

AUROVILLE TODAY

November 1989

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Number Eleven

We never thought it would be easy to touch that other dimension of Auroville, that invisible glue that, at some level, binds us together in spite of our superficial differences. It's so much easier to talk about windmills and trees, new economic orders and international exchanges, and therefore to give the impression that Auroville is one of those new age communities devoted to right living and social experimentation. But it's *not*, and we would feel untrue to ourselves if we didn't try to tap the deeper layer of our lives here, and to present—however incoherently—that which underlies the shifting surface of our daily struggle with bad roads, drying-up wells and marauding goats.

But how? How to capture in blunt instruments like words something as subtle yet concrete as a glance, an inner shift, a shared understanding, or the energy field that surrounds us here, sharpening, accelerating and—when we allow it to—illuminating every aspect of our daily lives? How not to cheapen or distort? How not to found a new orthodoxy? (For the danger of creating a new religion is a major preoccupation in Auroville) How to describe a path when much of the way is unknown? How to...?

"Embark", said Mother, who was never known to sit on the bank considering the difficulties. So *Auroville Today* sets sail, leaking, no doubt, and with an unkempt crew who can never quite decide in which direction to steer, or what exactly their cargo is, but preferring, above all, glorious shipwreck to a cosy excursion on the backwaters of the known! Bon voyage!

A Brief Introduction to Integral Yoga

The following is an attempt, no doubt superficial, to present a simple introduction to 'integral yoga'. The term, although often used, is perhaps not well understood, either within or outside Auroville. This is not to suggest that everybody has to be familiar with the terminology before they can embark on this yoga. Nor does it suggest that the integral yoga cannot be practised under many different forms, in different ways, by different people. However, since Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have laid the basis for this experiment, their words and example have a special power to remind us of why we are here, and where we are trying to get to.

Apart from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's works, I have drawn upon Peter Heehs' new biography of Sri Aurobindo (see elsewhere in this issue) and Shri Kireet Joshi's notes on the integral yoga. — Alan

'YOGA' is a Sanskrit word meaning 'union'; union with the one Reality that underlies everything in the world and which gives it significance. Yoga is also the name given to the rigorous process "by which we transcend or shed our present modes of being and rise to a new, a higher, a wider mode of consciousness which is not that of the ordinary animal and intellectual man". (Sri Aurobindo)

In the East, yoga has been practised for thousands of years. Over those years, different 'schools' or approaches have evolved to attain the object of 'union'. Each of these approaches takes one aspect of the being—the mind, the emotional being, the body etc.—and by concentrating exclusively upon that aspect, by refining and purifying it, awakens latent powers that greatly accelerate the natural process of nature towards union with the Absolute. The problem with each of these specialized approaches to union is that they leave other parts of the being untouched, even causing them to atrophy. In 'secular' terms, it's like the image of the brilliant professor who

cannot tie up his own shoelaces! Having experienced and followed each path through to its conclusion, Sri Aurobindo sought a higher synthesis of these traditional approaches, based on central principles common to all and a widening of the sphere of their individual action. In other words, an 'integral yoga'. Such a yoga would not seek liberation from the world, but would use all the faculties, aspects and activities of the individual and life as opportunities for purification, union and transformation. Nothing would be excluded. In Sri Aurobindo's famous phrase, "All life is Yoga". And this would duplicate, albeit in a highly accelerated way, the process of nature itself, which makes use of everything in its integral journey towards union with the Source.

In this respect, Sri Aurobindo's definition of evolution is different from Darwin's. Sri Aurobindo sees evolution as a gradual unfolding of higher and higher levels of consciousness. The physical modifications of matter—which were Darwin's concern—are for Sri Aurobindo merely the

outward manifestation of matter increasing its capacity to 'hold' and express 'higher' levels.

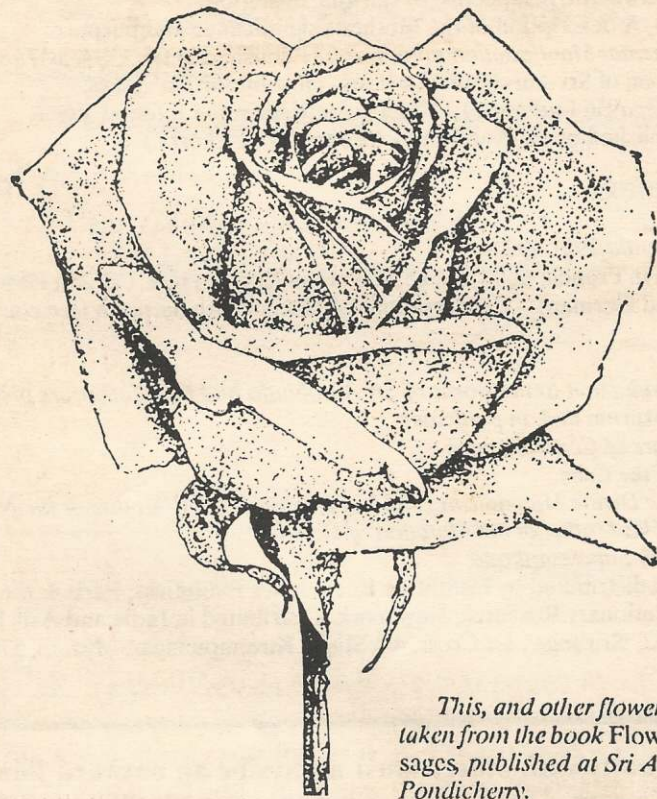
What are these levels? The traditional system of Indian yoga speaks of different 'planes' of the being, each of which has its own qualities and degree of illumination. The lower planes are those of which we are more immediately aware—the physical being, the vital being (the life force) and the mental being, or mind. Above the mind, according to Sri Aurobindo's classification, are the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind and the Overmind. Each of these planes represents a further ascent towards the Source of all and, consequently, each plane embodies a larger awareness and power of illumined action.

What Sri Aurobindo discovered, however, ('discovery', of course, is a relative term; Sri Aurobindo states that the ancient rishis knew of it) was a plane *above* the overmind, which he called the 'Supermind'. This is not, as the term suggests, another aspect of mind, but something of an entirely different nature. It is a principle of active will and knowledge superior to mind, a Truth consciousness that is simultaneously a power of direct and unerring action. "As its knowledge is always true, so too its will is always true; it does not fumble in its handling of things or stumble in its paces", wrote Sri Aurobindo.

The Supermind is the critical element which makes Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's yoga a yoga of *transformation* rather than, as in the traditional systems of yoga, a yoga of realization or liberation from life. By 'transformation', Sri Aurobindo means "a bringing down of the Divine Consciousness static and dynamic into all parts (of the being) and the entire replacement of the present consciousness by that". Only the Supermind can "descend, create a new Truth-Consciousness and divinise Life".

This supermind consciousness is not simply 'up there' apart from life. It is also *involved*, hidden in the depths of life itself. For, as Sri Aurobindo pointed out, evolu-

This, and other flower designs have been taken from the book Flowers and their Messages, published at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.



tion implies involution, as evolution is a progressive manifestation of that which is within. Consequently, the 'movement' of the integral yoga is a double one. An 'ascent' towards the supramental plane, and the 'descent' of that force into all the other planes and all the aspects of the being through a process of surrender and self-opening. The aim is the divinisation of life, a transformation of "mind and life and body even here upon Earth into a new manifestation of the truth-conscious spirit". The result of this transformation would be nothing less than a new species, radically different from the present human species. But this transformation can only be complete, be lasting, when physical life itself is transformed by the supramental force. Physical transformation, however, the remoulding of the body into a fit vehicle for the transformed consciousness, is the greatest challenge of all, for the body is 'imprinted' with the habits and fears of millions of years. This code must be broken and replaced, even at the level of the cells, with the supramental force, the only force capable of transforming the 'inconscious' physical, without losing its full power of action. This was the work that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were engaged in over so many years, clearing a path through uncharted territory so that others could follow.

And what would be the result of the transformation of a critical mass of humanity? Sri Aurobindo defined it as a 'gnostic' society, a spiritualized society which would "live like its spiritual individuals, not in the ego, but in the spirit, not as the collective ego, but as the collective soul".

