's what descends and comes into the earth, and it is permeating the earth's atmosphere all the time, all the time, and it comes with this wide, overall vision—it makes for wonderful nights. . . . I no longer bother about people at all—at least not as such, but in a more impersonal way. [silence]

I have been pestered my whole life by . . . something similar to the sense of duty without its stupidity. Sri Aurobindo had told me that it was a "censor," that I had with me a "considerable" one! It was constantly, constantly telling me, "No, it's not like that, it's like this . . . Oh, no! It's wrong to do that; be careful, don't be ego- [Continued on following page]

I knew people who were very scrupulous about telling a lie, but when directly they are in a group instead of saying the truth, they tell a lie spontaneously. They did not intend to do so, but it came "like that." Why? Because they were in the company of liars: there was an atmosphere of falsehood and they simply caught the malady!

It is in this way that little by little, slowly, with perseverance, first of all with great care and attention, one becomes conscious, learns to know oneself and afterwards to become master of oneself. [Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, February 1964, pp. 45-51.]

NOTES ON THE WAY (4)

The Mother

27 November 1965

[*This talk begins with Mother's comments on the message distributed on the Darshan day of 24 November.*]

"It is certainly a mistake to bring down the light by force—to pull it down. The Supramental cannot be taken by storm. When the time is ready it will open of itself—but first there is a great deal to be done and that must be done patiently and without haste."—Sri Aurobindo

Mother: That is good for reasonable people. They will say, "There, he does not promise miracles."

Disciple: Why? Do many people have the tendency to "pull down"?

Mother: People are in a hurry, they want to see the results immediately.

And then, they believe they are pulling down the Supramental—they pull down some small vital individuality who mocks at them and in the end makes them play the shabby fool. This is what happens most often—99 times out of a hundred.

A small individuality, a vital entity who plays the big play and makes a great show, plays of light. Then the poor fellow who has "pulled" is bedazzled; he says, "There, it is the Supramental," and he falls into a pit.

It is only when you have touched, seen in some way and had a contact with the true Light, that you can distinguish the vital, and you perceive that it is altogether like the plays of light on a stage, an artificial light. But otherwise, others are dazzled—it is dazzling, it is "wonderful," and then they are deceived. It is only when you have *seen* and when you have had the contact with the Truth, ah, then you smile!

It is quackery, but you must know the truth in order to recognise quackery.

At bottom, it is the same for everything. The vital is like a superstage that gives shows—very attractive, dazzling, deceptive: it is only when you know the True Thing that you recognise immediately, instinctively, without reasoning, and you say, "No, I do not want that."

And for everything it is so. Where it has taken a capital importance in human life is with regard to love. Vital passions, vital attractions have almost everywhere taken the place of true feeling, which is quiet, whereas the other puts you in ferment, gives you the feeling of something "living." It is very deceptive. And you do not know it, you do not feel it, you do not perceive it clearly unless you know the True Thing. If you have touched true love through the psychic and the divine union, then the other thing appears hollow, thin, empty—an appearance and a comedy, more often tragic than comic.

Whatever one may say about it, however one may explain it, is of no use at all, because he or she who is caught says immediately, "Oh, this is not what it is for others"—what happens to yourself is never like what happens to others! One must have the true experience, then the whole vital appears like a masquerade—not attractive.

And when you "pull," well, it is much more than 99 times out of one hundred . . . out of a million there is found only one case where one happens to pull the True Thing—this proves one was ready. Otherwise it is always the vital which you pull, the appearance, the theatrical show of the Thing, not the Thing itself.

To pull is always an egoistic movement. It is a deformation of aspiration. True as-

piration consists in a giving, a self-giving, whereas to pull means to want for oneself. Even if in the mind you have a vaster ambition—the earth, the universe—that means nothing, these are mental activities. [long silence]

You felt nothing special on Darshan day?

Disciple: No.

Mother: Sri Aurobindo was there from morning till evening.

For, yes, for more than an hour he made me live, as in a concrete and living vision of the condition of humanity and of the different strata of humanity in relation to the new or supramental creation. And it was wonderfully clear and concrete and living. . . . There was all the humanity which is no longer altogether animal, which has benefited by mental development and created a kind of harmony in its life—a harmony vital and artistic, literary—in which the large majority are content to live. They have caught a kind of harmony, and within it they live life as it exists in a civilised surrounding, that is to say, somewhat cultured, with refined tastes and refined habits. And all this life has a certain beauty where they are at ease, and unless something catastrophic happens to them, they live happy and contented, satisfied with life. These people can be drawn (because they have a taste, they are intellectually developed), they can be attracted by the new forces, the new things, the future life; for example, they can become disciples of Sri Aurobindo mentally, intellectually. But they do not feel at all the need to change materially; and if they were compelled to do so, it would be first of all premature, unjust, and would simply create a great disorder and disturb their life altogether uselessly.

The Mother's Nights and Her "Censor"

[Continued from preceding page]

tistical; be careful—do this, do that." He was right, but I sent it away long ago—or rather, Sri Aurobindo sent it away. But there remains the habit . . . of not doing what I like. Rather, of doing what *must* be done, and whether it's pleasant or not makes no difference.

This, too, Sri Aurobindo had explained to me. I used to tell him, "Yes, you always speak of life's 'delight,' life for the sake of its delight." But as soon as I had the notion, as soon as I was put in the presence of the Supreme, it was: "For You—exclusively what You want. You are the sole, the unique and exclusive reason for being." And that has remained, and this movement is so strong that even when . . . you see,

now I have ecstasy and ananda in abundance—everything comes, everything. But even then, even what that is there, something in me always turns towards the Supreme and says, "Does this *truly* serve You? Is it what You expect of me, what You want from me?"

This has protected me from all seeking for pleasure in life. It was a wonderful protection, because pleasure always seemed so futile to me—yes, futile; for the sake of your personal satisfaction. Later, I even understood how foolish it is, for you can never be satisfied—though when you're small you don't yet know that. I never liked it: "But is it really useful, does it serve some purpose?"

And I still have this attitude in regard to my nights. I have this widening of the consciousness, this impersonalization, this wonderful joy of being above . . . all that. But at the same time I also have "I'm here in this body, on earth, to do something—I mustn't forget it. And this is what I have to do." But probably I'm wrong!

I'm waiting for the Lord to tell me clearly.

But when I saw that, I always see Him smiling—a smile . . . it's all very good to smile, but . . . it encourages you more than it cures you! [*Mother's Agenda*, vol. 1 (Paris: Institut de Recherches Evolutives, 1979). 2 October 1960, pp. 426-28.]

This was very clear.

Then there were some—rare individuals—who were ready to make the necessary effort to prepare for the transformation and to draw the new forces, to try to adapt Matter, to seek means of expression, etc. These are ready for the yoga of Sri Aurobindo. They are very few in number. There are even those who have the sense of sacrifice and are ready for a hard, painful life, if that would lead or help towards this future transformation. But they should not, they should not in any way try to influence the others and make them share in their own effort; it would be altogether unfair—not only unfair, but extremely maladroit, for it would change the universal rhythm and movement, or at least the terrestrial movement, and instead of helping, it would create conflicts and end in a chaos.

But it was so living, so real that my whole attitude (how to say it—a passive attitude which is not the result of an active will), the whole position taken in the work has changed. And that has brought a peace—a peace and a calmness and a confidence altogether decisive. A decisive change. And even what seemed in the earlier position to be obstinacy, clumsiness, inconstancy, all kinds of deplorable things, all that has disappeared. It was like the vision of a great universal Rhythm in which each thing takes its place and . . . everything is all right. And the effort for transformation, reduced to a small number, becomes a thing *much* more precious and much more powerful for the realisation. It is as though a choice has been made for those who will be the pioneers of the new creation. And all these ideas of “spreading,” of “preparing,” or of “churning Matter” . . . are a childishness. It is human restlessness.

The vision was of a beauty so majestic, so calm, so smiling, oh! . . . it was full, truly full of the divine Love. And not a divine Love that “pardons”—it is not that at all, not at all! Each thing in its place, realising its inner rhythm as perfectly as it can.

It was a very beautiful gift.

Well, all these things people know in some part, intellectually, like that, in idea; they know all that, but it is quite useless. In everyday practice you live in another way, with a truer understanding. And there, it is as though you touched the things—you saw them, you touched them—in their higher disposition.

It came after a vision of plants and the spontaneous beauty of plants (it is something so wonderful), then of the animal with so harmonious a life (so long as men do not intervene), and all that was in its right place; then of the true humanity as

humanity, that is to say, the maximum of what a mental poise could create of beauty, harmony, charm, elegance of life, taste of living—a taste of living in beauty, and naturally suppressing all that is ugly and low and vulgar. It was a fine humanity—humanity as its maximum, but nice. And perfectly satisfied with its being humanity, because it lives harmoniously. And it is perhaps also like a promise of what almost the whole of humanity will become under the influence of the new creation. It appeared to me that it was what the supramental consciousness could make of humanity. There was even a comparison with what humanity has made of the animal species. It is extremely mixed, naturally, but things have been perfected, bettered, utilised more completely. Animality, under the mind's influence, has become another thing, which is naturally something mixed, because the mind was incomplete. In the same way there are examples of a harmonious humanity among well-balanced people, and this seemed to be what humanity could become under the supramental influence.

