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August, that special month with a central concentration — the fifteenth — birthday of both Sri Aurobindo and independent India, and this year Matrimandir's Inner Room. We celebrate with an interview from Nirodbaran, the Record of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and the features of the Inner Room: crystal, columns and symbols.

August, when the heat of summer has begun to melt into rain, rain and the green roadsides dotted with wild, white jasmines welcoming home all the summer escapees.

Finishing touches for the Matrimandir Columns...



Photo Sven

“A NEW RACE WILL COME”

Interview with Nirodbaran

Nirodbaran, author of *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, four volumes of *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, and two volumes of *Correspondence*, was born in East Bengal in 1903. He first heard of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram while studying medicine in Edinburgh in the late twenties from the famous Bengali musician, Dilip Kumar Roy, who came to visit Edinburgh at the time. This sparked off his curiosity to visit the ashram, and on his return to India in 1930, he stopped off in Pondicherry for two days where he had an audience with the Mother. Returning home, he took up a medical job in Burma. Three years later, having lost all interest in life, he returned to Pondicherry, this time for good.

The early thirties was a period of artistic flourishing in the Ashram and Sri Aurobindo was working on developing the literary faculties of a number of his disciples, and many of his letters on literature and poetry date from this time. Nirodbaran began writing poetry first in Bengali, then in English: “I thought it would be easier for Sri Aurobindo to give me inspiration in English, and I was looking forward to his corrections!” he laughingly remarks in retrospect, 55 years later. Nirodbaran, writing an average of one poem a day, wrote between four and five hundred poems during this period — poems of a pronounced mystical vein, fifty of which have been published along with Sri Aurobindo's comments and corrections.

During these years Sri Aurobindo was dedicating much of his time — up to eight hours a night — to letter writing, answering his disciples' questions, offering encouragement, and explaining the many aspects, experiences and problems of his Yoga. Nirodbaran's two volumes of *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* date from this period, and the letters in this collection are frequently characterized by Sri Aurobindo's understated, ironic, at times jocular, and above all infinitely patient humor. A frequent target of Sri Aurobindo's sallies is Nirodbaran's despondent and pessimistic nature of the time.

This period came to an end with Sri Aurobindo's accident in November 1938. Nirodbaran and some others were called upon to serve as his attendants, and the years that follow are covered by the four volumes of *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*. These informal evening talks that occurred between Sri

Aurobindo and his attendants make for fascinating reading, and bear testimony to Sri Aurobindo's enormous knowledge of a wide range of subjects from spirituality and yoga to politics, literature, history and art, as well as his concern for the unfolding events of the Second World War.

After he had completed *The Life Divine* and the first three books of *Savitri*, in 1944 Sri Aurobindo's eyesight began to fail and Nirodbaran became his literary secretary. In the years that followed he became his scribe, taking down the dictations of large new sections of *Savitri*, as well as the numerous corrections and reworkings of already existing versions of the poem which, in the words of the Mother, “is the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision”.

Nirodbaran's *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, written just after Sri Aurobindo's passing but published only in 1972, gives us both a personal portrait of Sri Aurobindo and a very rare and unique account of those years. Nirodbaran's most recent books are a biography of Sri Aurobindo in English, *Sri Aurobindo for All Ages*, as well as a book on Sri Aurobindo written for children, in Bengali and in English. Another book, *The Mother's Sweetness and Light*, contains many elements of an autobiographical nature.

I found him friendly, relaxed and alert, and looking a good twenty years younger than his actual age, as we sat in his small room looking out on the Samadhi, the walls covered with framed photos of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as crows cawed in the courtyard and devotees prayed in the bright light of the afternoon outside, over a number of sessions we talked about those years...

Auroville Today: In 1938, while passing through his bedroom to his bathroom at midnight, Sri Aurobindo slipped on a tiger rug, knocked his knee against the tiger's head and fell. When the Mother appeared the emergency bell was rung and soon after you were called. What were your first impressions upon entering the room?

Nirod: A sense of awe, mixed with pity, at seeing Sri Aurobindo lying there on the ground, almost helpless like a child. Mother was sitting beside him, fanning him and asking him from time to time, “How are you feeling?” He was wearing a very fine white dhoti, and I don't know if it was an illusion or whether it was the light that was falling on his skin, but his thighs, particularly, were of a golden colour. He had been lying there for two hours or more, he hadn't called anyone, but perhaps he had sent out an inner intimation to the Mother. It took two hours to reach her — you know she used to travel out into the subtle worlds — but suddenly she awoke from her trance and immediately she felt something had happened to Sri Aurobindo and then she rang the emergency bell. The doctor made a preliminary examination and suspected a fracture, but he needed assistance and that's when we were called in. Throughout the investigation, Sri Aurobindo was very quiet, occasionally wincing with pain. Mother was doing all the talking.

Finally the doctor pronounced a fracture of the thigh bone. Then his leg was plastered and it was two to three hours later before we were finally able to move him to his bed. After consultation it was decided to call in a specialist from Madras, who arrived only at 11 p.m. the next night. All this time Sri Aurobindo was lying quietly on his bed. But when the specialist arrived Mother talked to the doctor and then explained it to Sri Aurobindo, who listened without uttering a word: he was smiling now and then and was looking towards the Mother and doctor.

Sri Aurobindo spent about a month lying quietly in traction in bed, and it was about one month later when the leg was free that the conversations actually started, usually around 7 o'clock in the evening when all of us attendants were gathered around his bed.

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Much of Volumes III and IV of your Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo is taken up with discussions of the events of 1940 and the War: the Battle of Britain, the Fall of France. Can you recollect the atmosphere of those conversations and the nature of Sri Aurobindo's concern for the events?

He was concerned, but in an impersonal way, surveying things, commenting on, even anticipating the movements of armies; but always, even while taking an active interest, he was calm and quiet. He was always sure that Hitler would lose the war.

There was the very telling, very laconic remark that Sri Aurobindo made following the news that there had been fog during the evacuation of Dunkerque, in May: "Yes, fog is rather unusual at this time." How did he say that?

In a very simple way, maybe with a slightly ironic, amused smile. He very rarely showed any vibration or any reaction, very rarely.

In what circumstances do you remember him showing a reaction?

When Hitler invaded Holland I remember him saying, in a calm, composed manner, "We shall see..." We were in great anxiety as the Germans approached Paris, for it would have been a calamity for world culture if Paris had been destroyed. Mother remarked at the time that France had lost a great opportunity when it had refused Churchill's offer of union. She said, and later wrote too, that it was an act of Divine Grace, as was the Cripps offer later on. Both were refused and as a result, both India and France suffered. We used to talk about Churchill's speeches and Sri Aurobindo once remarked that Marlborough had saved England once and that Churchill had saved her once again.

When the war first began, a young man from town used to transcribe the daily bulletins of the BBC and send them to Mother. We, or Pavitra, would read them out to Sri Aurobindo. Later on a radio was installed in his room so that he could hear the news directly. Mother was more concerned with the occult aspects of the war than with the daily details, but Sri Aurobindo and Mother might have talked about it by themselves during their private sittings, between 2 and 3 or 3 and 4 in the afternoons, when they used to talk about many things...

What was the sound of his voice like?

Many said that it was musical, but I thought it was soft and masculine. He spoke slowly and quietly, and not at all dramatically, with an English accent.

What was it like suddenly after all those years of correspondence to be in close physical proximity to Sri Aurobindo?