The Mother wanted Auroville to be not only an experiment in human unity, but also the 'cradle' of this new species, this new life, this new society. "We have been given a body not to reject it but to make it into something better. And that is precisely one of the goals of Auroville. The human body capable of expressing a being higher than man." (1970)

Selected Bibliography

The works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are extensive, and sometimes challenging to read and understand. The following selection includes the major works and others which are central to an understanding of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's 'action'.

SRI AUROBINDO

- *The Life Divine* — his major work
- *The Synthesis of Yoga* — an analysis of different spiritual paths and an explanation of the Integral Yoga.
- *Savitri* — an epic poem.
- *The Human Cycle* — an examination of the relationship between the individual and society from the perspective of spiritual evolution.
- *The Mother* — A description of the Mother's significance and purpose.
- *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth* (Published in the USA as *The Mind of Light*) — one of Sri Aurobindo's last and most important essays.
- *Letters on Yoga* (in four parts) — Practical advice on the Integral Yoga (All works published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.)

THE MOTHER

- *Mother's Agenda 1951-1973* (13 volumes in French; nos 1,2,3,4,5,12 & 13 in English; nos. 1 & 2 in Hindi; no 1 in Italian and German) — Conversations of Mother with Satprem (see elsewhere in this issue).

A good introduction to the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are provided by the books of Satprem and, in particular:

- *The Adventure of Consciousness*
- *The Mind of the Cells*
- *Mother or the Divine Materialism* (Vol I of a trilogy. Vol II *Mother or the New Species*. Vol III *Mother or the Mutation of Death*.)
- *On the Way to Superhumanhood*

(Published and distributed by Institut de Recherches Evolutives, Paris & the Institute for Evolutionary Research, New York. Distributed in India and Asia by Mira Aditi Centre, 62, 'Sriranga', 1st Cross, 4th Stage, Kuvempunagar, Mysore, 570 023, India)

"An external unity with others must always be an outward joining and association of external lives with a minor inner result; the mind and heart attach their movements to this common life and the beings whom we meet there; but the common external life remains the foundation, — the inward constructed unity, or so much of it as can persist in spite of mutual ignorance and discordant egoisms, conflict of minds, conflict of hearts, conflict of vital temperaments, conflict of interests, is a partial and insecure superstructure. The spiritual consciousness, the spiritual life reverses the principle of building; it bases its action in the collective life upon an inner experience and inclusion of others in our own being, an inner sense and reality of oneness. The spiritual individual acts out of that sense of oneness which gives him immediate and direct perception of the demand of self on other self, the need of life, the good, the work of love and sympathy that can truly be done. A realization of spiritual unity, a dynamisation of the intimate consciousness of one-being, of one self in all beings, can alone found and govern by its truth the action of the divine life."

Sri Aurobindo — *The Life Divine*, page 1029

(This quotation was given to us by a long-time Matrimandir worker, when we asked him about his relation to Matrimandir. He felt it expressed his feelings so well that he asked us to use it instead of his own words — Eds.)



EXHIBITION

December 4th — 7th, 1989

At the invitation of the Alliance Française in Madras, a group of artists from Auroville has come forward to share their experience of years in India through their art. Following an exhibition held last year in the American Consulate (Madras), once again there will be an opportunity to glimpse the impact of this country on these artists who are from almost as many countries-of-origin and schools as there are works on display. The exhibition is sponsored by SAIER and Aurelec.

COLLECTIVE YOGA

by Edith Schnapper

Edith helps run the Auroville International centre in the U.K. and is a long-term friend and supporter of Auroville. She has published many books, including *One in All*, an anthology of religion, and *The Inward Odyssey*, which describes the concept of the Way in the great religions of the world. Her most recent book was *The Spiral Path*, an introduction to the field of Spiritual Psychology. Recently she sent us this article.

"It is unity in a new consciousness that is the aim"

— Sri Aurobindo

Events in Auroville time and again have borne out the fact that contrary trends, in time, stimulate renewed harmony in the community. They have also resulted in a self-questioning as regards the spiritual dimension of Auroville.

Such fluctuations have to be evaluated against the background of the global significance and the many-levelled evolutionary thrust instilled into the world by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The envisaged transformation, so as to be all-inclusive, has to advance on a wide front taking in the two main aspects of human life, the individual and the collective.

The Mother realised at an early stage that the transformatory work on the parts of the being, as well as on the cellular level, cannot stand alone; it has to be supplemented by a communally orientated view so as to make a universal change possible. This is the *raison d'être* of Auroville.

With this end in view, the Mother created a new concept which she called Collective Yoga. It refers to a spiritual discipline that has not been attempted before and, for Auroville, it is important to understand what it is and in what way it differs from other Yogas. One thing is evident. Collective Yoga does not refer to an assembly of people — groups, Ashrams, Monasteries — who pursue an individual yogic path together. This distinction is crucial, for it is here that many misunderstandings of Auroville's ideal and purpose originate.

Perhaps the most telling clue comes from experiences of the Mother which are excitingly confirmed in certain experiments in the New Physics. It was found that there are no independent entities or parts of whatever type anywhere in the universe; every single thing forms part of a greater whole and as such carries in it the imprint of the whole. The Mother expressed this in Her own inimitable way.

"It is the unity of all in the solidarity of a common manifestation that will allow the creation of the new and divine world upon the Earth. Each will bring his part, but no part will be complete except as a power in the solidarity of the whole."

We have to accept the fact, and learn to live by it, that there is a total interdependence and even an inescapable oneness linking individuals to a greater assemblage, as Sri Aurobindo likes to call it; in our present context, the individual to the collectivity of Auroville.

As the Mother observed, a truly collective life has to obey certain group laws that are different from those governing an individualistically orientated life. For instance, we are told that these laws are likely to run counter to personal achievements, however exalted, because of the latter's incompleteness. Thus an individual might have to relinquish certain realisations to allow the "imprint of the whole" to take root in him and change his outlook.

It appears that this is a necessary precondition for what the Mother calls collective realisation or awareness. Clearly this cannot develop in us by leading a mainly solitary life, it needs the experience and the interplay of a group of individuals willing to give themselves to this experiment.

A collective inner awareness also demands of us a shift in our attention. If it is, as is habitually the case, rivetted to a dominantly self-centered attitude, then divisions and clashes of personalities within the group are inevitable. But if our attention in daily life can be directed, again habitually, towards the group as a whole, then identification of individual and group becomes a possibility and, maybe with it, we are afforded a first glimpse of what the Mother meant when she speaks of the need for a new centre of action in us.

Is there a method or spiritual discipline indicated in the Integral Yoga to help such a radical change to occur?

More communal activities, greater openness within the group, greater tolerance and give-and-take, all these are undoubtedly helpful and have all been tried before, but they are clearly not enough. Something else is called for. This something else appears to be enshrined in a concept especially dear to Sri Aurobindo. He speaks of "an observing Consciousness" that "frees us to rise to a spiritual level and thus to recreate our existence". This observing consciousness in us, following other traditions, he calls variously the Witness Self, the Witness Soul or just the Witness. Sri Aurobindo gives us a clue of what is meant in his frequent admonitions "to stand back". For this witnessing awareness stands back from the daily flux of happenings, observing, impartial and uninvolved. It is an attitude to life which, if taken up as a spiritual practice from moment to moment, tends to loosen our self-attention and, what is more, takes into its ambience the greater whole, the group, the collectivity.

When we begin to live from that observing and witnessing position we realise that we have to relinquish our claim of independence, and that whatever we do or whatever anybody else does inevitably affects the collectivity as a whole, notwithstanding isolation or distances involved.

Such a witnessing consciousness, which Sri Aurobindo also links with cosmic consciousness, must mean, if it means anything, that divisive barriers separating us from one another are an illusion. Perhaps we begin then to understand the Mother's assertion "It is all the same Being that expresses itself for us in a way that is translated for us in an assembly, a group, a collectivity".

Auroville is a pointer to a future existence where the two aspects of life, the individual and the collective, not only interpenetrate and reinforce each other but are seen and act as the outflow of one and the same inner realisation of oneness.

Does such an existence belong wholly to the future? Not so, for it has become an actuality in the life of the Mother as documented for us in the Agenda. It contains both modes of transformation, the individual and the collective as a unified process. Both the Agenda and Auroville are creations of the Mother's consciousness Force, one being the blueprint of the other. As such, they cannot be separated without vitiating Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's evolutionary work in the world.