Only, it is very far ahead. You must not expect that it will be immediately—it is very far ahead.

It is clearly, even now, a period of transition which may last quite a long time and which is rather painful. Only, the effort, sometimes painful (often painful) is compensated by a clear vision of the goal to attain, of the goal that *will* be attained: an assurance, yes, a certainty. But it would be something that would have the power to eliminate all error, all deformation, all the ugliness of the mental life—and then a humanity very happy, very satisfied with being human, not at all feeling the need of being anything other than human, but with a human beauty, a human harmony.

It was very charming, it was as though I lived in it. The contradictions had disappeared. It was as though I lived in this perfection. And it was almost like the ideal conceived by the supramental consciousness, of a humanity become as perfect as it can be. And it was very good.

And this brings a great repose. The tension, the friction, all that disappeared, and the impatience. All that had completely disappeared.

Disciple: That is to say, you concentrate the work instead of diffusing it a little everywhere?

Mother: No, it may be diffused materially, because the individuals are not necessarily collected together. But they are few in number.

That idea of a pressing need to “prepare” humanity for the new creation, that impatience has disappeared.

Disciple: It must first of all be realised in some.

Mother: Quite so.

I was seeing, I saw that in such a concrete way. Apart from those who are fit to prepare the transformation and the supramental realisation, and whose number is necessarily very restricted, there must develop more and more, in the midst of the ordinary human mass, a superior humanity which has towards the supramental being of the future or in the making the same attitude as animality, for example, has towards man. There must be, besides those who work for the transformation and who are ready for it, a superior humanity, intermediary, which has found in itself or in life that harmony with Life—that *human* harmony—and which has the same feeling of adoration, devotion, faithful consecration to “something” which seems to it so high that it does not even try to realise it, but worships it and feels the need of its influence, its protection, and the need to live under that influence, to have the delight of being under that protection. It was so clear. But not that anguish, those torments of wanting something that escapes you because—because it is not your destiny to have it, and because the amount of transformation needed is premature for your life and it is that then which creates a disorder and suffering.

For example, one of the very concrete things that brings out the problem well: humanity has the sexual impulse in a way altogether natural, spontaneous. and, I would say, legitimate. This impulse will naturally and spontaneously disappear with animality. Many other things will disappear, as for example the need to eat and perhaps also the need to sleep in the way we sleep now. But the most conscious impulse in a superior humanity, which has continued as a source of—bliss is a big word, but joy, delight—is certainly the sexual activity, and that will have absolutely no reason for existence in the function of Nature when the need to create in that way will no longer exist. Therefore, the capacity of entering into relation with the joy of life will rise by one step or will be oriented differently. But what the ancient spiritual aspirants had sought on principle—sexual negation—is an absurd thing, because that must be only for those who have gone beyond this stage and no longer have animality in them. And it must drop off naturally, without effort and without struggle. To make of it a centre of conflict and struggle is ridiculous. It is only when the consciousness ceases to be human that it drops off quite naturally. Here also there is a transition which may be somewhat difficult, because the beings of transition are always in an unstable equilibrium; but within oneself there is a kind of flame and a need which makes it not pain-

ful—it is not painful effort, it is something that one can do with a smile. But to seek to impose it upon those who are not ready for this transition is absurd.

It is common sense. They are human, but they must not pretend that they are not.

It is only when spontaneously the impulse becomes impossible for you, when you feel that it is something painful and contrary to your deeper need that it becomes easy; then, well, externally you cut those bonds and it is finished.

It is one of the most convincing examples.

It is the same with regard to food. It will be the same thing. When animality will drop off, the absolute necessity of food also will drop off. And there will probably be a transition where one will have less and less purely material food. For example, when you smell flowers it is nourishing. I have seen it, you nourish yourself in a more subtle way.

Only, the body is not ready. The body is not ready and it deteriorates, that is to say, it eats itself. That proves that the time has not come, that it is only an experience—an experience that teaches you something, teaches you that it will not be a brutal refusal to come into contact with the corresponding Matter and an isolation (one cannot isolate oneself, it is impossible), but a communion on a higher or deeper plane. [silence]

Those who have reached the higher regions of intelligence, but have not dominated the mental faculties in them, have an innocent need that everybody should think like them and be able to understand as they understand. And when they see that others do not, cannot understand, their first reflex is to be horribly shocked; they exclaim, "What an idiot!" But they are not at all idiots—they are different, they are in another domain. You do not go and say to an animal, "You are an idiot;" you say, "It is an animal." Well, you say, "It is a man." It is a man; only, there are those who are no longer men and are not yet gods, and they are in a situation . . . rather awkward.

But it was so soothing, so sweet, so wonderful, that vision—each thing expressing its kind quite naturally.

And it is quite evident that with the amplitude and totality of the vision, there comes something which is a compassion that understands—not that pity of the superior for the inferior; the true divine Compassion, which is the total comprehension that each one is what he must be. [Mother's Collected Works, vol. 11 *Notes on the Way* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1980), pp. 22-29.]

INTERVIEW WITH SATPREM

[Following is a translation of an interview with Satprem published in the French magazine *Lui* in January 1980. The translation was provided by the Institute of Evolutionary Research in New York, the publisher of *Mother's Agenda*.]

Neither a guru nor a philosopher, but a man who reflects and who is trying to discover a "passage towards a new, superior state of man." A sage who wants to pierce through the secret of Matter . . . For Jacques Chancel [the interviewer on the famous *Radioscopie* program on French radio], Satprem is an "adventurer of the inner" . . . Surprising itinerary for this Breton from Paris who followed all the paths of the world before finally settling down in India, at the age of thirty. For at the time of his first visit he had been "fascinated" by Sri Aurobindo, great guide and thinker about whom he wrote several books, among them *Sri Aurobindo or The Adventure of Consciousness*. And by Mother, beside whom he lived for 19 years, recording her *Agenda* . . . This was the first time that Satprem had come to Paris in 20 years. Frederick de Towarnicki was able to meet him for *Lui*.

Lui: You left Europe when you were 21. You are French. You have been living in India for the last 19 years and today you are still pursuing your quest there for knowledge and wisdom. You were very close to the extraordinary spiritual guide, Sri Aurobindo, a great master of yoga, and Mother, who was at the head of the Pondicherry Ashram. How and where did your novel-like life begin?

Satprem: The beginning was a question. A question that I first asked myself in the Nazi concentration camps, when I was in a state of total nothingness: "What is man? What is life, Matter, death? What remains in a man when all has been wiped out? When nothing more exists?" My entire life has been an attempt to answer this.

As a child, I was already suffocating. Who was I? Who was this being that was me? I never could feel it, I never could get to what was really "me." It was always others that spoke, that "knew," that decided things for me. There was always a school, a father, a mother, knowledge, religion, professors. . . . There was always someone or something holding me back, a screen between reality and myself.

Lui: So then you have tried to answer your question?

Satprem: The first time, around 1950, I sought life at its source, by leaping backwards several million years: I returned to the Earth's past by living in the virgin forests of Guyana. There were moments when I felt this forest as it must have existed at the time of the great primates.

Water, wind, rain, the plants, the insects, the snakes, the trees, all mixed together in a kind of intense complicity. The nights were vibrant with a million sounds and secret movements. It was an unbelievably sumptuous madness! What was man in the midst of this extraordinary vibration? A miniscule point. He was no longer the center of everything! I also experienced moments of indescribable joy, and I discovered this inner harmony that links all things. It was already a new regard. At times my body grew light and no longer seemed to obey the laws of gravity. . . . But this return to the Earth's past—as I later understood—was not enough. One had to be still farther, deeper, towards man's future which is as yet only a rough draft.

Lui: Then you wandered all over India, didn't you?

Satprem: Yes, I was a kind of wandering monk. Doing that, I saw and understood many things. I practiced Tantrism, I became a sanniyasi. But even there I received no convincing answers, and what did it matter here and there to meet some isolated yogis floating in the heights of the mind? Along the way I had seen too many men stricken by sickness and pain. . . .

Lui: So then you went on?

Satprem: Yes. I was interested in the Tantra, but I didn't want to get stuck in one experience. Not in a religion or a spiritual technique any more than in a virgin forest. Nor, as I once wrote, become a "bureaucraft of adventure." So again, I had to ask the question "Where is the man in all this? Has he flowered already? If not, what is he?" And only with Sri Aurobindo and Mother did I understand where and how I could answer this question I had asked myself in the concentration camps. . . .

Lui: You are a Breton. Is Satprem your pen name?

Satprem: Mother gave it to me. It means "he who truly loves."

Lui: Is what you discovered a sort of "third eye"?

Satprem: No, it is simpler than that, much more direct. It is what is left when we peel off this varnish that has been glued onto us, or else when we burst out of this bowl in which we are trapped, like a fish, and which distorts our vision. And really, what would you think of a fish who pretends to grasp the reality of the world looking out of his fishbowl? What is truly

adventurous in Mother and Sri Aurobindo is that they did not seek to conduct their experiment in some "up above" or in an established religion. They did not believe in the heaven of a would-be liberated yogi any more than in our hygienic heaven which is at present suffocating us. They wanted to experiment in their own earthly bodies, in the very midst of evolution. Without microscopes, without test tubes and telescopes and rockets, they were determined to explore Matter itself, and that is where they went! They thus discovered a new mental vibration. And the fact of discovering another state of consciousness deep within themselves, deep within their bodies, within their very cells, is bound to transform the world's condition. Mother and Sri Aurobindo tried to open up for us a passage to another stage of evolution. For we are, I believe, on the eve of a great upheaval. . . .

