

Collaboration

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*Twentieth Birthday Bonfire in Auroville
Photo by Verne Henshall*

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December, 1987. First night in Auroville. The moon growing full. From our hut in Centre Field we hear the pounding speakers from the dance at Bharat Nivas. We walk down past the moonlight-spangled trees. Inside the concrete barn, the familiar atmosphere of deafening sound, colored lights, dimness. Young dancers on stage—some very young—dancing mostly by themselves. Adults watch mutely from the sidelines. Where am I? Chaperoning an American junior high school dance?

During the first few days of Auroville, the presence of the Matrimandir dominates the landscape of consciousness. The buzzing of motorcycles and conversation seems dwarfed by its presence. On full moon night, unable to sleep, I am drawn across Centre Field to the Matrimandir gardens splashed with silver. I sit in the amphitheater. It almost looks pregnant now, rounded and full. No longer that jagged block of concrete. Ready to give birth to the room inside. From a distance, the spotlights on the room make it appear to be glowing from within. Magical. During the next few days human relationships seem to take over. One is drawn inevitably into the flow of life, motorcycle, car, bicycle, bullock cart, meeting, volleyball game, moving around it. Around the Silent Center.

At four a.m. the chain reaction begins. First a loudspeaker from a distant village, an ebb and flow of garbled film song. Soon after, like wolves relaying howls, Kottakami and neighboring villages turn on their amplifiers. Suddenly two film stars are arguing right outside the room while M.S. Subbulakshmi tries to calm them by chanting the 1001 names of Vishnu. For the next two hours the cacophony roars in on the night wind as I am tossed, cursing, in and out of broken sleep. At dawn there is a fine nadaswaram rendition of a song I know, but it is small consolation. Every morning the same. The Tamil month of Margari, Dec. 15-Jan. 14, is a time of penance. Tradition says that one should arise at 4 a.m. and go to the temple to sing devotional songs. To make sure that this happens or to cover the ones who can't get up, the loudspeakers ravage sleep. Back home I'd call the police. Here I can only wonder bleakly at this sacred fascism, this vulgarity, this rage of poverty, this thing I can't understand.

Familiar itching introduces me to Auroville. Small, monsoon-bred mosquitoes, hidden in the dimness of our guest hut, like heat-seeking missiles, can find the spot missed by the repellent. They raise red welts out of proportion to their size. That's observable. I can stoically not itch. But soon I start to feel them when they're not there. Indefinable itching. The mind suddenly catches the hand scratching ... what? .. Even during the cool season a skim of sweat forms on my skin by 9 a.m. It won't go away until the evening bath. It exists at a threshold just below itching, yet a palpable presence. The itch to itch. Restless hankering, a perpetual state of semi-discomfort. Can be treated by water, sacred baths; by air conditioning; by immobility of the body ... no sweat.. just sitting.. ignoring the hundred, getting the itch for the bite of the Divine.

The 80's have come to Auroville. Financial survival is on the individual level now. Everyone runs a business, takes a salary, or is supported from the West and the rupee exchange rate. It's better to be an entrepreneur than a teacher. Familiar fact. Aurovilians joke about the yuppies among them. The three F's, fridge, fan and phone, are found in many homes along with two motorbikes in the 'keet' garage. All this makes for a lot of self-criticism in Auroville. Everyone knows the ideals: no money, no satisfaction of desires. I

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was happy to hide in my identity as decadent American. My gaze lingered on the smooth blue finish of a new Hero Honda. Inevitable people got tired of waiting for a collective security that would make it possible to live permanently, semi-isolated, in the heat and dust. The motorbikes arrived before the community bus.

Outside the mosquito net the translucent skin of a snake lies on the floor, two feet from the mattress. It wasn't there last night. I look up into the tiles of the roof while someone says that it could have been dropped by a bird that was going to use it to line its nest. Sure.

Auroville tradition has it that the young should stay up all night on New Year's Eve before the bonfire in the amphitheater. So they had another dance at Bharat Nivas. So they rented a video machine and watched twelve hours plus of movies. Did some of them sleep out in the amphitheater? As I sit watching the flames they are behind me, not saying much, somewhat worn and grizzled, with a sense of satisfaction and great familiarity among them—the way a couple of words between good friends can evoke whole stories. The younger ones cluster around the urn as some of them throw causerina branches into the fire for the thrill of the sudden upward flare of sparks as the needles catch fire. The flames leap over all of us, small mortals, all who are here and all the faces I almost see clustered around the amphitheater, a ring of the missing returned. Beedie smoke rises in the gray light. The sun is hidden this January 1st morning, and we move off to the kitchen for an Auroville breakfast.