Sri Aurobindo's symbol

4.4.58

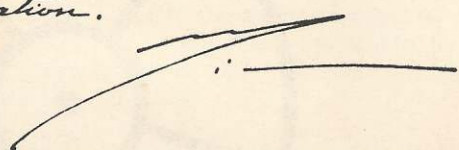


The descending triangle represents Sat. Chit. Ananda.

The ascending triangle represents the aspiring answer from matter under the form of life, light and love.

The junction of both - the central square - is the perfect manifestation having at its centre the Avatar of the Supreme - the lotus.

The water - inside the square - represents the multiplicity, the creation.



When darkness deepens strangling the earth's breast
And man's corporeal mind is the only lamp,
As a thief's in the night shall be the covert tread
Of one who steps unseen into his house.
A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,
A power into mind's inner chamber steal,
A charm and sweetness open life's closed doors
And beauty conquer the resisting world,
The truth-light capture Nature by surprise,
A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss
And earth grow unexpectedly divine.
In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,
The days become a happy pilgrim march,
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.
A few shall see what none yet understands;
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;
For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done.

Sri Aurobindo - Savitri I, iv

An extract from Mother's Agenda

14.3.'70

"ALL the experiences that others had had, those of entering into contact with superior worlds, they left the physical here as it is (How to say?...) from the beginning of the existence until Sri Aurobindo's departure, I was in the consciousness that one can climb up, one can know, one can have all the experiences (in fact, one had them), but when one came back in the body..., it was these old formidable mental laws which directed everything. And then, all these years have been years to prepare - to prepare - to free oneself and to prepare -, and these last days, it was... ah! the PHYSICAL verification, made by the body, that it had changed.

It must be 'worked out' as one says, it has to be realised in all details, but the change IS DONE - the change is done.

This is to say that the material conditions which had been elaborated by the mental, FIXED by it (*Mother closes the fist tightly*), and which were looking so inevitable, to the extent that those who had a living experience of the higher worlds thought that one had to escape from this world, to abandon this material world if one truly wanted to live in the Truth (that is the cause of all those theories and all those beliefs), but now, it is no more like that. Now, it is no more like that. The physical is CAPABLE of receiving the Superior Light, the Truth, the true Consciousness and to ma-ni-fest it.

It is not easy, it requires endurance and will, but the day will come when it will be totally natural. The door has just - just been opened - that's all, now one must go.

(silence)

Naturally, what was established is clinging and desperately defending itself. That's why all this trouble (*wriggling gesture in the terrestrial atmosphere*) - it has lost the game. It is finished. It is finished.

(silence)

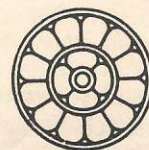
It took... a little more than one year for this Consciousness to win this Victory. And yet, naturally, it is visible only to those who have the inner vision, but... but it is done."

(long silence)



The Mother's symbol

24.1.58



The central circle represents the Divine Consciousness.

The four petals represent the four powers of the Mother.

The twelve petals represent the twelve powers of the Mother manifested for Her work.



Mother's Agenda

1951-1973

This tremendous document - 6,000 pages in 13 volumes - is the day-to-day account over twenty-two years of Mother's exploration into the body consciousness and of her discovery of a 'cellular mind' capable of restructuring the nature of the body and the laws of the species as drastically as one day the first stammerings of a 'thinking mind' transformed the nature of the ape. It is a veritable document of experimental evolution. A revolution in consciousness that alters the laws of the species. And it's the question of our times, for whatever the appearances, we are not at the end of a civilization but at the end of an evolutionary cycle. Are we going to find the passage to the next species... or perish?

As scrupulously as the scientist in his laboratory, Mother goes back to the origin of matter's formation, to the primordial code, and there, "by chance", stumbles upon the mechanisms of death - upon the very power that changes death - and upon a 'new' Energy which curiously parallels the most recent theories on the subatomic nature of Matter. The key to Matter contains the key to death... and the key to the next species.

☐ N.B. Tape recordings of conversation from the Agenda are available from Mira Aditi, Mysore.

C A P I T A L S

Our readers may have noted that *Auroville Today* is not very consistent when referring to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Sometimes we write about 'Him' and 'Her', sometimes we ignore the capitals altogether. There is a reason.

It has to do with the state of the mind of the writer of the article. Recognizing what They have done for humanity - to the extent that we are able to understand this - would already be sufficient to use capitals as an expression of veneration and respect.

But apart from that, there are the words of The Mother. She spoke about Sri Aurobindo as the Avatar, representing the supreme Consciousness and Will on earth, and about herself as the supreme universal Mother, representing both the eternal, ineffable and immutable Consciousness of the Executrix of the Supreme and the consciousness of the Sadhak of the integral Yoga who strives in an ascending effort towards an ever increasing progression.* With this in mind one is tempted to refer to Them in really big capitals.

There are, however, also some buts. One of these is that we prefer sometimes to refer to their human aspects. Another one is, that there is a latent fear in most of us: we are not prepared to help create a new kind of religion. "Auroville", said Mother, "is for those who want to lead a life essentially divine, but who renounce all religions, be they ancient, modern, new or future; the religions are part of the history of humanity, and it is under this heading that they will be studied in Auroville, not as beliefs to which one should or should not adhere, that represent themselves as exclusive Truth in which one should have an absolute faith, but as the process of the development of the human consciousness that has to bring man to his supreme realization."***

It is with this in mind that we sometimes refer to 'them', consciously ignoring the capitals.

Carel

* The Mother in l'Agenda de Mère 1951-1960, p. 209.

** The Mother in l'Agenda de Mère 1970, p. 192.

Matrimandir: the Fourth Dimension

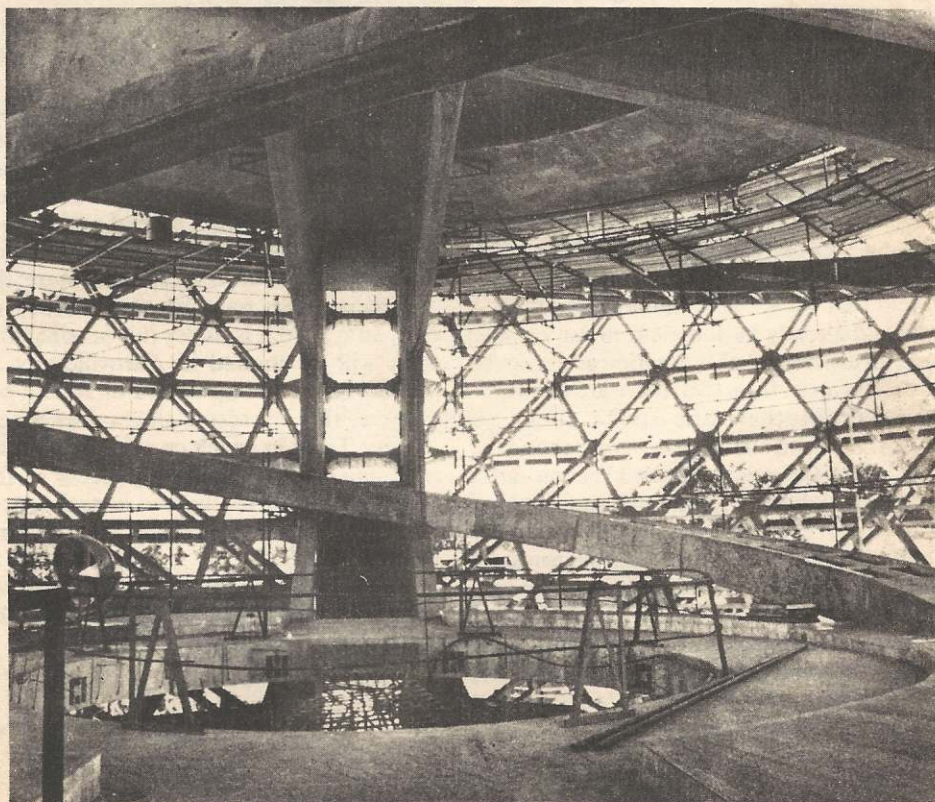
Some of Ruud Lohman's essays on Matrimandir were published just before his death in 1986. Ruud worked constantly at Matrimandir from its very beginning. He kept a diary on his experiences which will eventually be published. This excerpt is from the book *A House For The Third Millennium* which is available from the Boutique d' Auroville, and can also be ordered from the Secretariat, c/o Barbara, Bharat Nivas, Auroville 605101.