Lui: By that, do you mean a reversal of consciousness?

Satprem: A passage to a higher state of evolution. An "after-man." In short, a passage from obscure matter to conscious matter, as it really "is"—total and without separation. And our consciousness will have to learn how to deal with this.

Lui: But in your opinion, when will this take place?

Satprem: When you look at the world around you, you can see that it is already happening. And it will not come about without difficulty and peril. What is unfolding is not an individual phenomenon; it is taking place in every country, among many people, on every continent. The all-too-real crisis we are passing through is neither a crisis of civilization nor a political crisis, but at heart an evolutionary crisis. The entire human species is veering over towards another state. And Mother and Sri Aurobindo are the pioneers of this new stage in evolution.

Lui: But in this world visibly governed by violence, desire for power or money, isn't it an illusion to think we are living through a transitional stage that is leading man to a higher level?

Satprem: No, precisely. We are starting to doubt ourselves. The walls are beginning to crack. Everyone is feeling that our usual solutions are no longer effective. We are realizing just how broke we are. What we are witnessing is not the end of a civilization, but rather of a cycle in the paleontological or geological sense. There is something going on we don't know about. Millions of men—bombarded, ripped apart by contradictory information—are asking new and painful questions: "What is the meaning of all this?" They feel that the world is not what it should be, that what they have been taught has no relation to reality. They are reaching out, calling for

something. There is a change in perception, in their way of seeing: the hope for a new, more transparent perception of reality, free of all religions, ideologies and systems. The next species—this plenitude of man towards which we are so desperately reaching out and which, in our pain and our fallibility, we so need to become—is already here. It is not for tomorrow; it is here, in our grasp, in our own body, deep within this cellular consciousness, which is the species' next step. Mother and Sri Aurobindo opened this path, and by opening it in their own bodies, they have opened it up in the body of the world. For nothing is separate. When you pierce a hole in this "false matter" in which we live, then everything starts seeping through every other hole as well. Matter as we know it is suffocating us, and the pollution around us is one more sign of it. Indeed, catastrophe and war threaten us, but through the cracks in the walls we can discern new dimensions. . . . Which one day our children will live.

Lui: But what do you feel when you have such an experience, when you enter into real matter? Is the word "matter" really the right one?

Satprem: Matter as we know it is something quite different from what it really is. The most accurate word would be "energy." Or even "consciousness-energy." In India they speak of the "shakti." . . . It's an incredible current! It is the very essence of what we call matter. When Mother began experiencing this cellular consciousness, she said that once you have traversed all the layers of evolution and come to matter as it really is, you perceive waves vibrating "at lightning speed within total immobility." When that happens, "you" and "I" are no longer two different things but one tremendous current. . . .

Lui: By living closely with the animals, did you discover the power that lies behind instinct?

Satprem: We humans talk of "instinct" when we speak of the species other than man. We say that what drives a bird from Siberia to his tropical lagoon is instinct. But it doesn't work like that. In fact, the tropics and Siberia, and the entire map of the world, unfold . . . within the bird. He does not fly above the environment and look at it from on high; rather, it is something that happens inside him. In this same way, each species goes towards its own work and its own goals, each is harmonious in its own way: the human species is not yet so. But as I said before, what Mother and Sri Aurobindo discovered was a tremendous level, this new, cellular consciousness within us, which as yet we hardly know. . . . I think that evolution is the discovery of what man is. Each progress of the species is a step towards the reality of what "is."

Lui: You were the friend, the confidant of the Mother. Who was she?

Satprem: Mother came to India in 1914. She had a rather strange background. Her father was Turkish, her mother Egyptian, and they both lived at the court of the Khedive in Egypt. But one day, her mother refused to bow down before the Khedive, and she and her husband had to leave Egypt. So Mother was born in Paris in 1878, on the Boulevard Haussmann. She knew Renoir, Manet, Sisley, and Rodin quite well. . . . She lived in Paris when Fauvism and cubism were born. What stories she told us! She was a wonderful storyteller! As an adolescent, she had rather bizarre experiences; she would feel herself going out of her body, spreading wide in space, but she did not understand what was going on within her. She was 20 when Einstein formulated his theories on the equivalence of matter and energy, and on relativity. Mother was like a cyclone and, basically, very Occidental: an extraordinary force in action. . . .

Mother lived an experience that had nothing to do with intellect, sects, "spirituality" . . . She lived it right to the end, until her ninety-fifth year. She never stopped. Three days before her death, and right to her last breath, she said, "Help me to walk. I want to walk . . ." Mother told us that Sri Aurobindo had come to accomplish a work that concerns the entire terrestrial evolution. . . . With her I understood that I had to set out towards the "future of man."

Lui: But how does this experiment express itself practically?

Satprem: First of all, let's keep it simple: we must try to bring more consciousness, more transparency, into each movement of our lives. At each second I am preoccupied with being as fully "open" as possible, with more fully perceiving the surface falsehood and illusion. If that second is lived fully, all the rest automatically follows from it. Then things appear with a kind of self-evidence. And even suffering loses its reality. I don't even know what sickness means any longer. What interests me is this pulsation or this respiration beating within me when I walk, when I live, when I contemplate nature . . . or when I go in an elevator: a kind of immediate density, a sensation of harmony. The touchstone is the present second: how it is lived, the way one "is" in that second, seeking a new depth. I do not hide behind "explanatory systems." for those who have made this experiment, it is very simple. . . . And they come to realize that their bodies know more about it than they do.

One day, for example, I was walking along the eroded canyons near Auroville, I was attacked by three ruffians who, as

I later learned, had been paid to kill me. But strangely enough, when they came upon me, I had absolutely no reaction, neither of fear nor even reflection. I was in a kind of blank state. Only, when I raised my eyes and looked at the leader of these men, his arm fell back down and everything stopped. And calmly, I walked away, as if nothing had happened. And suddenly I understood that for the body, our physical body, actually "nothing" had happened.

Lui: How do you see India today? As a propitious ground for inner experiences? . . .

Satprem: There is an inner India that touches you deeply, and a kind of air that you can't find anywhere else. Of course, modern India absorbs many Western ideas as a result of its technical and industrial development. And yet—how can I explain this?—you can breathe there; there is a "soul" of India, something you can feel very physically. In most cases, the people are so simple, with such a depth of calm to them. What is striking is that even when they are "materially poor," they are seldom miserable, whereas in the West, even when they are "materially rich," their lives so often remain rather miserable.

Lui: Is the teaching of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother along the lines of those ancient Hindu sacred texts, the Vedas?

Satprem: Indeed, the Vedas are the great common line, centered upon the truth of Matter. Later, this line was completely lost, and it was taught that the world is an illusion (which in a sense is true) and that one had only to get out by soaring to the "spiritual" heights. But the priests, the Vedic rishis, knew that it was not the upward path or the path of ascension that had to be trod, but the path of descent . . . one had to go to the very heart of matter-energy, the place of the supramental vibrations. This secret has been totally lost, it has become unintelligible for those who read the Vedas today. But Sri Aurobindo said, "This is what I have lived, what I have discovered." And for everyone. For, once again, what is a "superman" all alone in his room? To us right here, what good are a few "liberated" yogis in the Himalayas? . . .

Lui: Satprem, do you believe in reincarnation yourself?

Satprem: What can we possibly understand of existence if we do not realize that this "moment" we call our life is the fruit of many other efforts, which explains, for example, why today we are more developed in one area than another, or why we experience certain difficulties that seem to push us towards some fated mistake? We have many lives behind us, it's obvious. . . .

In a sense, reincarnation is an evolutionary strategy that brings the species to a certain threshold from which it can advance to a higher dimension. From this point of view, it can be said that there is no need to construct the "superman"; we must let it develop by itself. . . .

Lui: But isn't Buddhism too a certain experience in matter? Can't Nirvana be considered as a "hole" in matter?

Satprem: At the time of the Buddha—500 years before Christ—mankind was not ready for what Sri Aurobindo and Mother have discovered, that the real work must be done in matter.

In Buddhism, the mind goes up into the higher regions of the fishbowl and enters a sort of vagueness in which everything evaporates, disappears. Perceiving nothing any longer, the mind experiences a kind of luminous swooning with a feeling of infinity, and it feels liberated, very much at ease. But you could as easily say that under the effect of an anesthetic on the operating table, you are liberated—for you no longer feel the pain, the suffering. And it's true. But in another sense it is an illusion, for the body wakes up and the patient comes back to the world of suffering, misery and sickness. When consciousness is thus "liberated," what does that change in the body, in matter, in evolution? Nothing at all. Why in the world have we taken a body if it is only to find a way out of it? Evolution has no mystical sense; there is nothing more material. . . .

Lui: In the West, we sometimes criticize certain Indian ashrams, as well as the rather mercantilistic reality of that experimental city, Auroville. . . .