It's not difficult to tell the difference between Aurovilians and visitors—motorbikes. From Rajdoots to Hondas to Mopeds, Auroville has joined the increasing trend in India toward this type of vehicle. They can be used year round, maneuver easily between bullock carts, bikes, and pedestrians, and get good mileage on 'petrol' which costs about 3 times as much as in the USA. They are also chief contributors to the increasing congestion, pollution, and frenetic noise of cities like once-sedate Madras. A few die-hards in Auroville stick to bicycles on principle. They tend to not go often to Pondy. My heavy-duty Atlas is great on the almost imperceptible downhill from the Centre to Certitude, quiet and smooth. Time and ease enough to enter into the presence of the plateau. After I make the turn toward Aspiration, the road fills up with land-mine rocks ready to explode a tire. Head down, I weave among them, wincing when I hit a big one and almost feel its pointed edge penetrate my tube. Then from Aspiration/Kuilpalayam the blue expanse of the Bay invites me down toward the palm trees, down the road that was recently a field, the road full of sand puddles. I try to perfect the art of sliding through them, balanced on the Zen edge of control, not-pedaling, at one with the sandy earth. Finally the main road where speed is possible if I can take the jolts. And the screeching buses that force me off the road. Still there are the local roadside attractions, the endless eddies of people engaged in an always surprising variety of activities—including calling me "white" man just when I thought I'd proved myself one with them by riding a bicycle. By the time all of this has happened in reverse, especially if part of it has been done at night, I understand more about the motorcycles in Auroville.

This morning at Last School, Durai, an Aurovilian who works at the Matrimandir, told us a story of his childhood: "When I was 7 years old I was grazing cows. One day on a small path near the village I found an envelope with a lot of papers (I imagine him turning the papers over and over in his hands, trying to read, to understand the pictures. Does he consider throwing the papers away? This is village India. Paper doesn't get thrown away.) I did not know what to do with it. I went to our village tea stall and



Drawing reproduced by Jothi from Co-Evolution Newsletter.

showed the envelope with the papers. They were shocked, because it was a lot of money. I did not know paper money. I only knew that coins were money. I showed them the place where I found it. They knew who was using the path. Later they found the person who had lost this money. He was rich man from another village. The man was so happy that he wanted me to stay in his house, to feed me and raise me, because he knew how poor we were. My mother did not want that, because, as the only son in the house, I had to help our family."

Coming out of the raw foods kitchen at Bharat Nivas at 1:30 p.m., I come upon six Tamilian workers digging a trench with crowbars and mumpies (hoe-like, short handled shovels). An instant wave of nostalgia for the good old days of physical work, the bite of blade into red earth. This trip has been mostly talk so far. Sigh. I unlock my bicycle, put my foot on the pedal and it doesn't catch. The chain has slipped off. I hunker down in the midday sun with the vision of a long walk home, take out a pocketknife and get into the grease. *Deja vu*. I've done this before in Auroville. Somehow the chain slips back on, and I look with satisfaction at my blackened hands that knew what to do. Instant gratification. Auroville can sometimes give you exactly what you want—and more.

Another incident of motorbike vandalism last night. A match was thrown into a gas tank. The resulting explosion completely totaled the machine and resulted in a fire as well. There has been a wave of such motorcycle gas tank incidents lately and no-one knows why. Resentment at the incessant stream of motorcycles, motorbikes, and moped driven by Aurovilians (and, increasingly, villagers) of all ages? A pyromaniac? A disgruntled former worker taking revenge indiscriminately? So far nobody has been injured. The police tell the Aurovilians to build better fences, hire watchmen and generally barricade themselves in the manner of the Indian upper classes. The residents naturally balk at these suggestions. But for a time, the soft, silent Auroville night seems full of menacing sounds. How easily someone can appear out of the newly grown forests and as quickly disappear.

Beach day! On Sunday mornings Aurovilians gather on the beach at Repos to swim, surf and lie in the sun for an hour or two. A welcome change from the old days when the beach scene was somehow outside the pale of respectability. Floating out beyond the sand-bar, beyond the surfers, the shore disappears behind the waves as I stretch out on the friendly, warm sea. Who needs a flotation tank when you have the Bay of Bengal?