Instead of simplifying, Matrimandir has a tendency to multiply the aspects, tendencies, characteristics; one might well get lost in between ribs and pillars, chakras and dimensions. Though it may be a very interesting game, where does it lead us? It leads to confusion, to the same confusion in which we live all the time, for that is in fact how we are made. Then where is the integrating factor, where is the way out?

It is not in the first or second dimension, with which we have been playing, but is it there in the third dimension which we discovered in Matrimandir? That points a way but taken by itself it is just as confusing as the rest unless some integrating factor is added. So we must conclude that this factor is not in the third dimension but in the fourth, and here is where we jump right into the heart and soul of Matrimandir, or rather, we walk right into the Inner Chamber. There is the answer, where else? The Inner Chamber is not just a room, it is a space in the fourth dimension and to enter it requires a leap, an inversion-conversion such as Mother speaks about in relation to the psychic being. In a talk on the 8th February 1973 She said: "To be conscious of your-psychic being you must for once be capable of experiencing the fourth dimension; otherwise you cannot know what it is like...my God! Indispensable, indispensable! Life begins with that. Otherwise you are sunk in falsehood...and in disorder and darkness. Otherwise in order to be conscious of your own consciousness, you have to mentalize. It's frightening, frightening!" And in one of the "Entretiens" She said, "You must remember that the inner beings are not in the third dimension. If you open up your body you will find only the viscera of the body, which are in the third dimension..." To enter the real Matrimandir we have to make a jump. That also means that to bring all the various threads of our being together we have to make a jump, a conversion. It also implies that in order to bring all the various threads of Auroville together in the psychic center we have to collectively make a jump into the next dimension. It is the only point—a huge point or an infinitesimal one, in that dimension it's all the same—where Strength can be one with

Wisdom, and together they can be harmonized with Beauty and Perfection; and the Inner Chamber is the only point and, symbolically speaking, the only place where all the other parts and planes of the being can begin to reflect a variegated unity and in which all the other centers of consciousness can be integrated.

But it is a space which is different. One behaves differently, feels differently, IS differently. That is the main problem of entering into the new space: one has to leave behind, to forget, to change, and that is a painful thing for individuals as well as collectives. But the alternative is letting the world and oneself go on eternally as they are now, and that is also not a nice proposition. What has to change most is the consciousness. In the same talk we quoted earlier (8.2.73) Mother said, "It is the mind which prevents you from feeling it. You must BE, you see, you mentalize everything, everything... You, what you call consciousness is thinking of things...but that's not it at all, that's not consciousness... Consciousness must be able to be wholly lucid and WITHOUT WORDS!... There you have it...everything is becoming luminous and warm... STRONG! and the peace, the true peace which is neither inertia nor immobility..." One can understand why the Inner Chamber is also called the Hall of Silence. One can begin to grasp the magnitude of the change required to move into a consciousness of wordlessness, which especially for collectives is a major leap from the noise of our common consciousness. In the symbol one also sees clearly how a collective should be run: the members yield their positions on the various platforms and knots of consciousness at all the different levels, and stations stuck in-between pillars and ribs, and collectively they move, each by shifting into his own psychic space, into the Inner Chamber. Only from there can a place like Auroville be run or any other place for that matter. One is together around the Crystal, the Spark, the Soul in silence, listening, integrating, receiving and then manifesting what has been received. Any other form of government or self-government does not hit the mark, does not bring the New World an inch closer.



"One might well get lost in between ribs and pillars..."

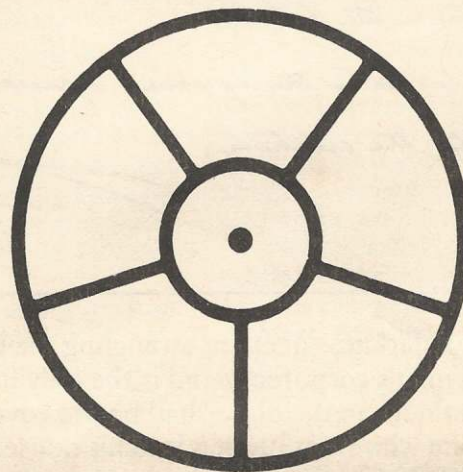
Photo: John Mandeen

A D

There should be somewhere on earth a place which no nation could claim as its own, where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme truth; a place of peace, concord, and harmony where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weaknesses and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the concern for progress would take precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the search for pleasure and material enjoyment.

In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their souls; education would be given not for passing examinations or obtaining certificates and posts but to enrich existing faculties and bring forth new ones. In this place, titles and positions would be replaced by opportunities to serve and organise; the bodily needs of each one would be equally provided for, and intellectual, moral, and spiritual

Auroville's symbol



"The dot at the centre represents Unity, the Supreme; the inner circle represents the creation, the conception of the City; the petals represent the power of expression, realisation."

Mother, 24.8.71

The Refinement of Habits

Religion is a habit of mind which flourishes in Auroville as it does everywhere. This is the mental habit of enshrining my own point of view or lack of point of view as 'the' truth. My own belief about the way I think things are, or should be, does not separate me from those who frequent temples or churches. In almost every mind lives a religion whether atheistic or theistic, ascetic or hedonistic, naive or sarcastic. Actually it is usually a mixture of these elements. This is nothing new, but it is something I very often forget in my attempt to live the truth. It is especially difficult in Auroville because I can fortify myself with many Centenary editions and Agenda volumes.

Stepping back outside this self, who sits and writes as if he knows, I wonder why he doesn't realize that anyone reading this can only see with eyes as blind as his. Anyone reading with links to traditional religions is immediately alienated. Anyone associated with some teaching is also alienated. Anyone who knows it already doesn't need to read it again. Finally he writes for himself, but shouldn't he be careful of the trap he is trying to warn others about? He would like to have a new metaphor to talk about human experience that is not just another old religion. But this is not easy. He sees the development of a 'green religion' now in the forefront of the fashionable politics of institutions, groups and governments. Concern for the environment, vanishing species, and renewable energy cannot be condemned. It is obviously a sign of growing sensitivity in evolution; but the deeper dimensions need to be included in any ecology to give the basis that human experience requires because of its

inner needs, however suppressed they may be by the demands of immediate survival struggles.

What is needed is something academically sound, culturally sympathetic and universally practicable. One recent integrative philosophy that can approach an 'integral yoga' came out of the Commonwealth organizations in the early 1950's. It is called 'human ecology'. By 1970 the term had international acceptance in Commonwealth circles. Very simply, human ecology tries to include everything a person needs to develop every level of his or her being. Clean air and water are a necessity, but so are beauty and truth.

So do you see that our writer is into a refinement of habits? The habit of religion replaced by the habit of human ecology? Perhaps, but of course, he is not making human ecology into a religion. Human ecology communicates in a way that is more widely applicable, that's all. Yogas with Sanskrit terminologies are incomprehensible or alienating except for those who are in the family, and that goes for all the occult esotericism that some of us like to indulge in as well.

You can now see our writer at his end point trying to see this world as one, looking for a language that is common enough to communicate with all the uncommon parts. Human ecology cannot be the answer, but it's one relevant way to handle the issues at this moment. Something else is going on that can't quite be discovered, even in *Auroville Today*, unless it is in you somehow already. It's not coming down to an 'Amen' or an 'Aum' or a green T-shirt, but something closer to a smile.

Bill

superiority would be expressed in the general organisation not by an increase in the pleasures and powers of life but by increased duties and responsibilities.

Beauty in all its artistic forms, painting, sculpture, music, literature, would be equally accessible to all, the ability to share in the joy it brings would be limited only by the capacities of each one and not by social or financial position. For in this ideal place money would no longer be the sovereign lord; individual worth would have a far greater importance than that of material wealth and social standing. There, work would not be a way to earn one's living but a way to express oneself and to develop one's capacities and possibilities while being of service to the community as a whole, which, for its own part, would provide for each individual's subsistence and sphere of action. In short, it would be a place where human relationships which are normally based almost exclusively on competition and strife, would be replaced by relationships of emulation in doing well, of collaboration and real brotherhood. — Mother, August 1954

Working with flowers

There is hardly anybody in Auroville who does not know the 'Work' tree. You can't overlook it. It is ubiquitous. Far fewer of us will know its botanical name: *Acacia Auriculiformis*, and nobody will bother to call it by that name. But in fact the name 'Work' was given by Mother to its fragrant yellow flowers, which are like catkins.