Satprem: Mother and Sri Aurobindo have nothing at all to do with the composition of ashrams or of Auroville. You cannot prevent people (often of good will) from coming somewhere and forming groups. Including, sometimes, people too much in a hurry, too self-interested, or too zealous. . . . The Vatican, Mecca have known pilgrims and dealers in sacred objects of every type! . . . Some self-interested groups have tried to grab hold of Auroville to make a big business out of it. But that's only an appearance. The essential thing is that meaningful experiments are going on there. . . .

Lui: In one of your books you have mentioned "the death of death." What do you mean by that?

Satprem: Death is the key, the greatest obstacle and at the same time the greatest possibility. Mother crossed through all the layers of negation, the pettiness, the refusal, the doubts, all those "no's" that are piled up in us as so many "little deaths" that one day will make our "big death"! Mother said, "Man carries in him the key to open the doors and windows, but he

doesn't want to use it. He is afraid of losing his identity. . . . He wants to remain what he calls 'himself.' He loves his falsehood and his slavery. He feels that without his limits, and the suffering they represent, he would not exist. That is why the journey is so long and so difficult."

When one has crossed these final mortal layers, one opens out upon a cellular consciousness where death no longer exists. At this level, consciousness has transcended death. This does not mean that we will remain eternally in the same skin, for this consciousness has a transforming power that will change matter itself. . . .

Mother said, "Death is not the opposite of life." To be precise, there is no death. Rather, there is a certain phenomenon of life that must take a new direction in order to be able to live always, keep growing always. . . . What is really doesn't die at any level, not even that of the body.

Lui: And yet, Mother died. . . .

Satprem: It is true, she left, and the doctors declared her dead. But she had told me, "I see better with eyes closed than with eyes open. They will think I am dead because I will no longer be able to move or speak, but you who know, you will tell them." Indeed, what was it she did if not to prepare in the cells of her body the thousand eyes of our little cells which one day will undoubtedly awaken everywhere without our knowing how? For she directly perceived the supramental in her body. She realized that the physical world—and the physical body—as we know them—is a tremendous falsehood programmed by a limited mind which has conditioned our relationship with the world. Mother died in 1973, twenty-three years after Sri Aurobindo. They put her in a rosewood box beside him. All I know is that the cells of Mother's body are living because she fully experienced this consciousness that is free from death. . . .

Lui: In this world full of peril, is your message a message of hope?

Satprem: As long as we do not feel the walls, it's hopeless; as long as our civilizations think that we are going to perform miracles, it's hopeless. But now that the whole world is up against a wall, yes, it is full of hope—it's a sign that we are going to break it down. Then the supramental vibration will grow in our consciousness and in matter. "So incredibly rapid, yet motionless, warm as though made of love," said Sri Aurobindo. It is pouring forth from every pore of the earth's great body. It is what we are living through at this moment. . . .

What is there to say to a caterpillar? It must become the butterfly.

THE GREAT HOLOCAUST—

CHHINNAMASTA

Nolini Kanta Gupta

[We thought readers would find the following piece, a report of a private talk with Nolini, of interest in view of the upheavals, both physical and social, which have occurred in the last year particularly. Nolini is the most senior of Sri Aurobindo's living disciples and lives in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.]

Throughout the ages whenever there has been a new creation on earth, or manifestation of a new consciousness in earthly atmosphere, it was always preceded by a stage of destruction and dissolution of the old. The dance of Shiva has its two aspects—the bliss of creation and also the joy of destruction—... both have been equally necessary up till now—complementary to each other.

Destruction means destruction of the unnecessary, unfit, all that refuses to accept the new advent, obstructs it, tries to deny it—all that is out of harmony with the inevitable new future. Earthly evolution is a march of progression—if you fail to keep up with that speed you have to move out of the way, rather you are removed to make room for the next coming stage.

If you are in the older creation or at least are in love with it, attached to it, the destruction becomes painful, even fearful and repulsive to you. But if you aspire for the new, are willing to participate in the dawning future, already belong to it, you feel the necessity of this destruction and welcome it to hasten the work and even rejoice in it. You enjoy the joy of destruction—at least Shiva does, the Divine Force does, it seems.

Something like that, in fact the same thing, is happening now. Mahakali has started her work of preparation, of elimination—of destruction and dissolution—to clear the path of Mahalaksmi and Mahasaraswati—the infinite love and compassion of Maheshwari sanctions and supports it. The new creation, the new world that Mother built and is still building with so much love and care is ready—ready to manifest, to reveal itself in the material field, waiting for materialising on earth, but earth is not yet ready, rather man is not yet ready, he still refuses it, clings to its old dead world—and clings fast to it—he loves this game of falsehood and crookedness. Perhaps truth is too bright, too compelling for his egoistic nature and obscure makeup so he denies, obstructs as much as he can the new consciousness, the new reality. Mother out of her infinite love tried to take this denial on her own self, tried to convince and change as many elements as was possible—then, when nothing more could be done She withdrew,

leaving the field to her other aspect to do what was unavoidable—the breaking up of the old, rigid world. It is a necessity for the ultimate good of earth and even man.

The work has started—call it the dance of Shiva, the Tandava, or the dance of Kali the fierce Mother—it has started and is proceeding faster and faster on its way. Destruction, dissolution, decomposition—yes, that is the first result and we are already witnessing and participating in it, whether we like it or not. It is the Supreme Lord's decree—it is bound to happen. Those who cling to Truth survive, those who make alliance with Falsehood perish—man has no other way than to make a choice, consciously or unconsciously.

It is an inevitable stage, there is nothing to lament or grieve if you are an aspirant of Truth.

The next stage naturally will be the clearance of the debris—a thorough cleaning—elimination of all that was against the truth, the ruin of the dead world, the field will be cleared of all that is filthy and obscure. For then only the new reality will be able to come forward, Mother's mission fulfilled.

The new creation is already there, forming itself, whatever is happening now in the Ashram and outside is happening so that it may come forward all the sooner. She is breaking the outer scaffolding within which the new reality has been established, or you may call it a dead shell that is being broken so that the new Reality may come out. It is Mother's action with her own Self. She has taken her *Chhinnamasta* form. All things She is destroying are her own selves—she is getting rid, as it were, of the old unutilisable limbs of her own body. We may remember Sri Aurobindo's lines: "The hour is often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest, a treading of the winepress of the wrath of God; but he who can stand up in it on the truth of his purpose is he who shall stand; even though he fall, he shall rise again; even though he seems to pass on the wings of the wind, he shall return. Nor let worldly prudence whisper too closely in thy ear; for it is the hour of the unexpected" [*The Hour of God*]. [From Gupta, *Sweet Mother*, 4th series (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 19780.)]

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Dick Batstone

[We are beginning to publish extracts from an unpublished diary kept by a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother during a visit to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1959-60, as we felt readers would find his experience of being "between two worlds" of interest. The author, Dick Batstone, who is now on a long visit to the Ashram with his wife, is a Londoner who has spent most of his working life as a bookseller, apart from 4 years as a teacher. He has been associated with the Sri Aurobindo center in London for many years and visited Auroville briefly in 1974. He first heard of Sri Aurobindo from an old Quaker who came into the bookshop where he was working and spoke to him of the "Plato of modern times." He then read *Sri Aurobindo or Founding the Life Divine* by Morwenna Donnelly, and Divakar's life of Sri Aurobindo. Next he wrote to "Madame Richard" and asked if he could come and study at the "Free International University" in Pondicherry, which he felt was just what he was looking for. The Mother told her secretary Nolini to say, "No—the university is not functioning yet," but gave the address of Dr. Arambinda Basu in Durham (but who now lives and teaches in the Ashram), with whom to correspond. He visited Basu and had a powerful experience in his house, which led him to want to go to Pondicherry for a new reason. He finally found himself there and kept a "diary," of sorts, composed of traditional diary entries, copies of letters written to friends back in England, and poems.]

20 February 1959: Today they woke me at about 5:30 so I could go to Balcony Darshan at 6:15. Berham [an Ashramite in charge of the guesthouse where the author was staying] explained that they had let me sleep late the day before, after traveling, but that most people, Ashramites and visitors, went every morning "to Balcony," as now, since her retirement into seclusion, it was the only opportunity they had of seeing the Mother.

I set off as it was getting light, walking through straight, empty streets to the Ashram. The roads in Pondicherry all seem to be straight and at right angles to each other, as in a Roman town. I had been told to go past the Ashram [main compound] buildings to the street beyond, where I would see a crowd of people waiting. Following a hurrying Indian, who I guessed was also going there, I came to a broad, sandy turning where several hundred people were standing. Men and women of all ages, and some boys and girls, they were looking up intently to a roofed balcony that projected from the first floor of one of the Ashram houses.

I went in among them and stood on the pavement on the opposite side of the road to the balcony, but was too late to be really central. Near me was a young Indian with an almost Grecian face and short

curly hair; his head was thrown back, his eyes closed, and a slight smile on his lips gave his face a radiance which seemed almost ecstatic. Another man, old, with white hair and beard maning him like a lion, gazed with a fierce, penetrating stare at the balcony.

After a few minutes there was a movement up there, and the Mother had come forward and put both hands on the balcony rail, and was looking down at us. Slowly she seemed to read the sea of faces below her, her head and eyes turning, with a pause here and there, to encompass the whole street. Then, unsmiling, she looked ahead of her and her gaze seemed to rise above the houses opposite to some station in the sky, and her body to stiffen slightly. In some curious way her face began to change until it seemed to become set like a mask, or figurehead, or again, like the Sphinx, its eyes lifted and set upon some distant horizon beyond human sight.