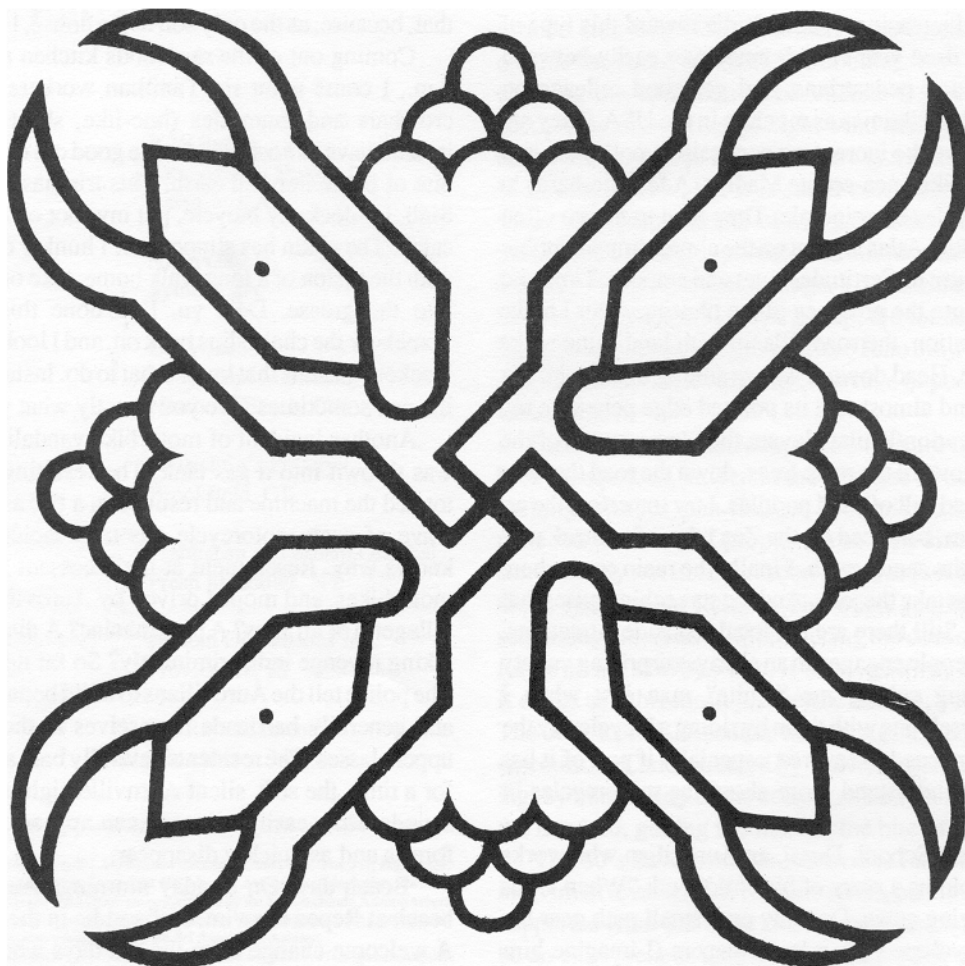
Later I met Poppo on the sand, Poppo who brought me to Auroville when it was just the urn lapped by pink moss roses. He talked about the terracotta pottery and other materials he's been finding at the archaeological dig near the Matrimandir. It all looks very official: white tent, careful trenches. Who lived on this plateau before and watched the sun rise out of the sea? I think about the past. There is a time, just after twilight, just before lamps are lit, when I feel the ancientness of India in every shape, shadow and motion of the villages. This feeling extends into the evening, in the rhythm of talk from darkened huts where an old story starts to curl into the night air. When someone asks me what I like about India, I tell about this, about living within a continuous 4000 year old culture of incredible complexity and simplicity. Like the way a woman draws kolams (protective mandalas without images) in the dust outside her door each morning, the rice flour (an offering to the ants) flowing smoothly from her fingertips in an endless knot design around a grid of dots. Like a city being build around a great, stunning, stone structure of a temple and a sacred tree.

A butterfly flew through the house and headed for the window, not the open door. It beat its wings frantically at the setting sun beyond the window pane. We talked on, oblivious to its flapping. There are so many creatures around. In the morning, vertical on a pane, wings dark against the glass, I could see the burden of wings flowing out of the thorax like a cape, the wings growing heavy,

pulling downwards. I gingerly lifted and moved it five feet away to the doorway. I let go. Without hesitation it flapped up into a neem tree and perched among the leaves.

How difficult an act to commit this diary to paper and the eyes of others. Auroville seems so fragile at times. Who am I to huff and puff my subjective, mundane observations? Yet, I want to give Americans some sense of the day to day details of existence. You cannot stay here long unless you accept and enter into these icons of Auroville life: the red earth, brain fever birds; lilting Indian accent of the children born here; cup of afternoon tea; the inquiring brown eyes of a villager; the flowers, long grasses, shrubs, and trees that have transformed the land; the people who move across it every day and pause a moment, like I do, caught by some tint of silence. ". . . it IS all this," wrote Ruud Lohman in *A House for the Third Millennium*, ". . . all the perspiration, all the aspiration, all the designs, all the money, all the steel, all the concrete . . ." all the bamboo and keet, the peanuts, sour tamarind fruit, motorcycles, film music; all the termites, the orchids, the scars from boils and infections that badge Aurovilians' bodies; the thorn fences, cashew nut trees, computer parts, crickets; all the sun—the same sun that afflicts Auroville with endless days of debilitating heat—the one sun that will pierce the inner soul of the city in the township on the plateau above the blue bay.

by Gordon Korstange



Nanduthalakai Kolam

This motif shows the "Black Scorpion", a significant figure of village legends and allegories, and is meant to dispel hostile forces.

The Mother on the Supramental Force

What are the very first things that the Supramental Force intends to drive out, or is trying to drive out, so that everything may be in its place, individually and cosmically?

Drive out? But will it “drive out” anything? If we accept Sri Aurobindo’s idea, it will put each thing in its place, that’s all.

One thing must necessarily cease, and that is the distortion, that is to say, the veil of falsehood upon Truth, because that is what is responsible for everything we see here. If this is removed, things will be completely different, completely. They will be what we feel them to be when we come out of this consciousness. When one comes out of this consciousness and enters into the Truth-consciousness, the difference is such that one wonders how there can be anything like suffering and misery and death and all that. There is a kind of astonishment in the sense that one does not understand how it can happen - when one has really tipped over to the other side. But this experience is usually associated with the experience of the unreality of the world as we know it, whereas Sri Aurobindo says that this perception of the unreality of the world is not necessary in order to live in the supramental consciousness - it is only the unreality of Falsehood, not the unreality of the world. That is to say, the world has a reality of its own, independent of Falsehood.

I suppose that is the first effect of the Super-mind - the first effect in the individual, because it will begin with the individual.

It is probable that this state of new consciousness will have to become a constant state. But then a problem arises: how can one remain in contact with the world as it is in its deformation? Because I have noticed one thing: when this state is very strong in me, very strong, so strong that it is able to resist anything that comes to bombard it from outside, then when I say something, people do not understand at all, not at all; so this state inevitably does away with a useful contact.