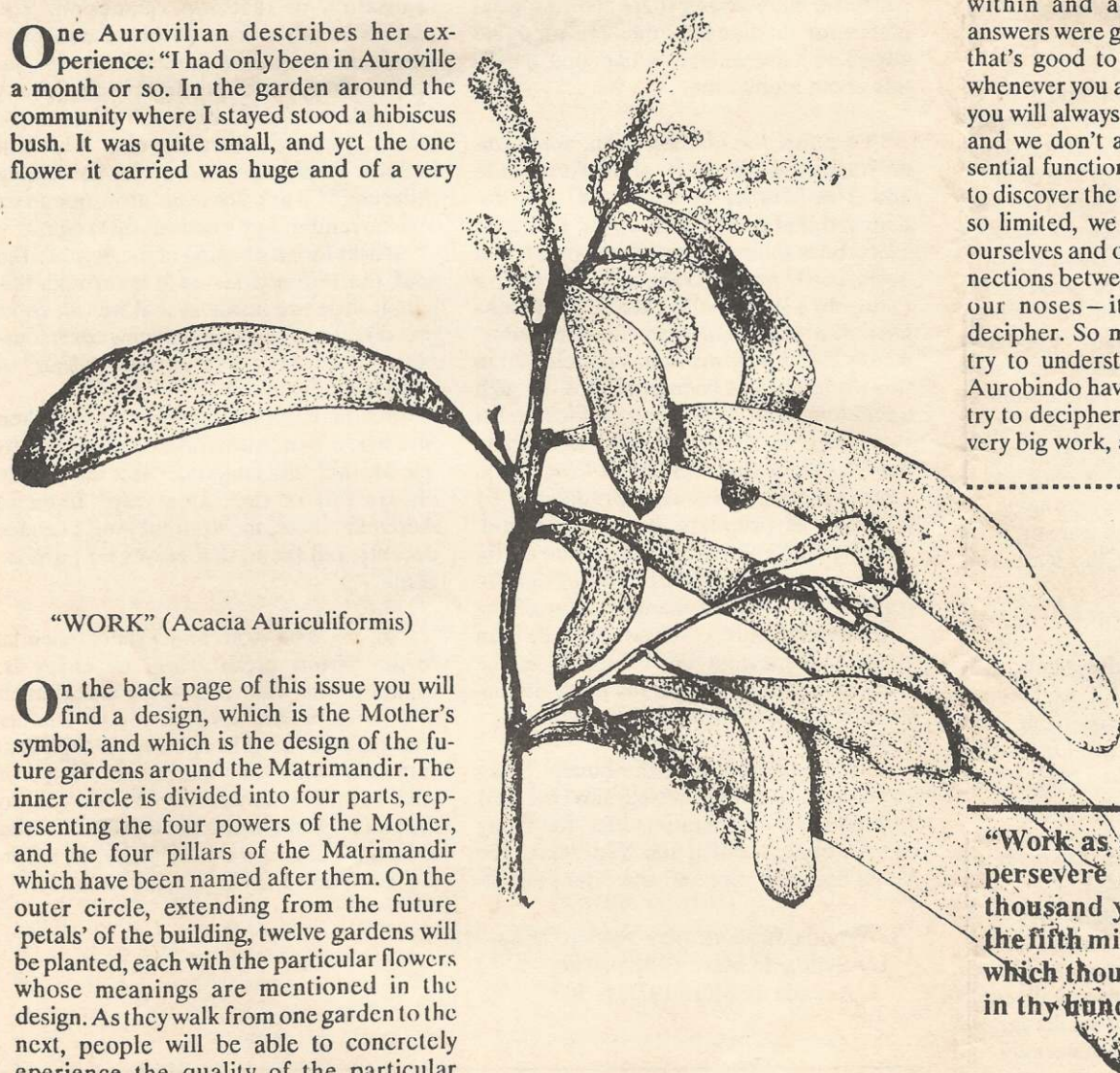
The Mother has given names to over 500 species of flowers and plants, by entering into contact with them and giving a more or less precise meaning to what she felt. She entered into contact with the nature of the flower, its inner truth, and thus came to know what that flower represented. She describes it as follows: "There is a mental projection when you give a precise meaning to a flower. It can answer, vibrate to the contact of the projection, accept the meaning, but a flower has no equivalent for the mental consciousness. In the flower it is something like the movement of a baby—it is neither a sensation nor a feeling, but something of both; it is a spontaneous movement, a very special vibration. If you are in contact with it, if you feel it, you can get an impression which may be translated as a thought. That is how I give a meaning to flowers and plants."

One Aurovilian describes her experience: "I had only been in Auroville a month or so. In the garden around the community where I stayed stood a hibiscus bush. It was quite small, and yet the one flower it carried was huge and of a very

tender, softly radiant colour. I bent over it in admiration. The person in charge of the place observed me and said, "Give it a kiss!" Though I was embarrassed, the force with which he suggested it made me obey. I was taken aback and touched to the core when I felt in the flower a very living response to my kiss!"

In the world as it is, whether one lives in a concrete city or in a semi-desert zone like Auroville, flowers are a means of uniting with our deeper self, with that in us which is—as in the plant—aspiring for the light and expressing itself through love of beauty. And this experience will be possible at the Matrimandir gardens once they have been completed.

□ For further reference see the book: *Flowers and their Messages*, published at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.



"WORK" (*Acacia Auriculiformis*)

On the back page of this issue you will find a design, which is the Mother's symbol, and which is the design of the future gardens around the Matrimandir. The inner circle is divided into four parts, representing the four powers of the Mother, and the four pillars of the Matrimandir which have been named after them. On the outer circle, extending from the future 'petals' of the building, twelve gardens will be planted, each with the particular flowers whose meanings are mentioned in the design. As they walk from one garden to the next, people will be able to concretely experience the quality of the particular flower species planted in each garden.

What for you is the essential function of Auroville?

Auroville Today asked this question of some Aurovilians.

Georges: For me, the essential function of Auroville is the understanding and working out of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's teaching. To try to receive what has been realized by them. Because, as I see it, Mother and Sri Aurobindo have succeeded in the transformation and the supramental body exists. Therefore a bridge has been made between our everyday world and the supramental world. And the supramental is present in our world. There is no place—even in the atom—where the supramental is not present, but we don't have the eyes to see it because otherwise we would be supramental beings.

I am convinced that something totally unexpected will happen in the world very soon. As we come to the end of the millennium, the acceleration of that movement that started in the 60's—that searching for a new spirit—is reaching its zenith and something important will happen, just as the French Revolution occurred at the end of the 18th century. The whole of the 20th century is preparing us for this quantum leap. And I'm certain that in Auroville, everything that is necessary to participate in this movement is present. Of course, one is saddened by the thousands of small and very human things that happen in Auroville, and we hear people say, "Is there nothing left of the idea, is there no unity, no understanding? Where is the spirituality?" But I'm convinced it's there, not in everybody, maybe not even in half, but a

handful, a few are there. And Sri Aurobindo and the Mother never asked for more than a handful. And these people, who are now beleaguered by all sorts of impossible things—because Auroville is a difficult place—their souls at least are prepared to go with the jump when it happens.

So Auroville is a place where, in full freedom, people can open themselves to this force for transformation and try to go as far as they can, while living in a community and not separated from the world. This for me is the only aim, the only reason for existence of Auroville. If it is not that, it is *nothing*.

How does your own work relate to this essential function of Auroville?

The only thing I want to do is to gather more knowledge of what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have done, to go deeper into it and try to live it. And when I've gathered more knowledge and fluency, I'll communicate what I've understood. Particularly to the young ones, who are so beautiful and who clearly belong to the children of the new dawn. For whatever happens, whatever stupid things they may do, they will always go beyond and grow into something very beautiful.

Auroville is our place, where we have to be. It's our place of battle—of our struggle with the inner problem—and it's very difficult. But it's the only thing that interests me.

Christine: When I first came to Auroville, my first impression was that it was so beautiful. There were few trees, but there was such a feeling of purity, of power, particularly in that red soil. Sometimes I'm sad because I feel something of that beauty has disappeared.