There seemed to descend a palpable silence; one sensed an invocation of spiritual power and a presence of grace. And from the street came an offering, a laying open of the individual's being to the invisible light that would purify and transform, an aspiration to surrender all to the Divine, a dedication of the effort that would ensue during the coming day.

And then, after what must have been about 10 minutes of clock time, there was a lessening, a release of pressure, and, looking up, one saw the Mother's eyes moving back to earth, and her face softening into gentler lines. She looked down at the people below the balcony, at the upturned heads and the hands raised in pranam, and she smiled, and it was a melting, intensely human smile of love, so that her whole face was alive and suffused with it. Slowly she seemed to inch back, still smiling and radiant, until she was in the doorway of the room, and then she had stepped back into it and had gone.

People began to disperse from both sides of the street until only a few groups were left, talking, and a few individuals still looking up to the balcony, or standing motionless where they had been, with closed eyes.

The sun had by now fully risen, and a new day had begun.

21 February 1960: Yesterday, after morning Darshan, as I was leaving the Balcony street, I was spoken to by a tall, active-looking Englishman in grey flannels, aged about 45, I should guess. After asking where I was from and how long I intended staying, he suggested I come along to his apartment after breakfast for a talk. He pointed out where he lived, and later in the morning I went to see him.

We sat together in a large, lofty room on the first floor which overlooked the sea. He introduced himself as N.D., and explained how he and his wife L. and their 18-year-old son had been living at the Ashram since the end of the war. Their daughter had also been with them until recently, but had decided she wanted to return to England, where she was now training as a nurse. N. asked me why I had come and, after I told him, described how he himself had arrived here.

It seems he was in the R.A.F. during the war and had been stationed in Cuttack, higher up the coast on the Bay of Bengal, where he flew coastal patrols and sorties against the Japanese as far east as Rangoon. One time when he and some fellow R.A.F. men were on leave in Madras, they saw a notice in a paper advertising a hotel in Pondicherry which boasted French cuisine. They went there, and very good it was. At that phase of his life he had become interested in the writings of Vivekananda, and one day he went to the town library in search of a book by him. This library, however, seemed only to have got abreast of the latest novel by Voltaire, and he was going away disappointed, when one of the staff suggested he try the Ashram library, which, he said, was a good one, and the only place where he thought the book might be found in Pondi.

At that time N. did not even know what an Ashram was, but he went along, and was lent the book and allowed to read it on the spot, though not to take it away. So he went for several days and read, and talked a little with the people he met there. And then one day one of the library attendants gave him *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo, saying that if Vivekananda appealed to him, so would this.

N. said he would never forget the effect this first contact with Sri Aurobindo had on him. He had been shown into a small, bare room with a chair and a table in it and had sat down to read, and it was as if this book had been the goal to which all his past reading and thinking had been leading him. He cannot recollect what he read, perhaps only a few pages, but here was the voice and spirit of one whom he had in some way known all his life. He had lost track of time and sat there knowing a great stillness and peace and felt that he had found what he had been looking for.

As he came day after day to read, his curiosity about Sri Aurobindo grew. Could he see him? He was told that Sri Aurobindo never left his room and could only be seen a few times a year on Darshan days, and even then did not speak. He could, however, if he liked, meet the Mother, the French lady who was Sri Aurobindo's "companion in yoga," and who

looked after the practical day-to-day running of the community. It was arranged that he should meet her. At the agreed time he had come, having in his mind some picture of the Mother as the epitome of all the saintly women he had read about since childhood—some demure figure in black, perhaps, with a white headdress, like a mother superior. He had a shock. This person he met was bedecked like some Eastern queen, in silk robes, with a crown of pure gold on her head, set with a flaming ruby. She wore golden anklets and rings flashing with jewels. Moreover, she was wearing heavy makeup. He was so disappointed that he said none of the things he had intended to, but had tried to chat in French, which was a piece of conceit since she could speak perfect English and he had not used French conversationally for over 20 years. And the time had passed with commonplaces, the Mother asking politely about his earlier life and he telling her of the war, and so on.

When he got back to his hotel, he flung himself on his bed deeply unhappy and in disgust with the whole business, and then he happened to pick up a book he had recently bought, a record of conversations with the Mother, and read, "The whole mental world in which you live is limited. . . . Do not judge the Divine by outward appearances nor by the preconceived ideas of your limited intelligence." This so opened his eyes that he lay and wept, full of anguish.

The next day he got up early and went to the bazaar and bought a bunch of the most expensive roses and took them to the Ashram and asked to see Mother. She met him and, before he could speak, said with the greatest compassion, "I know. It is all right."

And he told me he knew then that his being had come back to its home.

Meditation

Marching is over and the Gym has
emptied,
The lights go out, all but the moon
and stars.
Music begins, persistent melody
Searching and yearning, threaded focus
of sound,
While on the sand hundreds sit,
White-draped, anonymous at this hour,
Silent—silent as the sand.
The overture ceases.
Now only the susurrus
Of waves on the distant beach,
The high flash of the lighthouse lamp
And the night wind touching our faces.



View of the Matrimandir.

MOTHER ON AUROVILLE

20 February 1971:

Admission to Auroville is subject to approval by the Mother.

There will be a trial period of one year. This period can be longer or shorter.

People living in Auroville should not provide hospitality there to others who have not been accepted to live there.

Those who have been accepted should lead an Aurovilian life the main principles of which have been clearly indicated by the Mother.

Everyone should work at least five hours every day including Sundays. Working for oneself is not working for the community. Each member of the community should have an activity that corresponds to the needs of Auroville.

Drugs are forbidden in Auroville.

When Auroville is a city there will be several kitchens providing different types of food. But even now individuals should

not cook for themselves. It is better to organise kitchens for groups.

Those who live in Auroville should aspire for the new life.

* * * * *

12 March 1972:

About the fire at the Aspiration Workshop [in 1972], the Mother said that her protection was not effective because the atmosphere there was very bad. There was no harmony, sincerity, faith, or trust in the Divine; everyone was working for his own satisfaction and not with an aspiration for the Divine.

The blow is hard but it is a lesson that must be put to us. They must start again, start again with the true attitude of working for the transformation. [*The Mother on Auroville* (Auroville: Auropublications, 1977), pp. 84-85, 87]

PROGRESS

Center Area

Matrimandir Construction. Work has continued steadily with the casting of the reinforced cement beams for the "space frame" of the skin. The beams are being fixed to the structure in a series of 17 ascending rings and preparations are nearly complete for cementing the third quarter of the lowest ring. Simultaneously, construction is well underway of the large crane that will lift the beams for the upper rings. The crane has been designed and built almost completely in the Matrimandir workshop and *Toujours Mieux* in Aspiration. When complete, it will first be tested on the ground, then taken apart and (at this point in the story hopeful looks appear on everyone's face) hoisted piece by piece to the top of the sphere, where it will be reassembled.

For alternate-energy enthusiasts: A study has been made by Pal of the incoming solar energy falling on the Matrimandir, which, being almost a sphere, has a fairly steady energy input during sunshine hours of an average of 36 kwh. assuming the skin is covered with 2-inch diameter solar cells that have 12% efficiency. When the study was shown to workers at Matrimandir, the general response was that work in this area should be continued in connection with alternative-energy research already underway in Auroville as it is too premature to see how it would affect the design of the skin. One instrument that would be very helpful in this and other solar-energy research is a pyranometer with a digital integrator. Any contributions toward this would be most helpful.

Activity at the construction site, the workshops, and the office has been temporarily suspended since January 18 [1980], when the area was closed by local authorities. This came after a period of building tension between the Sri Aurobindo Society and Auroville due to continued threats by the SAS (in defiance of advice from law-enforcement officials) to occupy the Matrimandir and install their own paid workers. The area was ordered closed to avert any possible confrontation.

Matrimandir Office. Remodeling of the office and adjoining room has been completed; the stained woodwork, new windows, and varnished bamboo create a warm and inviting atmosphere for the first time. The second room contains a model of one design idea for the gardens and provides space for Pour Tous and Matrimandir meetings.

Matrimandir Gardens and Nursery. This has been a busy few months as winter is the time in the tropics for most planting and propagation, in addition to being the only time of the year we *velakarais* can work all day in the sun. About 35 new trees were added to the gardens, mostly along the road leading to the Matrimandir area. Many of these seedlings have their origin in South America or Australia, and all were raised in the Nursery from seed that came to Auroville through the Matrimandir Gardens seed-exchange program. Water supply for this and some additional outlying areas is now more efficiently supplied thanks to nearly 400 meters of new underground pipeline, reducing the need for long stretches of plastic hose and awkward transportation by wheelbarrow.

Work around the Banyan Tree was begun again by Francois to prepare for plantation of a lawn, but has since been halted due to lack of funds. Much compost is needed and it is felt that the work should proceed only when the best conditions can be provided.