Taking only the earth, for example, how could there be a **little** supramental creation, a nucleus of supramental action and radiation upon earth? Is it possible? One can conceive very well of a nucleus of superhuman creation **and** of supermen, **that** is to say, men who are men and who through evolution and **transformation**(in the true sense of the word) have succeeded in manifesting the supramental forces: but their origin is human and since their origin is human there is necessarily a contact; even if everything is transformed, even if the organs are transformed into centres of force, there remains nonetheless something human like a coloring. It is these beings, according to the traditions, who will discover the secret of direct supramental creation, without passing through **the process** of ordinary Nature, and it is through them that the truly supramental beings will take birth, the ones who must necessarily live in a supramental world. But then how would the contact be made between these beings and the ordinary world? How is one to conceive of the transformation of Nature, a transformation sufficient to bring about the supramental creation upon earth? I do not know.

Naturally, for such a thing to happen, a considerably long time is needed, this we know; and there will probably be stages, steps, things which will appear, things which for the moment we do not know or do not conceive, and they will change the conditions of the earth - but that means seeing some thousands of years ahead.

There remains **the** problem: is it possible to make use of this notion of space, I mean the space on the terrestrial globe? Is it

possible to **find** a spot where one could create the embryo or seed of the future supramental world? The plan came in all the details, but it is a plan which in its spirit and consciousness does not at all conform to what is possible on earth at present; yet in its most material manifestation, it was based on terrestrial conditions. It is the concept of an ideal town which would be the nucleus of an ideal country, a town which would have contacts, purely superficial and extremely limited in their effect with the outside world. One would therefore already have to conceive - but this is possible - of a power sufficiently strong to be at the same time a protection against aggression or ill will (this would not be the most difficult protection to obtain) and against infiltration and admixtures. But if necessary, one can conceive of that. From the social point of view, from the point of view of organization, from the point of view of the inner life, these are not problems. The problem is the relation with what is not, to prevent the nucleus from falling back into an inferior creation - it is a problem about the period of transition.

All those who have given thought to the problem have always imagined something unknown to the rest of humanity, like a gorge in the Himalayas, for example, a place unknown to the rest of the world. But this is not a solution; it is not a solution at all.

No, the only solution is an occult power, but this already implies that before anything can be done, a certain number of individuals must have reached a great perfection of realization. But one can conceive that if this can be done, one can have a spot which is in the midst of the outside world and yet isolated (without any contacts, you **see**), a spot where everything would be exactly in its place - as an example. Each thing is exactly in its place, each person exactly in his place, each movement exactly in its place - and in its place in an ascending progressive movement, without any relapse, that is to say, quite the contrary to what happens in ordinary life. Naturally, this presupposes a kind of perfection, this presupposes a kind of unity, this presupposes that the different aspects of the Supreme can be manifested and, of course, an exceptional beauty, a total harmony and a power strong enough to command obedience from the forces of Nature. For example, even if this spot were surrounded by forces of destruction, they would not have the power to act; the protection would be sufficient. All this requires the utmost perfection in the individuals who would be the organizers of such a thing.

Indeed, nobody knows how the first men were formed, the first mental realisation. One does not know whether they were isolated individuals or groups, whether this happened in the midst of others or in isolation. I do not know. But there may be an analogy with the future case of the supramental creation. It is not difficult to conceive that in the solitude of the Himalayas or in the solitude of a virgin forest an individual would begin to create around him his little supramental world. It is easy to conceive. But the same thing would be necessary: he would have to have reached such perfection that his power would act automatically to prevent intrusion, so that automatically his world would be protected, that is to say, all contrary or foreign elements would be prevented from approaching.

Stories of the kind have been told, of people who lived in an ideal solitude. It is not impossible at all to conceive that. When one is in contact with this Power, at the moment it is in you, you see quite well that it is child’s play; it is even possible to change certain things, to exert an influence on surrounding vibrations and forms, which automatically begin to be supramentalised. All that is

possible, but it is on an individual scale. Whereas, take the example of what is happening here, the individual dwelling at the very centre of all this chaos: There lies the difficulty! Does it not follow from this very fact that it is impossible to reach a kind of perfection in the realisation? But them too, the other example, that of the solitary in the forest, does not at all prove that the rest of mankind will be able to follow; whereas what is happening here is already a much more radiating action. This is what must happen at a given moment, this must happen inevitably. But the problem remains: can this happen at the same time or before the individual, the one individual is supramentalised?

Evidently, the realization under the conditions of community or the group is much more complete, integral, total and probably more perfect than any individual realization, which is always, necessarily, on the external, material plane, absolutely limited, because it is only one mode of being, one mode of manifestation, one microscopic set of vibrations that is touched.

But from the point of view of the easiness for the work, I believe there is no comparison.

The problem remains. All people like Buddha and the others, had first realized and then entered into contact with the world: well, this is very simple. But with regard to what I have in view, is it not an indispensable condition, for the realization to be total, that one remains in the world?

Extract from *Mother's Agenda*, 18 July 1961



Compliments of Sri Aurobindo Ashram



Compliments of Sri Aurobindo Ashram

His Chair

Drag it home from some garage sale and see what she'd say, shaking her head at the unremarkable, scalloped pattern of the fading, green upholstery, the flat, ramp-like arms that slant up: "Belongs in the den obviously."