I never regretted coming, although the first few months were difficult. And I was really helped at that time, because I went within and asked questions, and the answers were given to me very clearly. And that's good to remember—it proves that whenever you ask something very sincerely you will always get help. But we forget this and we don't ask enough. What is the essential function of Auroville? I would say to discover the real meaning of life. We are so limited, we understand so little about ourselves and others, we don't see the connections between what happens in front of our noses—it's like a book we can't decipher. So maybe here in Auroville we try to understand what Mother and Sri Aurobindo have said and we slowly, slowly try to decipher the world around us. It's a very big work, and sometimes you feel you

don't progress. And this quest is also not intense enough in us. Sometimes a door opens, you suddenly understand so much in a few moments, and then you wonder how it is that the remaining part of your life is so unassuming, so absorbed by other things. Why don't we have this aspiration in us to progress all the time? Yes, now I can say it. This is the most important thing for me—to have this all the time. Mother was learning every second—if we could live like that!

I'm amazed how little the Auroville children know about Mother and Sri Aurobindo. I was told that some people don't speak about Mother and Sri Aurobindo to the children because they are afraid of making it a religion. But it doesn't have to be like that. When you read Mother and Sri Aurobindo, it's like being in an atmosphere that *pushes* you towards something else. It widens you—you can't just jump in with one group or another. When I'm working on translating the 'Agenda', it's very moving to see how Mother is always, always looking for a new way. It's a reminder of how we all can be.

"Work as if the ideal had to be fulfilled swiftly and in thy lifetime; persevere as if thou knowest it not to be unless purchased by a thousand years yet of labour. That which thou darest not expect till the fifth millennium, may bloom out with tomorrow's dawning and that which thou hopest and lustest after now, may have been fixed for thee in thy hundredth advent."

Sri Aurobindo,
Thoughts and Aphorisms, page 56

Oh, these questions!

Hundreds, or even thousands, of visitors are passing through the visitors' information centre at Bharat Nivas every year, people of all creeds and nationalities. Some know something about Auroville, others don't. Gilbert started working in the information centre in January '88. After two years, he still doesn't feel it is becoming a routine job. He invites questions and allows himself to be challenged by them. We asked him what kind of questions he usually gets with regard to Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville's spiritual aspect, and what kinds of answers he gives... Here is a sample.

The Indian visitor who isn't from Bengal (where Sri Aurobindo is very well known) often asks where Sri Aurobindo comes from. If he knows more, often he states *either* that Sri Aurobindo is a pure Hindu (a statement which is usually made in a stubborn way) *or* that Sri Aurobindo betrayed the pure spirit of Hinduism by daring to interpret the Bhagavad Gita. Gilbert's response:

"Sri Aurobindo is not a Hindu in the traditional way. Going beyond the rituals, he tried to reach the root of the Hindu scriptures in order to bring back to us the essence of Hinduism. It is said that his epic poem *Savitri* is considered as the 5th Veda. But Sri Aurobindo was beyond any kind of religion, and he didn't belong to India, but to the world. And his work should be considered not as a new teaching, but as a direct action in matter."

Question: Was the Mother a disciple of Sri Aurobindo?

Answer: They were equal and recognized in each other complementary aspects that helped them do their work as integrally as possible and on many levels, material and spiritual. The Mother put it this way: "Without him, I exist not; without me, he is unmanifest."

Q: Was the Mother the wife of Sri Aurobindo?

G: The concept of wife/husband did not apply to them and is far, far below what they tried to achieve.

Q: Why is Auroville in India? (asked mostly by Westerners) and why near Pondicherry? (asked by Indian visitors).

G: Sri Aurobindo came to French Pondicherry since there he would be free from prosecution by the British. This is one, historical, reason. Another reason could be found if one thinks of the Mother's words: "In India are concentrated all the difficulties of humanity": to find a solution to these difficulties is precisely what Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's work is all about.

Q: What is the meaning of the name 'Auroville'?

G: The 'city of Sri Aurobindo' — the city for the material realization of Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

Gilbert adds for the French visitors, that the word 'Aurore' (dawn) is also part of the name — 'city of Dawn'.

Q: Do you have a spiritual leader in Auroville today?

G: We receive guidance from Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's books, but also from our inner guide which is established — be it at different levels — in each of us and belongs to the Divine essence. The more the inner guide develops in ourselves, the better we can understand Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's books. But we don't want a religion. We don't believe in rituals or ceremonies. Sri Aurobindo's yoga is a *yoga of action*, and it is only through genuinely lived experiences that we can feel we're progressing. Any of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings can be re-read 5 or 10 times and if there is a genuine inner progress, we progressively understand what they (not explained but rather) described. Therefore there is no need for a new physical spiritual leader. As it is said in French: "It is better to rely on God than on his saints."

Q: Are Sri Aurobindo and the Mother considered gods?

G: We are all a particle of God. In Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the particle of God seemed to be much, much bigger than in any of us! And it's our task to develop it.

Q: Are you having collective meditations in Auroville?

G: Irregularly. If we would have regular meditations, they would become another ritual, more or less empty according to the presence or the lack of a deep aspiration of the participants. It would become like going to mass every Sunday morning. It would have no more spiritual meaning, but rather a social one. If God doesn't exist, OK, let's forget it! If He exists, it's every second of life, and not just once or twice a week. Collective meditations can be useful at certain times, or particular circumstances; to express gratitude or to invoke a special protection. But Sri Aurobindo's yoga is called *karma yoga*; yoga in daily life. To develop our inner being through the hardships and difficulties — and joys — of daily activities is probably more difficult than if one stays isolated somewhere in a propitious, protected place. But when you go out of this propitious place, floating on a nice cloud, you suddenly fall back into ordinary life where everything may upset your quietness and here again come your ego reactions, irritability and so on... Karma yoga could be illustrated by these words from Sri Aurobindo: "Work done in a proper spirit is a prayer."

Q: So you worship work?

G: We don't worship anything. Worshipping is a passive attitude. We try to BECOME more aware of the Divine through work. Only through work will the Divine be expressed in matter, here on earth.

The New Creation perceived by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is a world where spirituality and materialism will be at last united. That's why Sri Aurobindo's yoga is also called Integral Yoga. There will be no more separation between working AND being aware of the Divine, matter AND spirit. The day it will be permanently established, everything will be different and harmony on earth will not be a dream any more. All this requires a very slow, humble and invisible work in the minutest details of life. It is our challenge here in Auroville. And it's not easy, because as soon as you embark on such a work, everything, as Mother once put it, "is waging war on you". One has to be a real warrior, in the deepest sense. So we learn. We learn a lot.

Q: Do you feel any change within yourself, any sign of progress?

G: It is impossible to judge. I believe we are all progressing, each of us being at different levels. It seems impossible to be in Auroville and not progress. Or else you quit, or you die. No less than that. It happens, too.

Q: Since you have been Auroville for many years, are you happy?

G: Happy is too strong a word. I'd rather say 'fulfilled'. That includes struggles and hardships as well as joy and hopes. As long as Auroville remains a challenge, it is interesting. And the next challenge will be: can Auroville develop materially and physically without losing its spiritual aspect? Some feel that it is impossible and

they have quit Auroville. I'm still here, because I want to see what will happen. Everything depends on our individual and collective sincerity and it's up to each of us to remember why we came here. Many questions could be raised. Let's wait and see. As the Mother said: "Come what may": it's an integral challenge.

Of course there are questions about Matrimandir. Apart from the serious ones, Gilbert gives the example of people who are sure that the Matrimandir is a water tank. They ask: "Are you providing water to Pondicherry as well?" Also the Amphitheatre is mistaken for something else: "Why do you keep this Shivalingam in the middle of your swimming pool, and why is it always empty?"

Q: You say you have no collective meditations, but you are building the Matrimandir, which is a big meditation centre?

A: It will be a place for meditation, but not in an organized way. It will not be a place of ceremonies.

Q: Is such a building not an enormous waste of money in a poor country like India?

G: The Mother said it will be the soul of Auroville, and at our level we don't yet know what its significance will be. We as individuals are just instruments in building it. The Mother said once to an ashramite that millions of rupees spent on the construction of the Taj Mahal was money well

utilized while one paisa spent on a cigarette was wastage.

Q: You have photos of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother everywhere, and you pretend there is no religion?

G: We put the pictures to make us remember why we are here.