Matters pertaining to the development of the gardens as well as of the construction work are regularly discussed at the weekly Matrimandir meetings. Some of the pressing, and as yet unresolved, problems of the past few months concern land use and the villagers. At the end of the harvest season the villagers traditionally spread their grains to dry on special plots of sun-baked earth. Several of these plots have come into the gardens area as a result of land purchase or exchange of perambok (government) land and have been "reclaimed," conversationally speaking, by Auroville, making them unsuitable for drying the grain. Alternatively, the villagers have begun using the smooth, sunny brick rim of the amphitheater for this purpose, bringing their bullocks and bullock carts, cows and often whole families to camp there until the grains are dry—a situation regarded as being anywhere from undesirable to intolerable by Aurovilians living and working in the area. It is hoped that as perambok land is involved, the local governmental departments will collaborate in finding a solution before the next harvest season.

In the Nursery special effort has gone into improving three particular plant groups: Plumerias, hibiscus, and orchids. Many of the Plumeria ("psychological perfection") cuttings brought back 2½ years ago from Hawaii and Singapore have been

planted out and are beginning to flower and new cuttings were received from Waima Arboretum in Hawaii, bringing the collection to around 75 different varieties. A number of new hibiscus plants and cuttings were obtained from the Lal Bagh Botanical Gardens in Bangalore when Narad and Bill Imig made a trip there last month. With these plants—which represent some of the original and best hybridization work done in India—and other special hybrids given to Auroville by the American Hibiscus Society, a good basis is formed for Bill's beginning experiments in hybridizing. He has also continued to improve cultural methods; one successful experiment has been mulching with shredded coconut fiber, a material that is cheap, easily available, moisture retentive, and has a soft, neat appearance.

The orchid population has exploded recently thanks to generous gifts totalling about 2,500 plants, including around 100 completely new species or hybrids. Aurovilians on trips to Germany brought back several special varieties, a contribution made possible by a careful selection from a grower in Thailand, and a trip by Narad and Mary Helen to Sri Lanka brought many beautiful and valuable additions as well as contacts with breeders, new tips on culture and information on how to set up a simple laboratory for seed propagation. Any future hybridization will be greatly



Bunding work done by the children of Aspiration on the sportsground. Photo by AuroImage.

enriched by an impressive 5-volume set of books just received from Matagiri in the U.S., containing the names and parentage of all the registered orchids in the world (there are about 30,000 naturally occurring species and about 100,000 man-made hybrids!).

Miscellaneous news includes bunding, contouring, and planting of windbreaks and several species of Cassia and Plumeria in the new fields; the new pump and well are functioning at last and the first section of pipeline has been installed; a new lamb adds another mouth to the family of wooly lawnmowers; a gratefully received donation enabled the purchase of much-needed tires for both bullock cars; John Harper has just completed a new solar heater donated by a regular visitor to Auroville, Rutledge Tompkins [who died 27 October; see elsewhere in this issue for a report]; and preparations are underway for the second flower show to be held this year on Auroville's twelfth birthday, February 28 and 29.

Unity Office. The story for the Resources half (or three-quarters) of Unity Office is mainly one of extension and refinement of the activities described in the first issue of *Progress*. There has been continued improvement of the physical appearance and condition of the office; new shelving units have been installed, also a new set of windows, curtains, and a new filing cabinet. The library continues to grow, especially in the area of appropriate technology information, the filing system has been improved, helpful contacts with individuals, groups and organizations have been extended and publications such as the *Auroville Notes*, *Amaidhi* (the Tamil counterpart to the *Notes*, prepared by Meenakshi), and *Progress* continue to be printed on the duplicating machine there. Recently an article was collectively prepared on afforestation and conservation in Auroville for the coming spring issue of an American magazine, *Co-Evolution Quarterly*.

In the other one-quarter of Unity Office one finds Joel surrounded by the paraphernalia of the Land Service trade diligently preparing proposals for aid in Auroville's dreams for large-scale land improvement and development. One proposal has been submitted to the Tamil Nadu Forest Dept. for a 3-year scheme for soil and water conservation on perambok land. Creation of water-retention areas such as Aurodam and extensive roadside tree plantings are examples of what can be accomplished through this scheme. A second proposal (coordinated with the one mentioned above) called "Land Reclamation and Community Development in Auroville 1980-82" has been submitted to

Janagri (formerly known as the German FAO or Tamil Fund). This is a one-year proposal covering new afforestation projects, maintenance for existing afforestation areas, soil and water conservation structures and bunding, Ayurvedic and homeopathic dispensaries, educational facilities, agriculture and aquaculture. Recently a successful proposal has resulted in the partial funding of the Greenways Program (avenue and cycle-path plantation). Last year approximately 2 kilometers was initially planted and the remainder of the funds will be allocated shortly.

Others involved in Land Service have been continuing the preparation of base maps and an overall map showing plot boundaries and existing developments. Topographical maps are also being prepared and land-related information is being collected and collated from all communities. [This article was written in February 1979; since then Resources and Land Service have moved to Eco House at Certitude together with the administrative office.]

Services

Pour Tous. Food distribution continues to flow smoothly through Pour Tous, the baskets seem heavier and occasionally contain pleasant surprises such as apples, celery or peanut butter. Freshly prepared mustard and a small jar of delicious mango chutney from Forecomers were also special treats that appeared recently. The fuller baskets represent a general upswing in contributions to the food envelope, but unfortunately are not indicative of an all-round increase in the budget. The van is still not running due to lack of about 300 rupees needed for minimum repairs and a regular amount for maintenance and periodic running expenses. Services such as the electricity and mechanical workshops are also struggling to make ends meet. New projects are not a problem as expenses are covered by project funding, but work done on older, long-standing development and on comprehensive projects such as the upgrading of all electrical connections throughout Auroville are dependent directly on the envelopes.

The Bakery has passed into a new phase with 7 or 8 Aurovilians now participating on a rotating basis. There have been some improvements in organization, both in the bakery itself and in the distribution system. Experimentation is continuing to refine the sourdough bread and also to explore combinations using several new grains grown in Auroville. These grains, which are similar to millet, are being stone-ground in Aspiration and brought fresh to the bakery the following day. Other products, such as

granola, biscuits (cookies), jam, peanut butter and pies for special occasions continue to be made, but tofu was absent for several months due to a soybean shortage. Tofu making has now moved to Revelation and was awaited with growing curiosity as notes kept going around saying that they needed 3 bags of cement in order to begin. Supply resumed again and it is as delicious as before. . . .

Food Cooperative. Those involved in food growing had a half-year anniversary meeting to evaluate results so far. The original agreement was that each community participating should show a minimum 50% return (relative to investment) for the first year and a 10% increase each succeeding year. (It should be remembered that organic methods, by their nature, are slower to build up production than if chemical fertilizers are used.) The average, however, for the first 6 months is a promising 69%. Each community was evaluated separately to see the relationship of productivity to soil conditions, cultural methods and facilities such as water supply and equipment. Estimates will be prepared where improvement is needed and collective proposals will be framed for the generation of necessary funds.

The Cooperative. Another service that is important to mention is the Cooperative. Unlike the Food Coop and Milk Coop, which are made up of people involved in a specific area of work, *the Coop* is a 12-member group primarily (but not strictly) comprised of people chosen to represent other groups and activities. Matters are brought to the Coop either through one of the members or directly to the weekly meetings. Specifically the function of the whole group is to provide a link between the community as a whole and outside individuals or organizations such as visa officials, etc. In addition, internal matters are referred to the Coop in situations where additional information or outside help is needed, or when it is felt that a problem can be more effectively brought into focus by preliminary discussion in a small group representing a variety of points of view. But in a broader sense the Coop is an experimental movement towards the evolution of a nongovernmental but effective social organization—a sort of collective administration. It is not a decision-making body except in instances when it is asked by the community to do so and the results of discussions in the meetings are constantly shared with the community through the *Auroville Notes*, the weekly Pour Tous meetings, and personal contact with Coop members.

Multipurpose Health Center. The health center has moved from the weather station into a more convenient room at Certitude

and is in regular use. Dr. Kamala Tewari is available in the clinic on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Biochemic, Ayurvedic, homeopathic, and allopathic medicines are available, also the Bach flower remedies. Anyone interested and willing to offer their knowledge and experience in any aspect of medicine and health care is invited to participate.

Children

Center Playground-School. There is a smaller but very happy group of children (about 17) now attending the Center Playground. Ulla, who has come from Germany, has regular math and English grammar sessions each morning upstairs for the 8- to 9-year-old group, while younger children have games, painting, etc., downstairs. Shraddhavan and Gordon are no longer there, but several new people have joined; there are now about 6 adults participating in a regular schedule with several others part time for body movement, geography-history-life science (according to the interest of the children), gardening, swimming lessons in Kottakarai and nature and plant exploration in the Matri-mandir Nursery. Seedlings of annual flowers in pots, collages and paintings of plants and flowers and other creations are being prepared for the "children's section" in the flower show being held in the Nursery.

Ami. There are now 7 girls staying permanently in Ami—Nellie has just left for a visit in England and a new girl named (appropriately) Amy, has joined. Nikko is still there and Martin will return when she has finished house-sitting for Angad in Kottakarai. Kiran and Meike come several times a week to help with gymnastics. In addition, the girls go out to other communities for activities that especially interest them. One of these is a study of history through art—architecture, gardens, styles of clothing, etc., as well as painting and sculpture—at Gratitude. In their present study of Japan they are sewing kimonos and experimenting with Ikebana and bonsai.