Draped now with a dangling tiger skin, this archetype of a man's favorite chair, "capacious," comfortable; his cradle, his cave where he sat for hours each day scanning the *Overmind Express*, reading carefully the 'help wanted.' At times he would beam "a bright smile . . . as a child smiles in sleep;" tickled perhaps by a cosmic comic strip or by some wonder that rose up from the tamed jumble of silence coiled around the radiant springs.

Gordon Korstange

Quotations in the second part are from *Twelve Years With Sri Aurobindo* by Nirodbaran

As Auroville Turns Twenty

by Jean Korstange

Gordon and I returned to Auroville on the eve of its twentieth birthday. We saw it through the eyes of our Madras taxi driver, Dhandapani. He had attended **the** ceremony at **the Urn** twenty years ago and had not been there since. Dhandapani wondered if he had arrived in Mudanthurai, a south Indian tropical forest, instead of Auroville. He never imagined or expected the jungle of vegetation he drove us through to get to the Center Guest House. He thanked us for bringing him there. As the forest filled with evening bird calls, Dhandapani dreamed his way back to the Madras trunk road. Had this forest really grown while he watched Madras struggle through drought and further industrialization that eats up its trees, water, clean air and open spaces.

A. Durai, an Aurovilian living in the Matrimandir Camp, **remembers Dhandapani's picture of the** white against the **blue sky** surrounded by red earth. "When Auroville was not here there were no trees and plants. From my work at Center, I learned about plants and trees. Many villagers have been given trees and plants to make again a forest." He goes on to describe what he learned about the aim of life in the future city. "Many people from everywhere have come and it is very peaceful. We have no caste problem because we all work for Mother and the Divine. When we have to decide something, we all work to solve it. Auroville is also very good for the villages. Many poor people are working here. Auroville is giving a lot of education to the people."

"I didn't know what was Auroville," the young Tamilian men from the local village, who are now deeply involved in Auroville, tell us. They say, "I was a young child and I saw for the first time in my life, cars going through my village on that day in 1968." They remember being afraid of the white people who now walked through their villages. First fathers and mothers worked in Auroville. Later children found employment to help their parents. And then the conflicts arose between the traditions that parents cling to and the new life that children seek. Ramalingam tells it like this; Sports was an unexpected thing that made me change my life. In my village most people are farmers. Farmers' children come home from school and go to the fields to help their parents. But when Auroville started to **provide** sports activities to us, we stopped going to the fields. We had a hard time adjusting our parents to this."

Adjusting to Auroville remains a challenge. It doesn't matter if you live there every day or if you return after eight years of life in the USA. Gone are the days when Matrimandir could be used as a compass pointing the way to Fertile, Aspiration, Certitude, **Kotakarai** or wherever you wanted to go. Now we look for a very tall "work tree" that marks the turn to what used to be an empty field for Sunday baseball games.

Trees, flowers, shrubs and green grass cover whole fields of packed red earth. It used to be that you could tell an Aurovilian by their red feet, even in Pondicherry. I was disappointed that I could not return to Keene, New Hampshire **with** the stained feet that would mark me as a unique being in the world. The transformation of the land in the last twenty years appears as the material symbol of a transformation.

And what of that transformation of the human consciousness? I walked up to the Matrimandir in order to view it. Through the framework of the outer skin sunlight surrounds the outside of the inner room. It is there suspended in space. I felt its incredible

lightness. It floats inside its own skin. I saw no need to go into the inner room. It stood before my eyes - inside out. As dusk fills the airy spaces of the beams forming the outer skin spotlights illuminate the outside of the room. Suddenly the Inner Chamber appears luminous as the pink sky turns blue-black. It's the nearest I've been to darshan since the balcony days in Pondicherry.

"I saw you waving but I thought, Oh! that's just some tourist." said an old Aurovilian friend who I finally flagged down on the way to Certitude. Those of us on bicycles are tourists because few Aurovilians still ride them. The motorbikes, cars, motor-rickshaws, buses, taxis and lorries that now roar and honk over the Auroville landscape symbolize a step into the rush of third world development. Waiting for the tar to cover the road takes its toll. Auroville gets the paved road free but it pays with accidents, backaches and the chaos of lorries, buses, bullock carts and cattle herds all working their way through the tree lined path from trunk road to beach road.

Auroville became a busy place while I was gone. Everyone goes to work. As I bike to Aspiration **from** Center Guest House I pass Tamilians walking to Bharat Nivas to cook lunch in the kitchen there. I am passed by Aurovilians who commute to Pondicherry to manage their shop on Nehru street or someone who is on their way to their workshop there. Another Aurovilian motorbikes to the new university at the beach to teach classes. Taxis to Madras leave at 6am for supplies that must be purchased there. Some Aurovilians even give up Auroville for two weeks in Madras to work as models in a fashion show.

"While I was working in Aurelec I built up a good relationship with Selva, Hari, **Boomi, Rama**, and Ratanam who were in Auroville. This friendship was one of the main things which brought a change in me. I liked the way they lived so I also started living with them. It was through them only that I got into Auroville," explains Kumar. Friendship and a way of life. Two values that sum up what is fulfilling for many Aurovilians. Those of us here wonder. Have we given up our dearest friendships? Have we given up a way of life that would be the only future we really want for ourselves? Kumar continued, "My goal is to live in Auroville until I die because Auroville is the place where I learn more than anywhere in the world."