Well, that was the strange thing about it: in his letters he was very chummy, but suddenly it was as if he were in another world — here we all were, moving around him and it was as if he were not aware of us anymore, as if he didn't recognize us, or simply took no notice of us. He was absorbed in himself. But during the talks it was as if he had come down from his high level of silence onto our human level. He would spend many hours meditating with his eyes open, in the early months, before he started writing. Even though we sometimes wouldn't sleep for many nights, we wouldn't feel fatigue or tiredness in his presence.

There is that famous question in the Gita, "How does a liberated being act, talk, walk?" One could ask the same question about Sri Aurobindo?

His aspect was always impersonal, but at the same time you could feel him very near, sweet, and yet rarely would he ever address us by our names. He was very far away — that was a strange experience particularly after the years of correspondence. Champaklal writes in his book though, that Sri Aurobindo used to call him by his name.

And during the talks?

Also very impersonal; he would rarely look at us. We would ask him questions from every side. In the beginning he would speak to us lying on his back and we would crowd around his bed. But he was never dry — English humor and wit would enliven the talks. It was only later that I would write down the talks from the notes that I had taken down afterwards, in my leisure time, — sometimes even late at night, without going to sleep.

Sri Aurobindo's Passing

Suddenly in the middle of November 1950, Sri Aurobindo became very taciturn,

very grave, as if he were brooding over something all the time. We asked him, "Why are you so grave?" and he answered, "The matter is serious, you won't understand." This was in the middle of November, and we were speculating what might be the matter. It was then that he decided, referring to Savitri, "I have to finish it soon." Up to that time we had been working on it in a leisurely manner, but then we took it up continuously, and worked from 11 to 1:30 without fail.

You mentioned that the November darshan had to be hurried up; when did it become clear that Sri Aurobindo was consciously preparing to leave his body?

Before the darshan he had some prostrate trouble which he cured himself, but after the darshan the symptoms began to increase again. There was no question of treating him. There was no treatment of the prostrate either, and an operation was out of the question. He did not want to take any drugs.

The Mother said not to give him any drugs unless he wanted them. Later when she saw that he was withdrawing, in the early days of December, she said that with his consent we could give him drugs. At that point we had to give him some antibiotics. At the later stage he was more indrawn than in the outer consciousness, but five or ten minutes before he left his body, he said to me, "Nirod, give me some water." I considered it a personal grace, a last touch, to show me that he remembered me — it was rare for him to call anyone by name. Sri Aurobindo left his body early in the morning, at 1:26 a.m. on the 5th of December.

Sri Aurobindo's body remained radiant for five days. It was a crimson-gold colour, a radiant colour.

Do you feel that Sri Aurobindo was drawing down the supramental force into his body (in this indrawn condition) during those last days?

It was beyond me to even guess about it. But we saw his body becoming suffused with

The supramental had already come down. Sri Aurobindo had fixed it in the Mother's physical mind, as the mind of light, through his passing.

a crimson-golden light at dawn. Now, either we hadn't noticed this, because it was still nighttime, or it didn't occur instantaneously. Sri Aurobindo's body remained radiant for five days. It was a crimson-gold colour, a radiant colour. Mother said that Sri Aurobindo went into seclusion in order to bring down the supramental light, that this was his main work and that when she used to visit him in his room, she could see that he was bringing it down, but could not fix it. Now he had fixed it in his body, and it remained until the 9th.

The supramental finally came down in 1956...

Mother was very precise about such points. The supramental had already come down. Sri Aurobindo had fixed it in the Mother's physical mind, as the mind of light, through his passing. 1956 was the beginning of the supramental manifestation on a universal scale in the earth's subtle physical layer. Sri Aurobindo said that when the supramental is in full control of the world, there will be no more world wars.

What were your feelings during the days leading up to Sri Aurobindo's passing and the days that followed?

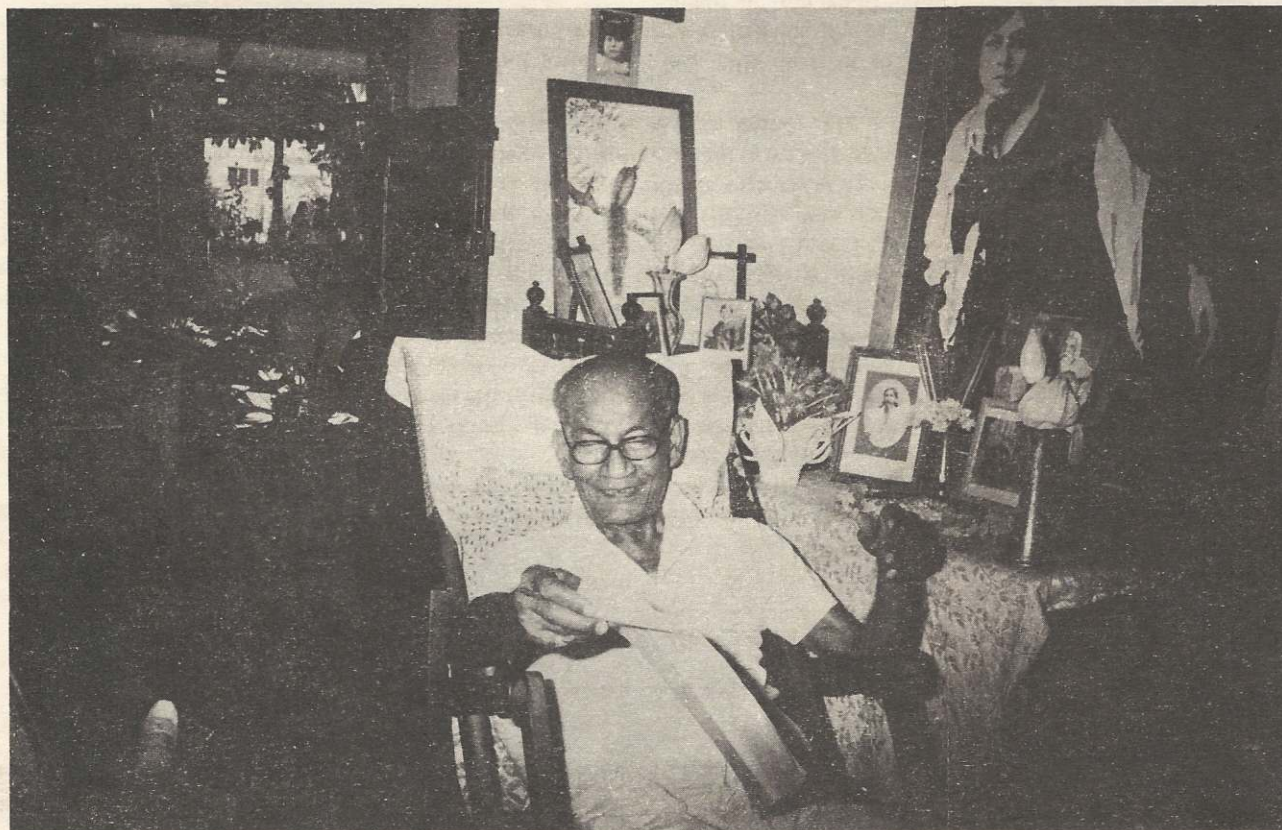
Tension and anxiety. But upon seeing Sri Aurobindo's radiant body at dawn, as if by magic all my anguish disappeared — I was feeling a great joy, then after the samadhi, a sense of void and emptiness. Everything was meaningless, but I don't think that it lasted long, because of Mother's personality: in her inner aspect she was not an ordinary person, she was the Divine Shakti. Her consciousness absorbed the entire shock and if someone was weeping, she would say that it was an insult to Sri Aurobindo, "because he is here!" These are spiritual phenomenon.