Wildlife at Gratitude [by Nellie, age 13]. During the Christmas holidays a pair of young peafowl became new residents in Gratitude. Named Kameshwara and Kameshwari, they have adjusted well and are outside during the day.

Towards the end of the monsoon, work was begun on excavating a lake, the topsoil being banked up alongside the garden area. A pair of kingfishers (*Halcyon smyrnensis fusca*) have taken advantage of this and consciously chosen the exposed bank as their new home, where visitors, students and friends can "participate" by watching the excavation—and hopefully the rearing of their young. Best viewing time is before 9:00 a.m.

A pair of Tickell blue flycatchers (*Muscicapa tickelliae tickelliae*), never before seen in this area, have been regular bathers at the pond for the last month. Also the golden orioles (*Oriolus oriolus kundoo sykes*) have returned to Auroville on schedule for their nesting season and will remain with us until their fledglings are strong enough to join in the migration north, which usually begins around midsummer.

The latest generation of baby monitor lizards have successfully reached approximately 3 feet in length. One of them lives in the hollow of a tree a few feet from Dietra's house; however, the mother monitor has not been seen for several months.

Ending on a note of beauty, some 50 hybrid tearose bushes have been planted amidst Gardenias, hibiscus, dwarf lemons and ample "Protection" (*Bougainvillea*).

Be to the world as the lion in fearlessness and lordship, as the camel in patience and service, as the cow in quiet, forbearing and maternal beneficence. Raven on all the joys of God as a lion over its prey, but bring also all humanity into that infinite field of luxurious ecstasy to wallow there and to pasture.

—Sri Aurobindo



During Meenakshi's leadership seminar at Fraternity, Auroville. Photo by AuroImage.

NEWS OF AUROVILLE

Indian Government Assumes Management of Auroville

• After an examination of the books of the Sri Aurobindo Society in Pondicherry by the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Union Cabinet of Indira Gandhi issued on November 10, 1980, The Auroville (Emergency Provisions) Ordinance "to provide for the taking over, in the public interest, of the management of Auroville for a limited period." Education Minister S.B. Chavan visited Auroville to acquaint himself with the state of affairs. Mr. L.P. Nigam, a retired High Court judge, was appointed administrator of Auroville.

The government Ordinance was a temporary measure to initiate immediate protection for Auroville until action could be taken by Parliament. Parliament was presented with a bill explicitly stating the terms of the government's role. After heated debate in both houses of Parliament, the Bill was passed into law in mid-December. The Bill effectively separates the S.A.S. from Auroville for a period of two years. After the two-year period, the matter will be reexamined and, if necessary, the government's management and powers can be extended for up to three more years.

Under the Bill, the Administrator, as representative of the Central Government, is entitled to the possession and management of all of the property of Auroville hitherto held by the Sri Aurobindo Society, and all powers of the Society over Auroville are vested in him. The Society, under the Bill, is completely divested of any power of action regarding Auroville.

In a move to counter the bill, the S.A.S. filed a case with the Supreme Court claiming that it is a religious institution, and hence any interference by the government is unconstitutional. The Supreme Court will meet in mid-January to decide the issue.

Auroville has long been struggling to free itself from the oppressive control of the S.A.S., an organization originally established to raise funds for the Mother and entrusted initially with funding Auroville and purchase of the land. After the Mother left her body in 1973 the S.A.S. began to assert more and more control over Auroville affairs, to claim ownership of Auroville in violation of Auroville's charter, and eventually it withdrew general financial support and visa guarantees for Aurovilians who opposed their arbitrary rule. Aurovilians had long been petitioning the Indian government, which has given substantial sums for the construction of Auroville, to intervene on Auroville's behalf. The matter of visas was eventually taken up directly

with the government rather than through the S.A.S., but other problems, including frozen bank accounts and harassment of Aurovilians by the S.A.S., had remained unresolved.

• **Eco-House:** After much waiting and various hassles, Eco-House is now functioning, centralising the work formerly done in separate locations by the Land Service and more. The present team is Dorothee, Joel, Kavé, Arjun, and Yusuf (as soon as he is free). Kavé is making a new large colour land-utilisation map. Joel is continuing to work out minimal guidelines for future development (plantation, roads and more permanent building) taking into account the already existing structure. The construction work of Christo and Pierre will also be coordinated through the office, starting with Arjun keeping accounts for them. Arjun is available to help with land ownership problems and dealing with local officials, and Yusuf will be able to help later. The first attempts at a team product are the following guidelines:

1. All proposed projects and constructions, whether residential, agricultural or industrial, should be coordinated and recorded through the Development Team of Auroville Land Service, a function of the Auroville Cooperative. This will enable a more conscious and coherent planning process to emerge.

2. Newcomers/new projects are asked to contribute a percentage of their construction costs to the Auroville community through the Envelope System in an "infrastructure maintenance and development" envelope. This will serve to cover the maintenance systems which the community provides to the individual, such as roads, pumps, etc. Such contributions can be seen in consultation with the Development Team.

3. As an indication of one's commitment in accord with Auroville's Charter and its spirit of trusteeship rather than ownership, newcomers are asked to sign the following statement:

"I hereby declare that I will not claim any right of ownership over any asset (land, building, equipment) created by me or with my help in Auroville.

"All lands and assets in Auroville are to be held in trust by the whole of Auroville for the sake of attaining and realising the ideals expressed by the Charter of Auroville." [From *Auroville Notes* no. 145.]

• Narad of the **Matrimandir Gardens** reports that he has an opportunity to obtain *Tropica*, a large volume on tropical plants, in India and is inviting friends of Auroville to donate toward its purchase. The amount needed for this helpful book is \$125.00 and donations may be sent to Matagiri, Mt. Tremper, NY 12457.

DEVELOPMENT IN ALTERNATIVE ENERGY IN AUROVILLE

Pierre LeGrand

[The following article was written for *VITA News* by Pierre LeGrand, an Aurovillian who recently spent several months in the United States on the Hexiad project and seeking funding for various Auroville projects.]

Auroville was started in February 1968 as an international city based on the teachings of Sri Aurobindo. It was launched by The Mother, the continuer of Sri Aurobindo's work. . . .

On the inauguration day, representatives of 125 nations gathered and soil from their respective countries was placed at the geographical center of the city, to be a symbol of human unity.

Since that day, Auroville has welcomed seekers from all over the world, eager to give themselves to the embodiment of this deeply ingrained dream of a divine life on a transformed earth.

Twelve years after its inauguration, Auroville is composed of 500 residents (150 children) from 25 nations and is a vigorous community, presenting an incredible richness and diversity of races, colors, social backgrounds, skills, and professional experience.

Throughout its history, Auroville has gone through many phases and is still beset by many "problems." But Aurovilians regard these as not merely problems, but as challenges to be embraced and overcome, opportunities for change, and means for inner and outer growth. For the challenge is simply enormous: how to find a true unity, beyond creeds, cultures, traditional thought patterns, social and racial barriers. How to establish a real and concrete dialogue, between young Westerners and villagers. How to find a truly new way of handling money, of administering, planning, without falling into the traditional traps. How to take advantage of the most modern techniques without forgetting the traditional wisdom. How to reestablish a viable environment on one of the most eroded and overgrazed areas in the world. How to cope with the increasing shortage of cement, oil, power.

Although the challenge is a totality which cannot be cut into easy pieces, we shall deal here with only the last two "aspects":

1. **Restoration of the land:** A number of techniques have been used (bundling of fields, retention dams, afforestation) and now Auroville can claim substantial achievements in this area: millions of trees have been planted, the watertable has risen noticeably, a new microclimate is progressively appearing. Still, a lot remains to be done and that will depend for a large part



Solar water heater in the Auroville community of Djaima. Photo by AuroImage.

on the response of the local population (understanding of the process, help, commitment, willingness to reverse traditional patterns) and on the help and financial assistance from the government, specialized institutions, and committed individuals.

2. Progressive utilization of alternative energy: (a) Windmills. As Aurovilian settlers took care of plots out of reach of the electrical network, they naturally thought of windmills as the most convenient way of pumping water and consequently it was in that direction that Auroville tried its hand first. Aurovilians have now built, installed, and maintained 12 windmills of various designs which pump water for agricultural purposes on a yearly basis. The last of these windmills, called the *Toujours Mieux* windmill (after the name the Mother gave to the Auroville mechanical workshop), features many innovations: lightweight tower, feathering sails, and especially a hydraulic timer which automatically adjusts the pumping

capacity to wind velocity. This windmill, although still a prototype, has aroused considerable interest from many experts and its design will serve as the basis for the construction of a series of 14 windmills to be manufactured in Auroville workshops and installed on different Auroville farms. Eventually the design will be given to anyone willing to propagate it, in India or elsewhere. The construction of this series of 14 windmills has been funded by Tata, one of the largest Indian industrial corporations.

A more recent development in windmill technology has been the design of a hydraulic timer which can be adapted to any classic mechanical windmill. Five of these timers will be installed on classic windmills in Auroville as part of the project mentioned above.

These windmills are "horizontal-axis" machines. One classic Savonius rotor is currently being installed and another Savonius rotor, equipped with a new hy-

draulic timer and transmission, should be in operation by the end of 1980.

Tests are underway to study the possibilities of an alternative windmill.