Lean, bronze bodies stretched out on the Auroville beach in the Sunday morning sun. Relaxed, social, even playful describes the mood. Oneritual that seems to create **a break** in the otherwise tense, overheated work week. A contrast to the Bharat Nivas offices with their computers glowing in a smoke filled room where the door is kept shut and the exhaust fan is never turned on unless someone asks. Where clerks carry around stacks of papers. Where the Hall of Culture awaits more artifacts from Auroville's latest dig. Here new world art is exhibited among the books and the 4,000 year old culture of India. Bharat Nivas kitchen, designed to feed hundreds, sets up 15 or so plates of lunch on a 5 foot long counter. Diners write their names in a book. Take their plate and enter a spacious arena where tables and benches have been installed in cement. In order not to get eaten up in the space, they cluster together at a few tables just off the kitchen.

Pour **Tous**, the community store and food supplier, has two locations. Computerized accounts and boxed orders are prepared

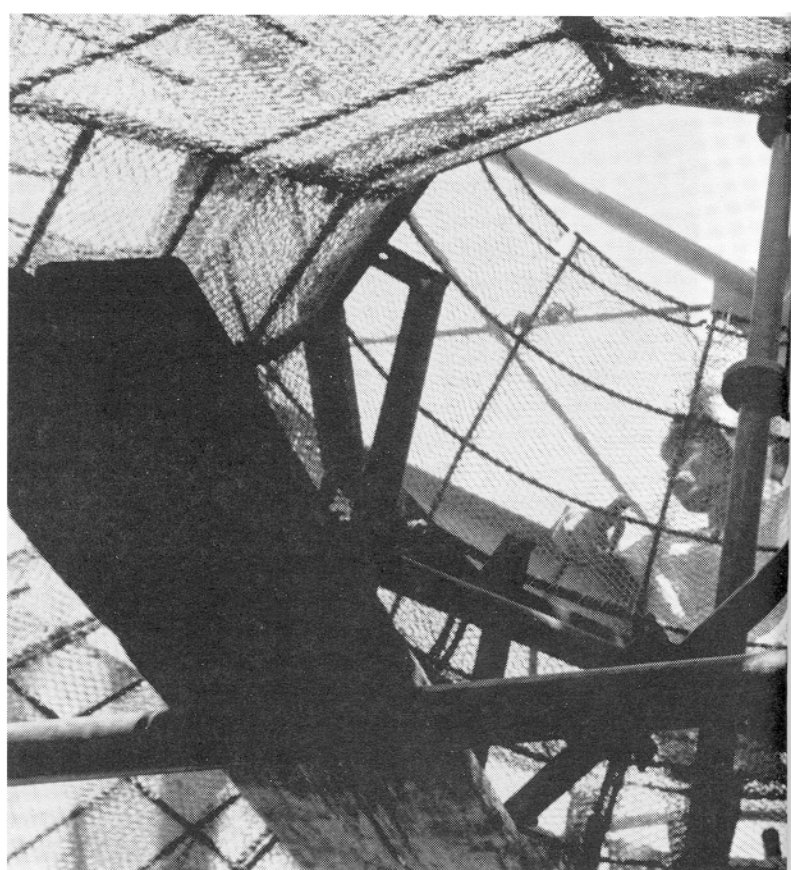
in Aspiration. Shopping can be done at the Bharat Nivas Pour Tous. Auroville grown fruits and vegetables can be purchased here. Because of the 10% service charge on a customer's bill, some Aurovilians cannot afford to use Pour Tous. For the visitor, who travels on bicycle, it's a blessing. In fact, it's rather like the popular Nilgiri stores in Madras. You can get good quality food at a fixed price at scheduled times. Not unlike how we live in the USA. It's certainly more pleasant than the hustle in Nilgiri stores where you must check your bags upon entering and grab the last bag of peanuts off the shelf before someone else does.

Kali, born at Promesse in 1969, told of her struggle to be educated in Auroville. After the schools in Aspiration closed she went to Udavi school. There she studied in Tamil and English. The first thing one notices about Kali is her ability to communicate in three languages at once. Her mother tongue is French and she says it's easier to write in English than her other languages. She quit Udavi school at the age of 12 and here's what lead her back to the books when she was 16. "I was working in an electronic unit when one day the school organized a camp in the mountains and I went. Something changed in me towards school. All my life I hated school. Because my mum was keen for me to study, I sort of did it without much interest. Being with other kids at the camp, having more of a social life, got me to want to do something more with the others and not be stuck to my job. I suddenly felt like going to school and getting my studies together. Once back in Auroville I first went to Pondy and was going to start classes. Then I got to know that a group to study for the tenth standard government correspondence exam had formed in Auroville. I got myself involved. The main thing was that we had an exam at the end of our program which is very unusual in Auroville. This exam was like the last chapter of the book and it cut this never ending monotonous feeling."

For Harikrishna, who entered the Aspiration school in 1970, "The school was so much fun with lots of toys. I never had that many toys to play with....I learned some English. I always had a little garden but still didn't let go of the toys. Auroville school was interesting with lots of students who came from all around. "Harikrishna spent the 1985-86 school year in at The Meeting School in the USA. When he returned to Auroville in September of 1986, he took up teaching math and Tamil in the Aspiration High School, although his first love is farming and he is still looking for a place in Auroville to farm. he says, "The things I do now are sports and teach math and Tamil. The experience I had in the USA helped me a lot in education and in understanding the world better. My parents are asking me to get married. Because I am a sports lover and mixed in two cultures, Indian and Western, I can't decide anything for the moment."