Savitri

"The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds" and "The Book of the Divine Mother" were written in their present form between the time of his accident and 1944. Very little of either book existed in previous drafts of Savitri. Book I, "The Book of Beginnings", was rewritten at least ten times. Book III was finished in August 1944 — that was when I was called in to help with Savitri and to take dictation. Before that, I was doing minor secretarial work and personal attendance.

In 1950 Sri Aurobindo was in a hurry to finish Savitri. Which books was he working on then?

"The Book of Fate", "The Book of Yoga" and "The Book of Everlasting Day". He had already revised "The Book of Fate" numerous times, but he was not satisfied. He was particularly working on the last Canto where he says, "She alone can save..."



Nirodbaran in his room next to the Samadhi

A draft already existed of this Canto, but he changed it a lot after his decision to leave the body. "The Book of Everlasting Day" was enormously expanded — only a few lines existed from an old draft, but most of it was completely new. He dictated it to me slowly, at times stopping for the lines coming in — it must have taken us about 4 or 5 days.

Did he check the final sections with you?

Everything that he had dictated was typed, and then read out to him again, but a final revision of "The Book of Death" and the "Epilogue" was not done. After "The Book of Everlasting Day" we went back to "The Book of Fate" and the "Epilogue". He just made a few changes here and there in an old version of the "Epilogue" and when these two had been completed he asked: "What remains?" I answered him, "The Book of Death"... and the "Epilogue" — the "Epilogue" was not finished — and then he said, "We shall see later." We do not know what he intended by these words, but I felt that he did not want to finish them. This was about two weeks before the November dar-

Mother herself said that it revealed a totally unknown side of Sri Aurobindo to her.

shan. It was the completion of the incomplete *Savitri*. He was never to take it up again — first there were the preparations for the darshan, and after darshan his condition gradually deteriorated.

Looking back, are there any particular sections or books of Savitri that stand out for you?

"The Book of Everlasting Day".

How long do you feel it will take for the vision expressed in "The Book of Everlasting Day" to be fulfilled?

I can't tell. Much depends on how much *sadhana* we do. Perhaps we have to wait for Sri Aurobindo to come back, as Mother has said he would in a supramental body built in the supramental way. She has told Amal Kiran that she was absolutely certain of his coming, though the knowledge of when he would do so had not come to her.

Looking Back

Which of your books did you enjoy publishing the most?

Correspondence, of course (laughter). Its sense of humor is combined with the inner feeling it gives of how much Sri Aurobindo has done for me. I wrote *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* after his passing, but it was only published in 1972. I was not sure that the Mother would allow it, so I kept it back. But then I read out the whole of it to her, about two years before her passing, and it

Mother is definite about it: a new race will come.

Sri Aurobindo's 'Record of Yoga'

On 20th April, Peter Heehs from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives gave a talk in Auroville to about 50 Aurovilians on Sri Aurobindo's *Record of Yoga*.

The *Record of Yoga*, which the Archives is publishing in its Archives and Research periodical, is a diary of Sri Aurobindo's personal *sadhana* between 1909 and 1927. As it was only for his own use, the references are often difficult to understand, and the language is bare and prosaic — unlike the inspirational language of his 'public' writings of these years.

However, the *Record* is fascinating for a number of reasons. It shows, for example, Sri Aurobindo using his body like a laboratory, making painstakingly precise notations of the effects of his *sadhana* upon the various planes of his being. Peter read out a passage that showed how, in the space of a few hours, Sri Aurobindo ranged dizzyingly from higher mind to higher physical *sadhana*, to ordinary personal hygiene, and then to ecstatic *bhakti* yoga. The *Record* demonstrates indisputably that the teachings in works like *The Synthesis of Yoga* had been experienced in the minutest detail.

The *Records* show Sri Aurobindo struggling with the many difficulties associated with the yoga of transformation where, on each higher level, the old achievements must be fought for, re-established and re-integrated. As he put it later in a letter to a disciple:

"You write as if I have never had a doubt or any difficulty. I have had worse than any human mind can think of. It is not because I have ignored difficulties, but because I have seen them more clearly, experienced them on a larger scale than anyone living now or before me that, having faced and measured them, I am sure of the results of my work."

In this sense, Sri Aurobindo's *Record* is like Mother's *Agenda*. Both are records of the daily process, of the daily struggles and illuminations of the supramental yoga. And both are riveting because they present, in vivid detail, their immense endeavour to conquer inconscience.

In fact, while the terminology differs, there are numerous parallels between the *Record* and the *Agenda*, particularly in regard to descriptions of the qualities of the Supramental Force and its action upon the physical body. Both stress, for example,

that the physical transformation will be the last result of the supramental transformation. In a remarkable extract from the *Record* in 1913, Sri Aurobindo also foresees that the process of complete physical transformation will not be completed in his lifetime.

"A clear distinction must now be made between the *vidya-avidyasiddhi* which is constituted by the seven *chatushtayas* and the higher *amrita* in which all limitation is removed and death etc. entirely cease. Only the first will in this life be entirely accomplished."

Alan, based on notes by Peter Heehs.

Peter Heehs is the author of *Sri Aurobindo, A Brief Biography* (O.U.P., 1989)

Story 1 -

The seeds set forth for October are now beginning to be accomplished, but the month of October was the turning-point for the action.

=
defi.

1. Already fulfilled for the intellectual realization, fulfilled for the ideal.
2. Result of the rapid yoga (Ch)
3. It is unable to expect results immediately.

Darshan.

The Ananda Brahman is now an entirely essential part of the Darshan. The entire synthesis of the Anandamaya Purusha. Krishna has now to become explicit in the normal Darshan as he has been in the abnormal, when the intensity was at its highest.

Dynamics.

The telepathic perception, subliminal, is being steadily purified from within a false shell.

Yes, he's been badly damaged — he's there, lurking behind a bit, but he's under control! (laughter)

Interview by Roger

What Mother has said somewhere is that the completion of Matrimandir will be commensurate with the establishment of Peace and Harmony in the world.

Of course! I have lived with Sri Aurobindo. I have seen something here. I see myself — what I was and what I have become. I have seen Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and what they have done: how could I be a disbeliever? One thing I'm sure of — how and when I do not know — is that what they've seen, what they are working for, will be realized. Mother is definite about it: a new race will come. There will be a lot of change, not only here but also out in Auroville — they are working very much out there: what Auroville was 20 years ago and what it is now cannot be compared. But still there is much to be done. What Mother has said somewhere is that the completion of Matrimandir will be commensurate with the establishment of Peace and Harmony in the world.

So, the Man of Sorrows has been banished once for all?

So despite the state of the world today, you remain an optimist, as regards the future?

Twenty-one years and four months later: the crystal globe for the Matrimandir arrives in Auroville on 26-4-1991 at 10.15 p.m. It is moved into the Matrimandir's Inner Chamber the next day at 09.45 a.m.