Q: Can one keep one's religion in Auroville?

G: Religions haven't solved anything. People are killing each other in the name of religion. Let's just be human beings, looking for the Divine.

In response to *Auroville Today's* question what for him is the real meaning of Auroville, and how he would relate his present activity to this, Gilbert answered:

"What I feel and would also answer to visitors is: Auroville is a laboratory, and we are the willing guinea pigs. And I add that as in any laboratory, you have sometimes explosions, fumes, accidents, and unexpectedly beautiful results, too. Something higher makes us go through drastic experiments, but we cannot complain, for we have chosen to be here.

Whatever we do in Auroville relates to this experiment which is going on here in this laboratory. Planting trees, or informing visitors is the same thing. It's all part of it.

We don't know where we are going, and how far. What matters is that we ARE on that path. I don't ask or care how Auroville will look in 40 years. It is not important. □

MEDITATION?

"AND where do you folks have your collective meditations?" asked my American guest. "On peut méditer sous le Banyan?" said the French girl. Looking at my puzzled face, they both started wondering if people do meditate at all in Auroville. Should meditation then not be part of Auroville's spiritual life?

Actually, the answer is no. Though Auroville is — and Aurovilians attempt to live — a spiritual experiment, there are no collective meditations, there are no special places for meditation — one can meditate anywhere if one wants! — and people hardly talk about meditation.

To grasp the phenomenon, some understanding of the work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother is necessary. She announced that on the 29th day of February 1956, the manifestation of the Supramental upon earth had become a living fact, a reality. In a Wednesday class some months later She explained that "manifestation" means that a new world has manifested in this world: "It has been promised for such a very long time, it has been said for such a very long time, not only here in the Ashram, but ever since the beginning of the earth. There have been all kinds of predictions, by all kinds of prophets. It has been said: There will be a new heaven and a new earth, a new race shall be born, the world shall be transformed." The manifestation of the Supramental in the earth atmosphere is an event as important in evolution as the manifestation of Mind in the earth atmosphere some millions of years ago.

She was asked what the human being can do to transform himself into that next step on the evolutionary ladder, the being Sri Aurobindo called the Superman, the being between man and the future supra-

mental being.

"But it's not man who is going to convert himself into a superman! Just try a little! You see, it is something else that is going to do the work. Man can collaborate, that is, he can lend himself to the process, with good will, with aspiration, and help to his utmost". *

Auroville is there as an experiment for that new consciousness that has dawned upon the earth, an attempt towards the realisation of that supermanhood. The realisation of that new consciousness does not demand spiritual athleticism, big concentrations and meditations, heavy austerities or special virtues. It asks only for a confidence in something else, a kind of childish confidence, a need for something different,** it asks for aspiration, openness and surrender, key words in this yoga.

It asks for an opening of the psychic, the soul, the Fire within — as it is through this simple little fire inside us that we can enter into direct contact with that new consciousness.*** Nothing like another 'affair' of spiritual discipline.**

But this is not easy to understand. When She heard that Aurovilians were meditating, Mother said laughing: "But the people always fall in the same trap! Even in Auroville, there, meditation! And I cannot decently tell them: that serves no purpose at all." **

So, my American and French friends: forget about meditation, or enjoy it, whatever you want... it won't make much difference, unless it helps you to contact your psychic being, to open up, to aspire, to surrender with your mind, your vital and your body. It is in this way that we can do the research and make the discovery of the divine, not through mystic methods, but in life itself, down to the cells of the body. □

* L'Agenda de Mère 1951-1960, p. 78 and 81

** L'Agenda de Mère 1970, p. 219

*** L'Agenda de Mère 1971, p. 103

BOOK REVIEWS

MOTHER, OR THE MUTATION OF DEATH, by Satprem,

"This is the transition of the Earth"

—Mother

The Institute of Evolutionary Research based in New York City is responsible for the translation and publication of the American editions of Mother's Agenda (so far volumes 1,2,3,4, 5, 12 and 13 have been published), as well as related works of Satprem. *On the Way to Superhumanity*, a long essay by Satprem, which reads like an anthem to the forces of the future, was published in 1986. This was followed in 1987 by the *Mutation of Death*, the third and final volume of Satprem's trilogy on the Mother (see bibliography elsewhere in this issue—Eds.).

The *Mutation of Death* traces the experiences of Mother's yoga of cellular transformation from 1968 to 1973, by linking extracts from Mother's extraordinarily revealing conversations with Satprem from those crucial years (published in the *Agenda*) with a prose that is like a continuing burning question, an attempt to tear away the veil that still divides the old world from the new. The old world, a mind-born division of pain, suffering and death; and a new world where the polar opposites of what we call life and death fuse, merge into a new continuum, ruled by the light of a new consciousness, a "third position" — known to the Vedic Rishis thousands of years ago — whose emerging power could well be in the process of radically altering the laws of our world as we know and see it now. The book is a demanding one to read, as Satprem takes us into the miraculous and also dangerous new unknown which is the terra incognita of Mother's yoga, her charting of a passage from one species to another in a body opened to the "deep sense of the oneness of all matter".

In August 1968 Mother has the experience of "Her mind and vital sent packing" and her individuality becoming "a means for transforming the whole". A new mind replaces the old one with a vision that unfolds to her "Landscapes of a perfect harmony, structures, cities, under construction, scenes of the soul's perception... the most marvellous hours one can have on earth". It was as if the soul was in contact with a power "that can crush everything to bits or rebuild everything"; a force that was acting in direct contact with matter without mental or vital intermediaries. And more and more it was as if Mother were living in two worlds at the same time, two worlds that were as if superimposed and perhaps closer than we dare imagine. In 1970 she remarks to Satprem:

"Last night it was truly remarkable. You could not have said, this is the subtle physical and that is the material physical; they were surprisingly one within the other... it's as if that subtle physical world were trying to enter this one... as if it wanted to force its way into this world."

We are all programmed to see the world in a certain way, the past is always with us — our sense of identity born of memory or a subconscious accumulation of experiences and impressions depends on it — and it is just this programming that veils to us the workings of a subtler, though nonetheless physical, world growing in our midst. Perhaps the very act of seeing the world differently, if it were to spread amongst an unknown quantity of individuals, would have the power to change it — a chain reaction of timeless cellular sight.

In Mother's experience this new state of being alters the experience of time: "There is no more time. It's as if another time had entered this one. It's the quality of time that is changing. There is a sort of intensity of consciousness that alters the value of time... you enter a state in which time no

longer has the same reality. It's something else. Very peculiar. It's an innumerable present." And Mother's experiences are not spiritual but cellular as if she had lifted the body's veil: "It isn't at all the same way of looking at things, not at all... and it's physical, that's the extraordinary thing! Previously I used to go into an inner state of being (I know and have experienced them all; I had a conscious life), but all that is over. It's as if the physical being became double. Two worlds in one. The body consciousness is already conscious of a world that would not be governed by the same laws... as if the body were learning eternity. A state of consciousness in which everything is light, splendour, beauty, happiness, goodness. Salvation is physical. There's only one exit from all of this. It's the supreme door. The marvel of marvels, it's right here."

Time changes for the cellular consciousness as does the perception of what for us remains the great divide of life and death. "I have the feeling of becoming another person — no not just that, I am touching another world another way of being. As if dangerous, but marvellous. The feeling that the relationship between what we call life and what we call death is becoming more and more different, completely different... you see it's not that death disappears (death as we conceive it as we know it in relation to life as we know it). It's not like that at all! Both are in the process of changing into something we still don't know; something that seems both extremely dangerous and absolutely marvellous... it's obvious that there is an active will at work to teach the body how to live in a state that is neither life nor death — something else. And that something is divine. Or rather our next step to the divine. ... All the splendours one can experience by going up, getting out, by leaving are nothing! They don't have that concrete reality. That is why the world has been created. It's in terrestrial matter; on earth, that the supreme becomes perfect."

Neither what we call life or death nor the millennial opposites of spirit and matter are what they seem; they mask another reality that could well be emerging unobserved in our midst. It would seem that Mother, by breaking through the substratum of consciousness on which our sense of reality is based has rediscovered that Vedic fire buried in the rocks of matter whose power can alter the worlds. A passage created or a precedent set in one body becomes a possibility for all bodies. As if an event or breakthrough in a particular point of a vibrational force-field (that of the subtle cellular consciousness of matter) alters the whole. We are left grasping for paradigms or metaphors but the implications are tremendous.