For the teachers in Auroville the problems of educating the young are the same ones we face in the USA. Boring is the word students use for education. How can teachers be as entertaining as videos? "What good is an education?" children ask. When they can spend their time horseback riding, surfing, racing motorbikes, playing on the best basketball team in Pondicherry, and communicate in three or more languages, how do you convince these young people that they should study. Study? For what? No one knows the work Aurovilians will be doing in the 21st Century.

Some of the young adults in Auroville are satisfied with the education they've received. Like Grazi, who was born at Promesse in 1970. "I went to Fertile, to Johnny's school where I learned a lot

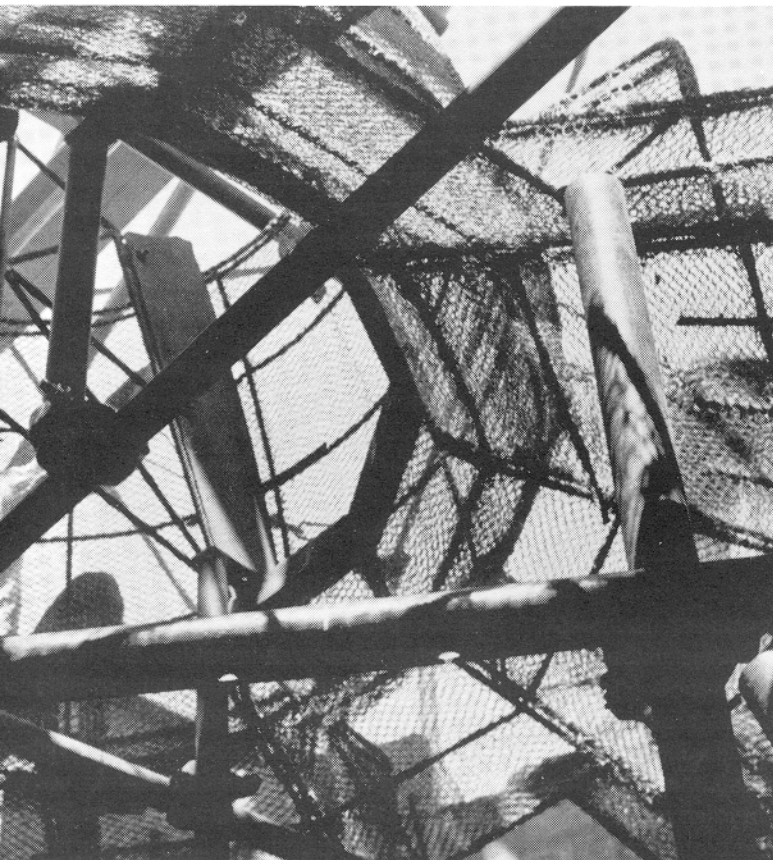


*Workers setting Web Cage at top of Matrimandir
by Verne Hemshell*

of practical work like carpentry, animal care, and gardening. I preferred carpentry, feeding animals, making collages and stars to writing, reading or doing math. At 16, I got my first horse, Dada, a beautiful white stallion. It had been my dream to have a horse, but then I had to give him away, because I decided to go to Kodaikanal International School in the Palani Hills in Tamil Nadu. It was a lot of running around to get the money together. I made it for the second semester of tenth grade at the beginning of 1987. I completed tenth and half of eleventh grade, then stopped because it made me realize how special Auroville is and how much it really means to me."

Gone are the days when Matrimandir
could be used as a compass pointing
the way to Fertile, Aspiration, Certitude,
Kottakarai or wherever you wanted to go.

Many of the 18 to 22 year olds who grew up in Auroville and are still there know what they had to do to educate themselves when the Aspiration schools closed. Miriam, who was born in West Germany in 1962, describes her education in Auroville. "In Berlin I went to preschool and did 3 years of elementary school, the last in a Steiner School. Then in 1971, my father took me to Auroville. This of course was a tremendous change for us. Those were the pioneering times and while I was going to the newly started school my father did gardening, tree planting, baking, teaching and building work. But in 1975, our school closed down and from then on



I had to organize my own schooling with private teachers. My interests were mainly languages, math and gymnastics. A few years later, with 4 or 5 girl friends, we moved into a childrens' settlement called Ami. Being the oldest, I was somewhat of a caretaker but I still put a lot of time into studies. I remained in Ami till 1981 and then moved to New Community with my mother who had come to live in Auroville. In 1983, I spent 4 months in Delhi working in a Free Progress School called Mirambika. When I returned I took up working as an English teacher. In 1985, together with some parents and teachers we started a kindergarten. This project has been the main focus of my energies since then."

One room in Sanskrit School had been turned into a video room. There teachers can prepare video history lessons, basketball players can gather to study the Celtic's plays and games or those who have the time and interest can see the world through a special collection of educational videos taped from the USA Public Broadcasting System. How many times have we flicked our T.V. set on in Keene, New Hampshire to watch wildlife documentaries that leave us wondering if this will be the only way to see animals fifty years from now. While we are fascinated and enriched watching these programs, we think it may ultimately be just another way of letting the world go down the tubes. If we are satisfied with a world of video animals, can we be at all serious about protecting endangered species or the environment?