The search for the globe has been a long one, and so was the manufacturing process. The size — 70 cm. diameter — was marked on the plan that Mother drew up with one of the disciples. But the material? Transparent, translucent, glass, crystal, solid, hollow — filled with water from the Ganges or just plain distilled water, even a plastic globe — all had been subjects of study or discussion at some point in time. What seemed best was a solid, transparent glass globe without flaws. But could that be made? Murano in Italy said no, from Firozabad in India no reply was received, the firm of Corning Glass

"... and right in the center on the floor is my symbol, and above it four of Sri Aurobindo's symbols joined to a square, and on top of that a globe. A globe of some transparent material if possible and with (or without) light inside, but the sun should strike the globe... And the important thing is the play of the sun on the center. Because that becomes the symbol — the symbol of the future realization."

(Mother as quoted in Mother's Agenda of January 3rd, 1970).

in the USA said they might be able to do it but there was no follow up, the French firm of Baccarat declined after an initial interest, Waterford in Ireland was not able to do it, nor was Glassexport in Czechoslovakia. It seemed that we had to look for a globe made of natural crystal.

But in July 1983 the searchlight fell on the firm of Schott in Mainz, and somewhat later on Zeiss in Oberkochen, both in West-Germany. "Are you able to manufacture a glass globe of 70 cm. diameter?" was the innocent question asked through telephone to the sales department of Schott. And the answer, to our utter surprise, was a quiet: "Yes, that shouldn't be a problem." "I said 70, not 171". "Yes, that's understood, but we only cast the glass, you have to contact the firm of Zeiss to do the polishing. Zeiss and Schott are related firms."

Extensive telephone calls and long letters to Zeiss followed. It is not easy to explain the use of a crystal globe; the West European tradition has a persistent tendency to link such things with witches and crystal gazers of dubious reputation. Finally, on the 26th of October 1983, an initial visit to Zeiss took place to discuss matters in detail. There it became obvious that a study had to be made into the effects of the ray of sunlight on the globe, as that ray would unevenly heat up the globe — at the top more than at the bottom — and that would result in tensions in the glass. The study would determine if the globe could indeed be made, and what kind of glass would be the best. As money for the study was available, the order for the study was given soon afterwards.

On the 8th of June 1984 Zeiss presented the study, and gave us an estimate for the cost of the globe: approx. 230,000 German Marks. At that time money was a scarce

article in Auroville; money for Matrimandir was received at irregular intervals only, and this amount seemed to be unobtainable. Moreover, it had to be paid in German Marks, an insurmountable obstacle to donors in India. It became obvious that this amount had to be raised outside India.

But it wasn't long before a solution was found: Auroville International, the umbrella organization of all the Auroville International Centers in the world, created a special 'Crystal Globe' bank account in Holland, and would act as donor for the globe. A fund-raising campaign followed. Individuals were invited to "participate in this mystery of Light penetrating Matter", as one American friend wrote poetically, by donating either through the Auroville International Center in their country, or directly. And gradually, through many small individual donations and some larger ones, money started to flow in. Within 6 months of the opening of the account, an amount of 75,000 German Marks had been collected, enough to pay for the first installment. A foundation in the USA promised that it would guarantee the payment of the second installment, should sufficient money not be received in time.

...this mystery of Light penetrating Matter...

In the certainty that funding would not be a problem, there was a second visit to Zeiss on the 25th of June 1985. The content of their study was discussed in depth and a sample of the proposed type of crystal (with the name of Bohr Kron 7) was shown. It became clear that the study was not detailed enough, and in the course of the contract negotiations Zeiss agreed to execute, upon receipt of the order, "another exact calculation of possible influences of temperature on the globe in order to enable Matrimandir to construct an adjustable diaphragm which would have to be mounted to the beam incidence aperture" — in other words, to determine the exact sizes of the mirrors of the heliostat to be placed on top of the Matrimandir. Also, the exact dimension of the globe was put into question: "You mentioned 70 centimeters", said the people from Zeiss, "but how many zero's should there be behind the comma?" And they explained — and later showed during a tour through the factory — that Zeiss was used to polishing glass for lenses and large, telescopic mirrors with diameters of over 3 meters, to an exactitude of fractions of millimeters.

Impressed by the professionalism and utmost precision of Zeiss' work, the order to execute a second study and to manufacture the crystal globe, ("diameter 70,0 centimeter will do!") was given on August 7, 1985.



A globe emerges ...

Soon afterwards Zeiss started to execute the study; for a period of more than two months the overall system was computed, using the method of finite element computations, proven in space objects. In this process, both the thermal conditions and the resulting mechanical stress on the globe surface, and even the stress caused by the four supporting feet of Sri Aurobindo's symbols, were examined in detail. The study was presented in February 1986 and showed that the globe was indeed able to withstand the large temperature differences caused by the ray of light from the heliostat. The study also gave precise indications as to the exact magnitude of the heliostat mirrors.

Doing a study is one thing, casting the blank for the globe, however, is something else. Bohr Kron 7, the specific quality of glass to be used, was not cast regularly. Zeiss had ordered the casting of the globe on November 24, 1985. Schott replied that for internal organizational reasons, it was not possible to do the casting before September or October 1986. In June 1986 Schott postponed the date again till March 1987, which caused quite some frustration. There

...there, suspended in a double crate, something of incredible beauty...

were more meetings with Zeiss, to discuss details of the second study and the delay in the casting. "Is it possible to do the casting earlier or elsewhere?" "No," said Zeiss, "we depend fully on Schott for this special quality of glass, and they are probably the only firm in the world able to do this highly specialized job." The delay was regretted but unavoidable. Waiting for news from Schott, details of the second study were exhaustively examined and attempts were made to finalize the fund-raising efforts.



Milling the glass



Glass cooling down inside the mould

for the globe



Ready for final separation from its base

Finally, and unexpectedly, Schott wrote on May 12, 1987 to Zeiss that the cast had been done, and that the mould was being cooled. When, on the 24th of June 1987, a fifth visit to Zeiss was made, it appeared that this casting was the second one, the first one having failed for unpublished reasons.

The casting at Schott's in Mainz lasted 15 hours, and was done in a special form of refractory stone, held together by seven metal bands, which was placed on top of a platform built of iron and steel. During the casting process the glass in the form was kept at a constant temperature.