In 1963 Mother had observed, "You see it's not just a question of these cells here; it's a question of cells in, well, quite a lot of people, hundreds maybe thousands — all that clings anywhere and in any way to the higher consciousness. And since my mind is silent (I deliberately keep the mind absolutely still, trying not to react to all that constantly comes to it from the 'outside' or trying to react almost subconsciously), nothing is there to think, "Oh it's this one's body, it's that one's body; it's The Body!" (Agenda 6.4.63) Elsewhere Mother had remarked, "It is not for one body. It is for the earth."

In April 1973, Mother tells Satprem, "My nervous system is being transferred to the Supramental". According to Satprem, Mother is "being led to the point where something else will have to manifest itself."

How far would Mother be allowed to go?

At this critical stage, however, in May 1973, Satprem had his last interview with Mother. From then on, Satprem, to whom Mother had confided her experiences of Yoga over so many years, was no longer allowed to meet her.

□ *Mother, or the Mutation of Death, by Satprem. Published by Institute for Evolutionary Research, New York. (Translated from the French) 1987.*

Roger

SRI AUROBINDO: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY, by Peter Heehs.

The most recent attempt at the formidable task of writing a biography of Sri Aurobindo is Peter Heehs' *Sri Aurobindo: A Brief Biography*. Described by the writer as 'a popular introduction to the subject', the book is divided into two parts. Part one deals with Sri Aurobindo's childhood, his education in England, his return to India, and the period of his political activism. Part two focusses on the spiritual adventure which occupied the last 40 years of his life.

There is little new material. Most has been published elsewhere, although, like a good historian, Heehs always goes back to primary sources. But what makes this book valuable is both the lucidity of expression, and the skill with which Heehs selects his material so as to bring out clearly the main lines of Sri Aurobindo's experience and thought. For example, the 14 years of Sri Aurobindo's life in England are covered in a mere nine and a half pages. Yet the moments that are captured — his early decision to dedicate his life to a world-change, his hero-worship of Joan of Arc and Mazzini, his 'mental experience' of the Atman while reading a translation of the Upanishads — appear to be crucial signposts to his later discoveries and achievements.

This part, on the whole, is straight history. A much greater challenge is presented when the biographer is con-

□ *Sri Aurobindo: A Brief Biography, by Peter Heehs. Oxford University Press 1989.*

Alan

NEW PUBLICATIONS

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER, by Kireet Joshi

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, a new book by Kireet Joshi, has just been published. The book is not a summary of the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, but a brief account of the core of the task they placed before themselves and of the main stages of the accomplishment of that task. A review of the book will appear in a subsequent edition of *Auroville Today*.

□ *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, by Kireet Joshi. Published by the Mother's Institute of Research in association with Motilal Banaridass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1989. Rs. 150.*

LIFE WITHOUT DEATH, by Satprem and Luc Venet

For those of our readers who may not know, the English edition of *Life Without Death* is now available in India through the Boutique d'Auroville and the Mira Aditi Centre. This edition has been published in America and sells for Rs. 80.

Life Without Death is written by Luc Venet with quotations from Sri Aurobindo, Mother and Satprem. The author's goal is to explain the "specific conditions" of the change to "another way of living on earth, a being after man..." As Luc walks in the countryside with Satprem, he records their conversations during the Spring of 1984. He has brought us up-to-date earlier with excerpts from letters he has received from Satprem in 1982-83. The power and intensity of the book is such that each one needs to experience it directly rather than through any comments that could be made here. As Satprem puts it: "There are plenty of 'manuals' on how to do Yoga — there's no manual for being thirsty. And if you are thirsty, the river comes to you; if you are not thirsty, the river does not exist. It does not exist."

□ *Life without Death, by Satprem and Luc Venet. Published by Institute of Evolutionary Research, New York. (Translated from the French) 1988.*

Corrections

- In *Auroville Today* no. 9 it was stated, in reference to Matrimander, that "the columns have been fabricated and paid for in Italy." This is incorrect. The money for the pillars was raised entirely by Auroville International UK. We apologize for the error.
- In our previous issue, a pincode error appeared. The correct address for pre-publication subscriptions for the book *The Spirit of Auroville* is: Auroville Trust, Bharat Nivas, Auroville, Kottakuppam 605104, T.N., India.

"Humility"

My God! That Sri Aurobindo, What A Guy... I Want To Get To Know Him!

All inner experience is subjective for a rational mind, precisely because it is lived in an inner world. The experience is unique and difficult to communicate without betraying it; it is based deep within each of us waiting to be revealed.

But, how can we bear witness to our experiences without paraphrasing those who have preceded us and have led us through the ambushes on the path of life to the point where we pass beyond appearances?

It happens maybe one day when we aren't expecting it; on the beach, when suddenly the most intimate element of our personality blends with a grain of sand, embraces the whole ocean, drowns in it, and is carried away by a wave of love that leaves us astonished and helpless. It may happen in a fleeting exchange of glances, when our look penetrates as if into ourselves when we have unlocked the chains that protect us; or perhaps through a piece of music which makes us suddenly merge with the essential sound that reverberates in the heart of All. At the foot of a tree, when a leaf falls, softly, and settles on the warm and humid earth, then nothing is inert any more, all is life and even matter rejoices, attunes itself and vibrates with a unique pulsation. Yes! It can come anywhere, any time, without effort, without law, without logic, without reason. However, there is an order and suddenly everything is in its right place. Gradually a new perception of the world builds up which has nothing in common with our old small human understanding,

our very safe explanations. The more we open ourselves to this very new vision, the more we discover fragments of answers, which are in themselves flexible and beyond our control. And if we attempt to imprison them, to put them into words, they elude us like migrating birds. Then we know "definitively" that our senses are liberated, our inner sight is opened and we know with certitude that never again will it be possible for us to go back. At that moment we start frantically searching for clues, often in books, and we feel attracted by those who talk about their search, their experiences, and we never stop gleaning fragments of answers. We never stop recognizing, hearing and reading what we know already; and one day which is not like the others, usually by chance, we find ourselves where we must be — precisely when the meeting has to happen.

We stumble upon the book, there is a recognition, an illumination, at last. What we felt for so long, and what nobody could understand is written there in black and white. We can't contain our joy! "Someone knew how to express the inexpressible." And we devour it. We spend night after night discovering new keys which will open other doors. We cease gathering here and there and start on our own way. And because it is ours, it is unique — for each of us there is a unique way.

And even before having closed the book, we exclaim "Good God! This Sri Aurobindo— what a guy! I want to meet him!"

Yanne

To our subscribers

This is *Auroville Today's* 11th issue, after one year of operation. We hope you have so far appreciated its contents and that this magazine has fulfilled its function of giving you more understanding and background of the phenomenon of Auroville.

One year ago, when we started this magazine, we hoped we would be able to provide you with something interesting and of sufficient quality. Though we fully realize that lots of things have to improve, we feel that we have partially fulfilled our objectives.

Originally we had intended to send a one page issue each month, and now and again a special issue of two pages. It turned out that there was so much to write about, that you have now received 8 double and 3 single issues. Consequently, we underestimated the costs involved and set our subscription rates too low. Therefore, we are obliged to fix new subscription rates (see elsewhere in this issue), which will take effect from the date the subscription is due for renewal, which is for most of our subscribers from issue no. 16, the issue of April 1990. (Remember, issue no. 1, 2 and 3 were free!) We will remind you again in February/March.

For new subscribers, the revised subscription rates will take immediate effect.

The Editors

● ● ● To Receive Auroville Today ● ● ●

The yearly contribution for 12 issues of Auroville Today is for Auroville Rs. 94, for India Rs. 100, for other countries: Can \$ 27, French F. 145, DM 45, It. Lira 31,500, D.Gl.50, USA \$ 22,50, UK £ 13.50. This includes the postage by airmail. Please send the contribution* (or your supporting contribution of double the amount) either to the Auroville International Centre in your country (add 10%) or to the Auroville Today Office, Auroshilpam, Auroville 605104. Cheques should be made payable to Auroville Trust, specifying: *Contribution for Auroville Today*, with your name and address. You will receive the issues directly from Auroville.

* cheque, money order, bank draft all accepted

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Proposed design for Matrimandir Flower Gardens