(b) Biogas. India, with China, is the leading country in biogas technology, at least in terms of the number of plants installed. Most of these plants use cow dung as the main source of gas production and one small plant, using the traditional Indian design, has been constructed in Auroville and has been operating successfully since its installation in 1979.

Another experiment has been the design of a plant using mainly vegetable waste as the source of gas production. Different tests have been conducted to study the optimal figures for green matter, cow dung, water, temperature, gas yields, etc. The next phase of this project will be the construction of a plant to "digest" the waste of 2 acres of banana plantation. The gas will be used for lighting, cooking, and powering a gas engine for irrigation purposes.

(c) Algae culture. Extensive experiments have been conducted in algae culture and algae has been tested as food (for humans and animals) and as fertilizer. The last use seems the most promising and there is a project aimed at producing algae as fertilizer for a 2-acre vegetable garden.

Up to now, these experiments have used *Chlorella* algae, the most sturdy species under South Indian conditions. Experiments will be conducted to see how *Spirulina* can be grown with effluent from the biogas plant mentioned before.

(d) Integrated systems. The experience gained through the construction, testing, and monitoring of these alternative devices has pointed to the advantage of integrating them in a complete system, and a 20-acre farm was started 3 years ago whose specific goal was to study the interrelation and benefits of an integrated system which will group water-pumping windmills, fish ponds, vegetable garden, waste recycling, banana plantation, algae culture, and biogas.

Already 3 prototype windmills have been installed on this farm, algae culture started, one fish pond put in operation, and a small prototype biogas plant have given the necessary data.

The experience gained in the study of this integrated system will eventually lead to a more ambitious project: a solar village, which will house 150 residents in a highly efficient complex where wind, sun, water, and natural cycles will be used to their utmost. In turn, this solar village will provide a model for the future growth of the town.

Because the deepest aim of Auroville is not merely to evolve only a certain kind of technology, but to "grow" in all directions (individually, collectively, inwardly, outwardly, socially, economically, etc.) and because the natural conditions there are naturally "adverse" (endemic poverty, extremely eroded land, extreme climatic conditions, etc.), these technologies grow at a rather slow pace by Western standards. However, because they are part of a more global picture, this slow pace and the fact that Aurovilians have chosen to live in a state of voluntary simplicity close to the village level—and as a lifetime commitment—is a guarantee that these new technologies will have a chance to become eventually deeply rooted in the consciousness of the area.

For if many devices, each more ingenious than the last, have been constantly produced by universities and high-technology institutes, their impact at the village level has been either nil or marred by failures. Many ingenious devices have been "implanted" in villages and failed because of the tremendous gap—cultural, technical, social—between the experts and the villagers.

In this perspective, Auroville, with its bewildering diversity and intermixing of engineers, villagers, plumbers, mechanics, and laymen, is in a unique position to bridge this gap and will more and more be able to act as a demonstration site for experiments of the same kind, in India and elsewhere, thus fulfilling its goal of "endless progress."

THE DREAMER AND THE MATERIALIST

Pierre LeGrand

[The author is an Aurovillian who recently spent several months in the U.S. working for Auroville.]

Eternal opposites, irreconcilable enemies, or mutual helpers toward the elusive goal of a timeless growth?

Sky and earth, spirit and matter, total freedom and bondage thick, laughing harmonies and opaque wars!

A visit yesterday to the redwood park in Santa Cruz, Calif., gave me a key to the "problem," temporary crevice in our hard crusty shell.

Quick, quick, I'll try to weave a net of words to catch the bird, knowing very well that at the end will only remain a souvenir flat and lifeless, but I still believe in the process of trying to recapture that fleeting instant, act of love, desperate, passionate, clumsy, inadequate, but necessary however as a step towards the real love, sure of itself, at the end (or the beginning) of the timeless growth.

O dreamer, thou speakest to us of laughing birds, of inscrutable sky, of playing clouds and calm immensities of a regal ease . . . we struggle here in the dark, we, tiny seed, with our daily lot of fears and hardship, we, so fragile that our life is at stake every instant, from the greed of this coming caterpillar or the hand of that playful child, who might uproot us, just for the fun of it, or out of that grave and great and sublime scientific curiosity . . . and we try to reach the light, so high, and so sparingly left by our big brothers playing in the sky . . .

And yet we know we are a seedling of these giants, we know that one day too we will play in the sky, with the birds and the clouds, we will play with them, O dreamer, our brother, but wait, just wait, there is time for everything under the stars . . .

And today, when the weeds around us—taller, stronger than our tiny stalks (which will be mighty trunks one day)—threaten us with their strangling roots, we know, O dreamer, that their realm is ours too, but today we're sorry, we have no time to indulge in thy poetic converse, but have to keep busy forcing our humble roots in that hard and hostile soil!

And there is no bitterness, now that we have learned patience and humility and confidence, all those part of the Process, love, eternal Love, seed of the timeless growth. . . .

Santa Cruz, 16 July 1980



Harvest at Patrick and Heidi's in the Greenbelt. Photo by AuroImage.

GENERAL AND CENTER NEWS

• **Rutledge B. Tompkins**, a retired rear-admiral and long a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, died last October 27 in Arizona, where he had been living for the last few years. He was a staunch supporter of the Ashram, particularly the Archives and Research Library, and Auroville, and gave generously of his time and resources to both.

• **East-West Cultural Center** (2865 W. 9th St., Los Angeles, CA 90006; tel. (213) 480-8325) has announced that Michael Dave, long a friend of the late Jyotipriya, founder of the center, is now leading a new group, "In Pursuit of the Treasure of the Gita," a course which began in January. The center also has a meditation period Sundays, 2:45 to 3:30 p.m., led by Robert Dane. A Sri Aurobindo Study group meets Thursdays from 8:00 to 9:30 p.m. in the center library. The Spiritual Inquiry Group, led by Fredric Ross, meets in the library, Saturdays from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. For more details or information on other activities, write or call the center.

• An article entitled "Prototype Communities of Tomorrow: Auroville," by Jerome C. Glenn, appeared in the October 1980 issue of *The Futurist*, a magazine published by the World Future Society of Washington, D.C. The article covers most aspects of Auroville's history and development, including its conflict with the Sri Aurobindo society, decision making, finances, health, education, agriculture, relations with villagers, the Matrimandir, etc. The author visited Auroville two years ago in connection with the Hexiad project.

• **Gene Maslow**, who teaches art and consciousness at the New School in New York City, will be guest lecturer at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles beginning in February 1981. He will give two courses, one in art and self discovery and self-expression, and another in "Art and . . .," involving exercises concerning art and meditation, art and intuition, art and spirituality, etc.

• **Dr. G. Venkataswamy**, long a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and Mother and a well-known eye surgeon in India, reports that Sri Aurobindo's relics were installed at the Arvind Eye hospital in Madurai, India, by Udar Pinto on September 22, 1980, at a ceremony inaugurating the hospital's new building.

• **Roberta Greenberg** (7030 SW 9th St., Plantation, FL 33316; tel. (305) 791-6235) can be contacted by people interested in learning more about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the Ashram and Auroville. A library of works by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is available, but there are no meetings or meditations at the present time.

• **Auroville International**, Quebec (4461 Rue St. André, Montreal, Que. H2J 2Z5, Canada; tel. (514) 524-7445) has a new board of directors: Francois Hubert, president; Guy Thouin, vice-president; Marie Lemieux, secretary; Claire Garand, treasurer. Gaston Veronneau is assisting in the transition between the old board of directors and the new one. For information on meetings and participation in helping the association assist Auroville, write or call the association office.

APHELION

Gordon Korstange

Would Shankara ever scrub this bolt,
This rusty contraption of maya,
Forgetting about his serpentine rope
And the fall from brahmin to pariah?

Slippery Ramalingam, it is said,
Escaped the confines of his bier,
Left behind a flame instead,
Cheated that fundamental fear.

Thus one may muse during the day,
Struggling with dust and the sun,
While heat waves dance above red clay
We contemplate the quotidian.

A hot breeze flows across the fields
As day plods on to conclusion,
Our strength of will begins to yield,
We long for her transfusion,

But when we come to cool, quiet hours
In twilight's time of meditation,
Goats move among the flowers!
It is an old lamentation.

Vishvamitra demanded Rama's bow
When demons disturbed his solemn rites,
Who will do battle with our shrieking foe,
The electric asura that shatters our nights?

Come! Come! All you old masters!
Forsake the solace of your skies,
Descend from your precious heavens,
Work among us in any guise.

Is it a worn-out cry, this invocation,
A plea of priests and shamans?
Will it be uttered by us again?
Where are the masters? Where are the
brahmins?

We will not escape these rusty bolts,
Rapacious goats, piercing notes;
We will not yet wear the robes.
The sun streams down through suspended motes.

THE TASK

Gordon Korstange

[The author lived in Auroville for several years and is now living and teaching in Connecticut with his wife, Jean.]

So let these words be work at least
not of muscle and sweat,
but a digging into real stuff,
a hint of the right burden
after long sifting
through dead silence
and black muttering.
It is work! It is work!
Do then without stint,
without thought of use,
praise the giver of such good work.



The Arvind Eye Hospital in Madurai, India, where Sri Aurobindo's relics were recently installed.



Concreting at Matrimandir. Photo by Aurolmage.