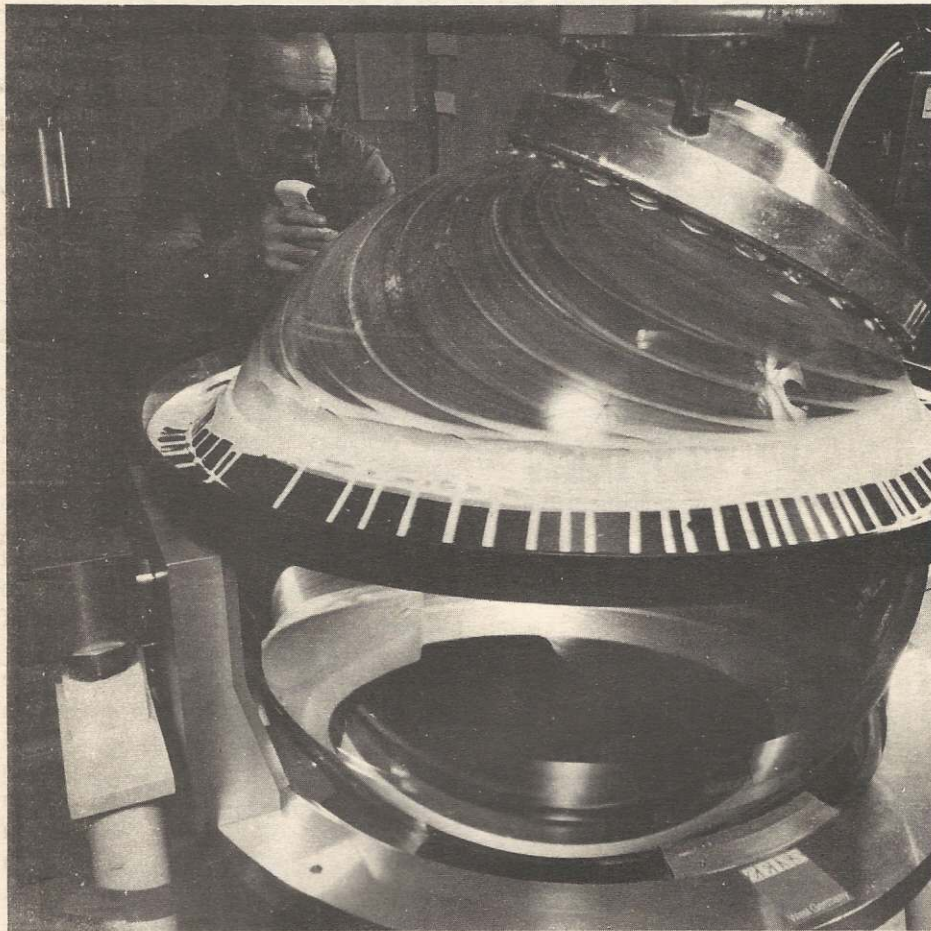
After 15 hours the rough casting in the form of a massive dome with a diameter of 80 to 85 centimeters and a weight of 1100 kilograms was finished, after which it was cooled down extremely slowly (to avoid tension) in an annealing furnace for a period of 5 weeks.

From the technical point of view the casting was not extraordinary for Schott. The novelty was the large size of this special quality of glass, the desired form of a globe and the further treatment. The dome, rounded at the top, straight at the bottom, had to be cut and milled into a globe, losing more than half of its weight in the process. But first the rough form had to be polished on two sides, in order to test the quality of the glass: irregularities, such as thread — or ribbon — like inclusions or air bubbles were not acceptable. When it was established that the glass conformed to the specifications, the cutting and milling to the actual size was begun. This process left innumerable little scratches on the surface.

The blank for the globe arrived at Zeiss'

premises on October 6th, 1987. Again a quality control took place, after which the fine work of removing the thin layer of little scratches *mu* after *mu* (one *mu* is less than a millimeter) was begun, in a specially designed grinding and polishing installation. This work took several months to complete; on the 26th of January, 1988, Zeiss wrote that "the optical processing of the BK 7 globe has been successfully completed", earlier than anyone had expected. It took Auroville by surprise, and it was not until June 14, 1988, that the crystal was formally presented and delivered to Auroville International at the Zeiss premises in Oberkochen. Yoka, who was present at the occasion, wrote later:

"We are taken down long corridors into a basement where we enter a large room full of polishing machines of various sizes. Among the many objects in the room stands a wooden crate. It contains something round,



Polishing at Zeiss

covered with pieces of white cloth. While we are still talking, somebody starts to remove the pieces of cloth one by one and the talking dies away. As they are removed, something very clear and at the same time very shiny becomes visible. Eagerly we approach to have a close look and we catch our breath. There, suspended in a double crate, something of incredible beauty is resting.

"As we stare and look, it starts to move slowly upwards, being gently lifted out of its crate by an electric pulley. When it is free from the crate, it moves towards us, till it hangs in free space and we can gaze at it, drink it with our eyes and marvel, for marvellous it is."

Then followed years of waiting, until Matrimandir's Inner Chamber was sufficiently ready to receive the globe. Finally, at the beginning of this year, it became clear

that the process to deliver the globe should be started, a process which culminated a few weeks later, on April 26 at 2.30 p.m., in the arrival of the crystal at the airport of Madras, where airlines, customs and airport authorities co-operated to give the green light for delivery within 4 hours of its arrival, a feat never before accomplished according to our shipping agent. The van of Auroville's Center of Scientific Research brought it from Madras to Matrimandir, where it arrived late that evening. It was hoisted into Matrimandir's Inner Chamber the next morning.

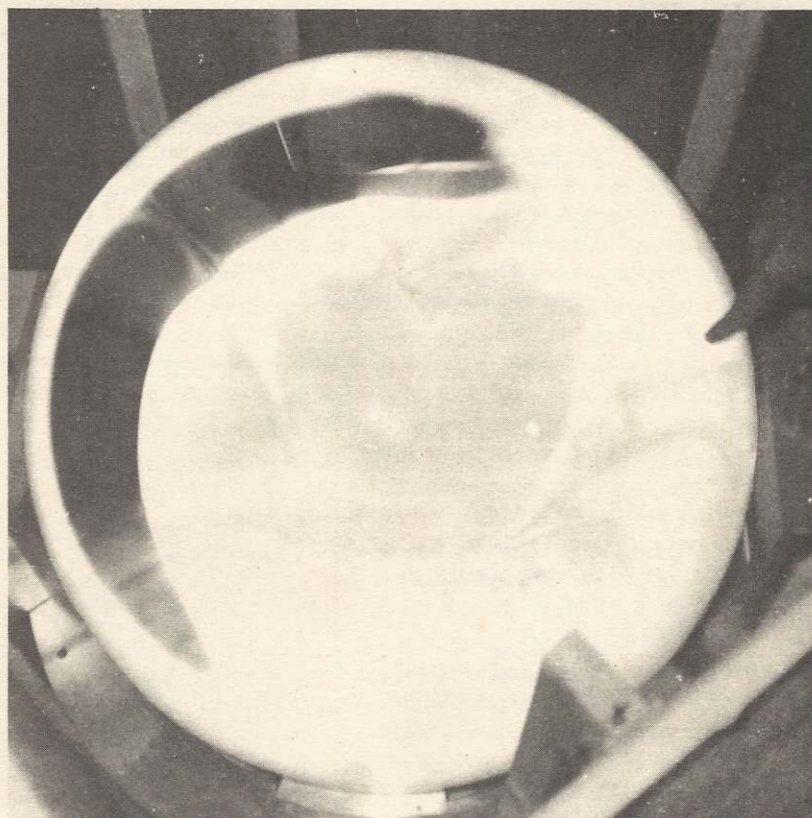
Matrimandir builds itself from inside out.

Carel

We apologize to our readers for the mistaken date in the June issue (No. 29), where we put the date of the crystal's arrival as 26 May instead of 26 April — Eds.



Welcoming the crystal in the Chamber ...



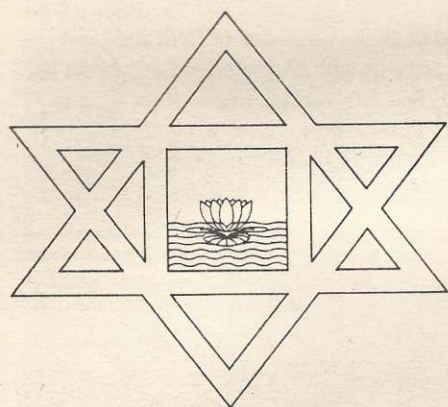
MANUFACTURING

SRI AUROBINDO'S SYMBOL

Auroville Today asked Piero, who is responsible for finishing the Inner Chamber of Matrimandir, to explain how the symbols were made.

"Mother has said that four of Sri Aurobindo's symbols, standing upright and joined together, will carry the globe. My first task was to get the exact dimensions of both Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's symbols, for which I contacted the design department of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. They gave me a small drawing in which the basic dimensions were laid down; this drawing was sufficient for the design of smaller symbols, but it appeared insufficient for our particular purpose. The width of each of the four Sri Aurobindo's symbols is 35 cm, but when I made my drawings I found that the square did not come out as a square. Then, I don't know how it happened, somebody contacted Champaklal, who said that if I (Piero) was going to do the symbol, he had to give me the proportions. And then he went to a small drawer in his room and drew out a small bit of paper, with the measurements, and with many more decimals, and that was perfect. I was so surprised that it came from him, from a person who has no mathematical background!

"It was then that I learned that the proportions of Sri Aurobindo's symbol have changed over the years. Originally, the triangles were higher. The final design was made on the basis of a sketch by Mother. The peculiarity of Sri Aurobindo's symbol is that the proportion of the triangle's height and base are the same as the section of the Great Pyramid of Gizeh, which are linked by the Golden Ratio. I do not know if this was consciously done by Mother.



"In enlarging the Ashram's small drawing, there were also some problems with the lotus in the middle of the square. Originally it looked more like a water lily than a lotus, until I discovered that there is a flower called the Egyptian lotus. The design of this flower fitted exactly into the symbol. The symbol is executed in brass, in order to support the globe's weight. The cutting and welding of the brass plates, and the cutting of the lotus section of the symbol, were done with great care and precision by Auro-engineering, which uses computer-steered milling machines. These machines can only operate on designs that are based on existing mathematical curves; for that the exercise was to design the lotus part of the symbol in a rigorously defined geometry more acceptable to the computer!

"After the brass welding and the cutting of the symbols, a nice finish was required. The work was done by a German goldsmith, Edith Axer. The milling of the lotus flowers in particular had left a rather sharp and mechanical finish. She perfected it into a work of jewelry. The galvanizing process

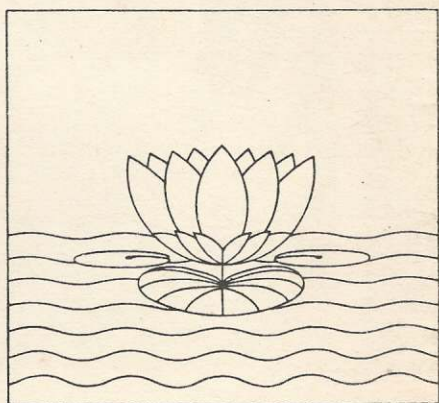
will be done in Bombay in July. As the quality of the brass used is rather porous, it will be coated several times in order to obtain the right smooth surface. Thereafter the symbol will go into a large bath where it will be gold-plated. The lotus part will be gold-plated separately, and will be fixed into the square afterwards. The plating will be about 3/100 mm thick: it doesn't sound like much, but it means using about 1 kg of pure gold!

"Originally, we had been looking for a gold-plating in a kind of orange colour. The firm in Bombay, Wadia, who will do this work has a catalogue which shows all the possible colours ranging from a very pale yellow gold to a rather reddish one. But then we ultimately decided that the best would be to use the colour of natural 24K gold. The colour of the evening sun around sunset, transmitted by the mirror, may give the symbols this particular orange glow of which Mother spoke.

"The four joined Sri Aurobindo symbols will rest on Mother's symbol, which has been executed in the same beautiful white Italian marble that was used for the walls. This marble has been stored underground in the amphitheater for years. It was purchased in 1977 because at that time we calculated that the Inner Chamber would be ready for Mother's Centenary in 1978! We had to change Mother's symbol slightly. In its classical design, Mother's symbol has rounded corners. When we started cutting the marble, we realized that it was very tricky to do that. We tried it out on a piece of waste slab, and it proved to be too risky. For that reason we have chosen Mother's symbol which is used on the cover of *Mother's Agenda*. The result is very nice, actually. This work was all done by Aurovilians.

"On the floor beneath the four symbols, there will be a highly polished brass plate which will reflect most of the light back into the room. The parallel ray of light that will fall on the globe will leave it refracted, as the globe is actually a huge lens. A small opening of 4 cm has been left in the brass plate, through which the light which passes through the globe parallel (technically speaking, the light which goes through the central part of the globe) will filter down through the floor of the Inner Chamber and into the lotus pond beneath Matrimandir.

"It is symbolic: I do not think that you will be able to see it in the daytime, as the natural sunlight will be too strong. But in the evening, maybe a tiny spot of light will be visible from underneath the floor of the Chamber. It still has to be seen if that light can be concentrated again into a ray so as to really touch the water of the lotus pond beneath."



The 21 Columns

For those who volunteered to paint the twelve columns for the Matrimandir inner chamber, the story turned into an unexpected saga or sadhana. "You couldn't even cry anymore," recalls Menaig, who coordinated the painting work for a year and a half. "We didn't do twelve columns, we actually did twenty-one because the first three were okay, but the other nine had to be done twice."

The columns arrived at Matrimandir in the beginning of January 1990 (for this story see *Auroville Today* #14, Feb. '90). They were 24-inch diameter, galvanized, seamless steel pipes, eight meters long, weighing 830 kg each. The painting job appeared straightforward and the first two were done completely in a couple of months. Menaig continues: "When I took on the work, I had no idea what I was getting into. First of all I never expected we would have to do 'body' work (levelling the column surface). I thought the columns would be round! It was very tricky, very long. We didn't have the tools or the infrastructure." The real "nightmare" started after six months when the paint began to blister. The humidity was suspected and the grey putty used to "round" the columns. All sorts of changes and experiments were attempted and still the paint bubbled. "At that point I was about to tear my hair out," noted Menaig with her hand on her head; "well, I had talked to everybody and

"And then, inside, there will be twelve columns... and the twelve columns are for people who need support for their backs!"

*Auroville References in Mother's Agenda
3 January 1970 p.155*

nobody could tell me anything I didn't already know about paint. Then Carel got the information in Germany about zinc coatings: they're not paintable for three years. So everything had to be scraped back to bare metal." This didn't happen to the first couple of columns because the zinc galvanization had been ground off before painting. More culprits were discovered in the grey putty and zinc chromate primer which were all changed. The new metal putty, however, has such a thin consistency that it has to be laboriously applied in layers to the turning column with a hand-held hacksaw blade. With the technology solved it became a matter of time and patience. A dedicated team started putting in extra time, a few infra-red lights appeared to help the drying, and then even an electric polishing machine to speed up the work. By June 21, there were seven columns in the chamber and an intense feeling to finish during August 1991. There are an average of 15 coats of paint on each column with finer and finer sandings between coats. The final polishing is then done. "You can't see anymore that it's metal. You don't see greyish shadows," and then Menaig paused and added with a smile; "it's a nice surface. I think everybody who's been working on the columns is quite proud of the end result. It's been a tough run but it's worth it."

Bill

Aranyani Organic Mushrooms

Aranyani is a goddess in the Hindu pantheon akin to Demeter in the Greek. Aranyani is the goddess of the fertility of the earth. Her name is also used as the marketing name of the Auroville Regional Organic Food Cooperative. Healthy, organic foods grown without pesticides and chemical fertilizers are the reason for the Cooperative. Training programmes are offered to village farmers with guaranteed market and crop insurance. It is a five year experiment to try and reverse disastrous agricultural practices. Traditional farming is fast disappearing in favour of cash crops based on chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Soil fertility is lost after some years of such practices. It is reported that cashew nut trees sprayed for 10 years no longer produce nuts. Rainfed, seasonal crops are being grown less and less and these are the leguminous crops that keep the soil fertile. The market value and consumption of these traditional foods does not compete with the cheap white rice which dominates the market. Many of these local grain varieties are six-month crops and for

the farmer, two fast growing three-month crops offer a better economic proposition.

The cooperative works with farmers willing to introduce or continue land conservation measures, practice traditional farming techniques and participate in the programme for five years. So far the project is marketing organic cashews, mushrooms, pickles, jams and tamarind. They want to also do the various local millets, grains, mustard, sesame and groundnut. The project also includes seed programmes, natural pesticide manufacture and supply, educational materials, and demonstration sites for composting and soil protection.

The project is being jointly sponsored by Village Action, Forest and Farms & Dairies Groups. Some funding has been received and the project aims to be self-sustaining.

Aranyani Organic Mushrooms are so delicious that each crop is immediately sold out in Auroville.

Bill

(See also "Organic Farming in the Villages", *Auroville Today* # 21, Sept. 1990)

PUBLICATION NEWS

Auroville References in Mother's Agenda

A research project begun many years ago to print in a single volume all that is available from Mother concerning Auroville, has succeeded in publishing a paperback edition of all the conversations of Mother about Auroville that appear in the thirteen volumes of *Mother's Agenda*. This publication is called "Auroville References in Mother's Agenda." It is part of the project that was announced in *Auroville Today* (Issue # 6 - May 1989) as "The Spirit of Auroville." The title was later changed to "Auroville in Mother's Words." This new publication is a chronological reference without commentary for all those who need it for their work of building an Auroville "that will live the truth of tomorrow." In Auroville the contribution for the book is Rs. 120. It can be mailed anywhere in India for an additional Rs. 5. The prices for abroad, including surface postage, are US \$ 12, £ 7, DM 20, FF 80, D.GI. 25. All correspondence should be addressed to Auroville Press, Auroville 605 101, India. □

Recently Available — Leaflets:

Matrimandir

- English ○ Spanish
○ French ○ Hindi

Introduction to Auroville

- English ○ Spanish
○ French ○ Hindi
○ German ○ Tamil

Renewable Sources of Energy Auroville Building Centre Green Work Guide for Guests

all leaflets: Rs. 2.00 each

Brochure:

Auroville (40 pages) Rs. 17.00

New Books:

Auroville References in Mother's Agenda
(255 pages) Rs.120.00

(excluding postage)

BOOK REVIEW

THE VEDA AND INDIAN CULTURE

by Kireet Joshi

Those who have an interest in the roots of Indian culture, and would like to know to what extent these roots are still of relevance today for the spiritual regeneration of contemporary India, would do well to read the brief book "The Veda and Indian Culture" by Kireet Joshi. "The book", says the author, "is an attempt to stimulate readers to study the subject in greater depth, particularly by taking recourse to Sri Aurobindo's *The Secret of the Veda*."

The Vedas are amongst the earth's oldest surviving scriptures. They are supposed to date from some time between 10,000 B.C. to 5,000 B.C.. For a long time, the texts of the Vedas have been imperfectly understood, as the meaning of many of its key words has been lost. It was Sri Aurobindo who, through his own spiritual development, rediscovered the hidden meaning of the key words, and found that they are extremely ambiguous, having an outer as well as an inner meaning, the latter understandable only to a small number of initiates. Understood in this light, the Vedas contain a huge mine of wisdom, many examples of which are given in this book. There is, for example, the legend of the herd of the lost cows and the Angirasa Rishis who went out to search for them and had to fight the Dasyus and the Panis, the sons of darkness, to recover the herd. The deeper secret of this legend becomes clear when the word used for cow, 'go', is understood in its rightful meaning, which is light.

The Rishis went in search of the Light, spiritual light, and the Panis had concealed it. There is no destruction, but only an effective covering of the light. This covering is the Night of Darkness, but there is in it a secret light, which is the possession of the forces of darkness. In the end, the combat is not merely the destruction of evil and darkness, but also the recovery and manifestation of the light which is concealed in them.

Those who are familiar with the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother will immediately recognize the parallel: the light is one, it is the same everywhere. Spirit above is not the only light, Matter below is also that very light. Matter can be pierced, and the light which is concealed in it can be made manifest. The deep secret of the Vedas, then held as a promise for realization only, was ultimately manifested by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Kireet Joshi explains in his book the reasons for the dichotomy and opposition between spiritual and physical life which came into existence later, and the denunciation of material life which caused the deep crisis of modern India. He also touches briefly on a new kind of integral education aimed at an unprecedented perfection and ultimately a mutation of the human species as foreseen by Sri Aurobindo. It is the work of Sri Aurobindo, aiming at the manifestation of Spirit in Matter, which gives the assurance that Indian culture will provide a new guidance to the entire human race.

Thus, the author does not propagate a mere revival of the ancient systems, but stimulates the study of the Veda. For there is much in it which is relevant to the aspiring man of today. For example in this verse of the *Rig Veda*, dedicated to Agni, who symbolizes the psychic being:

"O Agni, when Thou Art well borne by us Thou becomest the supreme growth and expansion of our being, all glory and beauty are in Thy desirable hue and Thy perfect vision. O Vastness, Thou art a multitude of riches spread out on every side" (*Rig Veda*, II.1.12).

The book provides for fascinating reading. It is available from Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratishthan, Rajendra Bhavan (Third Floor) 210 Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi 110 002 and costs Rs. 45.

Carel

LETTERS

("A NOBLER PRAGMATISM" No. 28, April/May)

Dear Roger,

Your article on the split and tension between "idealists" and "pragmatists" at Auroville strikes a familiar chord as we see a similar tension occurring within individuals in our work of psycho-spiritual integration.

In the article you state that resolution of the idealist-pragmatist conflict is a matter for the Heart which certainly is true for the individuals harmonizing their internal conflict.

The personality like a community is made up of multiple elements, which are termed subpersonalities in Psychosynthesis, each has unique characteristics of physical, vital, mental and essential spiritual qualities. Sri Aurobindo refers to the multiplicity within the personality in "Letters on Yoga" and "The Synthesis of Yoga".

In our work we hold idealist-pragmatist as a spectrum, that each personality has this spectrum and generally one end of the spectrum becomes dominant while the other is repressed. When a personality element is repressed the ego deems it negative or even hostile and projects it on to others so that the negativity seems to come from others. Conflict, both internal and external, must be accepted with equanimity for resolution and transformation to occur.

The harmonization and subsequent transformation of subpersonalities is an ongoing process first initiated by a personal witness consciousness/will and carried further by emergence of the Psychic Being.

When we accept rather than project our inner conflicts the Heart makes such acceptance possible; looking at the idealist-pragmatist conflict with calm and equality will enable the Psychic Being to come forward for many in the community with ensuing better outer relations.

Mother gives a very clear view of this process in *Questions and Answers 1956*, (8-11).

The shocking assassination of Rajiv Gandhi underscores the critical importance of resolving polarized viewpoints beginning within the person so that hostile forces cannot gain a murderous foothold. As Sri Aurobindo tells us, only the Psychic Being can guide us safely through the maze of untruth.

Carl Peters MD, California, USA

☆☆☆

Here come greetings from the north. Our thoughts have been with you maybe more than usual, as the reports on the political turmoil in India reaches us.

It raises questions of how this affects life in Auroville. Does it also pressure and tense up life in Auroville?

Though we are far away geographically, we all seem so connected in our consciousness today, on a global scale, we feel it is happening to us too. Things happen so fast today we don't have the tools to interpret the changes coherently, as we are still so dependant on yesterday's mind.

We want to thank all the Aurovilians whom we had the pleasure of talking and meeting with, during our stay in Auroville in Feb./March this year. It has taken some time to digest our impressions from a short but intense visit. Where is Auroville heading, was a thought we carried back with us. In retrospective reflections on what people told us about their life in Auroville, one message that came across was a kind of anxiety and lack of faith and belief in the progression of life in Auroville, not being in accordance with its goals. Fear makes people aggressive and primitive and we saw expressions of this. But we also found an awareness of the situation and silent minds that were coping. So with Love, we send you good faith and perseverance, and Stars of truth-consciousness to greet you in the sky, for the progression and ongoing change towards the supramental manifestation on its way, on our planet.

Eveline, Ulf, Staffan
Auroville International Sweden

☆☆☆

Auroville Today provides information about Auroville on a monthly basis and is distributed to Aurovilians and friends of Auroville in India and abroad. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the community as a whole.

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Printed at Auroville Press. Photos: Sven.

♦ ♦ ♦ To Receive Auroville Today ♦ ♦ ♦

The contribution for the next 12 issues of Auroville Today is for India Rs. 100, for abroad Rs. 450, Can.\$ 27, French F. 145, DM 45, It.Lira 31,500, D.GI. 50, US \$ 22.50, U.K.£ 13.50. This includes the postage by airmail. Please send your contribution (or your supporting contribution of double the amount) either to the Auroville International centre in your country (add 10%) or to Auroville Today, CSR Office, Auroville 605101. Cheques should be made payable to Auroville Fund, specifying: Contribution for Auroville Today. You will receive the issues directly from Auroville. Personal cheques are preferred to bank cheques. Please avoid postal orders.

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August 1991 - Number Thirty-One

In this issue: Nirodharani, Matrimandir, Guest Programmes ...



... at work below the Matrimandir

Photo Sven



New Ventures

For that season when the weather of South India turns paradisaical, and the guest houses of Auroville overflow, a new working group of Aurovilians has formed to help organize "unending education" for guests. The programme for this season (see box) was coordinated by a team which included Sonja, Joster, Tom, Tineke, Paulo and Dhanya, who have arranged with other Aurovilians to give and assist with the workshops. For *Auroville Today*, Bill spoke with Sonja and Joster about their work.

Why have you organized guest programmes in Auroville?

It almost started happening by itself, spontaneously. Probably it's part of the natural evolution of Auroville. Once Auroville reached the stage where it could host an event like the International Youth Year Conference (1987), the International Health and Healing Congress (1988), the "Peace Trees" Seminar (1988) a much wider dimension opened in Auroville. Since some time there have been periodic courses and training programmes in architecture, village development, ferro-cement and such things and all these have been increasing over the past few years. They have brought energy and development to Auroville as a whole, and benefitted more than just the individuals who participated. Our group came together because last year guest programmes were already happening in Auroville, in Vérité and at Centre Guest House. Tom was also organizing motorcycle tours through South India. A group came from Findhorn and four Aurovilians organized a two-week introduction to Auroville for them. They will come again this year. In fact this introduction to Auroville will be offered every month.

We never had any introduction to Auroville before and we survived! Why is it needed now?

There are people who are interested in Auroville but unable to wander around by themselves with a map and bicycle to discover what Auroville's all about. Coming to India for the first time is a big step for some people, and if they are met at the airport and taken to a reserved accommodation where, for a short time, they know they'll get a good organized introduction to everything, well, they're happy about that. It makes things easier and they find out what they want to know much faster. Auroville has changed over the years — guests can't just walk into places like they used to. Even Matrimandir, where a guest could always find some work, has become a much more structured workarea where it's not always easy to fit in. Guests and newcomers have mentioned the problems they have in getting to know Auroville. Of course, most people will just come like always, but it's good to have something for those who need some help or some activity to "ground" their stay, and would like to have more possibilities of involve-

ment in Auroville. It helps Auroville too to finance the maintenance of places like Pitanga Hall and other facilities we have created for group work. They are mostly under-utilized and have to be maintained by community funds.

Do you see any danger of diluting Auroville's meaning and purpose by such programmes?

Not at all; on the contrary, they will help to keep the focus of Auroville's ideals. By organizing things with an overall coordination group we can maintain quality control over the guests' activities. Already other people had been using Auroville to hold courses, renting the guest houses to do their own programmes without much benefit to Auroville, financially or otherwise. For our guest programmes we will naturally motivate people to come to Auroville and not just as tourists.

Even if somebody comes just for the hatha yoga course — it's not just that, which they can get anywhere, but this one which will happen in Auroville.

Actually these programmes will include only small groups of people and will be spread out over several months. The noticeable impact on the ordinary life of Auroville will be slight. We are not changing the focus of Auroville as a way of life to that of a course or a workshop you take and then return to your old ways. Obviously we're not trying to "package" Auroville as a "new age" product. We're trying to expand the possibilities for ourselves and for our guests to live more consciously in Auroville. What happens to people when they come to Auroville, even for a few weeks, can profoundly affect the rest of their lives.

How will people find out about these programmes?

Well, not through advertising! We will work mostly through the Auroville International Centres. The people who will sign up for the programmes will be "friends" of Auroville or people who wanted to come anyway. We're trying to find a coordinator in each continental area. Ilse (AVI Holland) can do it for Europe. We have prepared an information packet with all the course descriptions, prices and procedures. It will be sent to anyone interested. Our address is Auroville Guest Programme, Centre Guest House, Auroville 605 101, India. □

Auroville Guest Programme, Winter 1991-1992

Date:	Programme:
November 25-30	Tai Chi; Iyengar Hatha Yoga
December 2-7	Relaxation and Breathing; *Introduction Week
December 9-14	In Search of Oneness; 1 Week South India Excursion
December 16-21	*Introduction Week; Dance Improvisation; Reflexology; 2 Days Excursion (Mahabalipuram)
December 24-28	*Introduction Week; Iyengar Hatha Yoga;
Dec. 30-Jan. 4	Dance Improvisation; Transformation Game; 1 Week South India Excursion
January 6-11	Tai Chi; Reflexology; 2 Days Excursion (Mahabalipuram)
January 12-18	Introduction Week
January 20-25	In Search of Oneness; Relaxation and Breathing; 1 Week South India Excursion
Jan. 26-Feb. 1	2 Days Excursion (Mahabalipuram); Introduction Week
February 3-8	Tai Chi, Iyengar Hatha Yoga; Transformation Game; 2 Days Excursion (Mahabalipuram)
February 10-15	Dance Improvisation; Reflexology; 1 Week South India Excursion
February 17-22	In Search of Oneness; Transformation Game
March 2-7	Iyengar Hatha Yoga; Tai Chi; Transformation Game
March 9-12	Introduction Week; Dance Improvisation
March 14-21	Reflexology; In Search of Oneness; Transformation Game

* Fully Booked!