I've heard of an educator from India who presents the idea that the Indian masses could be educated through video. That literacy as we know it, reading and writing, was on the way out. In my office I have a poster of a dinosaur with the caption: Read Avoid Extinction! Does Literacy have anything to do with the state of being in Auroville? Some people read the Agenda. Some people refer to it

as "the big red book." Some say, if I got into reading Sri Aurobindo and Mother, I wouldn't be able to do anything else. Others reply: "What else is there?"

That's where I end up when I return from Auroville and look at life in the USA as Auroville turns twenty. Is there anything else? Here or there I seem to live pretty much the same lifestyle. Here I shop in boutiques and health food stores. There I get my bargains at the Sunday market or find treasures in the boutiques. Conversation, books, movies, video and exercise divert my consciousness from introspection and meditation. I only seem to polish the mirror of consciousness these days. Most of my time and energy goes into work that keeps me at the subsistence level of the US standard of living.

Before I left Pondicherry I picked up the bulletin from the Archives. Since 1986 they've been publishing Sri Aurobindo's record of yoga. I was ecstatic with expectation. Now I would know how to do it. How to go step by step into the Supramental which would again descend on the 29th of February. I opened the first volume and read the words "Sapta Chatusthaya." That was defined as the "programme" of yoga that Sri Aurobindo received after coming to Pondicherry. At our December 5th SAA meeting we had discussed the yoga with a religious historian, Robert Minor. He impressed me with the idea that no one knows how to do Aurobindo's yoga because he never told anyone what he did. And thus I dove into the Record of Yoga .

10.15 a.m. January 13th 1912

Ananda has fully established itself in the field of Indriyas. All sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, movements, actions, are now pleasurable or give pleasure; all carry with them the rasagrahana or appreciation of the beauty of the gunas which they are in expression, the joy of the vijana in them (The basis of chidghana ananda), the joy of the heart in them (the basis of premananda), the joy of the body in them (the basis of the kamananda), the joy of the mind as indriya in them (the basis of the ahaituka ananda).... Experiments made with the body show that below a certain intensity all pain now gives ananda of bhoga at the time of the feeling of pain, and pain beyond that degree brings it after the immediate acuteness has passed.

I got that far and asked, 'How did everything become pleasurable?' Then I thought, 'I'm not equipped to decipher this.' No wonder the whole world isn't talking about Aurobindo's Record of Yoga. Perplexed and disappointed I could only surrender to the incomprehensible and aspire for the supramental force to do its work. After all, that red earth in Auroville is now nourishing trees. But then the trees didn't grow without propagation and water. That's what Mother used to do to people. She propagated the Supramental consciousness because she knew how to plug into it. She watered our thirst for the divine.

A Visit to the Delhi Ashram

By Gordon Korstange

As we unloaded the taxis at the Madras airport we wondered how Tara and her brother, Promesse, of the Delhi Ashram would get all their baggage on the plane. Most of their packages were books but there were also some plants, including a seedling from the Service tree that shades the samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. They were confident, however, with the air of having brought many more things than these few boxes from Pondicherry to Delhi. By eleven o'clock we had landed in a cold capital with all but two packages in tow.

Tara had already changed into the blue parka she wears all the time in the chill, northern Indian winter. For us, the cool dry air was a welcome change from the heat and humidity of Tamil Nadu, even in January. Tara's twin sister drove us through the New Delhi night, along the wide roads where soldiers peered from behind sand-bagged, anti-terrorist bunkers or huddled around fires. The Ashram is on Sri Aurobindo Marg (street) in an area that was once the wild outskirts of the city (see box). Now, high-rise apartment buildings have sprouted up around its playing fields and gardens (and dump their refuse over its walls). Delhi has surrounded it and moved on.

Once inside the compound, traffic noise faded and a feeling of protection settled upon us. The first thing that caught our eye was the shrine that houses Sri Aurobindo's relics, a simple yet striking structure under a "lingam" tree and set in a garden.

The relics had been installed on December 5, 1958, brought there by Indra Sen who described how the Mother had given them to him: "She took out a bundle from within (a table) and said in deep and distinct accents, in an atmosphere of profound solemnity, which the occasion seemed to create for itself, *Here are four caskets, a rosewood one, a sandalwood one, a silver one and a gold one. The gold within the silver, the silver within the sandalwood and the sandalwood within the rosewood. And that is tied up in one kerchief and then another one. I shall take them all out and put them back again.* . The Mother then untied the two kerchiefs and took out casket by casket while we watched with the deepest interest and feeling of our life. The gold casket contained the Relics (Nail and Hair) and having reached that, the Mother repacked them one by one, and in the end retied the two kerchiefs on them. And then She said, *This must remain intact. This has potency, this has power.*"

The next morning we awoke realizing just how much cold unheated, concrete buildings can hold and headed for hot tea and a spot in the sun. We joined the approximately 70 ashramites for a breakfast of south Indian idilis. Tara appeared and found us a guide for a quick tour before the school assembly. He was Anilbaran, a nephew of Sri Aurobindo, who had served in the Indian army for many years, then found his way to Delhi. He knew every nook and cranny in the place and took us into the kitchen, storerooms, mills, bakery and gardens, emphasizing the high quality of what is produced and the degree to which they have become self-sufficient.

The main buildings of the Ashram contain rooms and apartments for its members and some female students who stay there, the kitchen, food producing rooms, offices, bookstore and meditation hall. Behind this cluster is Mirambika, the free-progress school of the Ashram, a series of mostly open-air classrooms and a spacious playground. Anilbaran pointed out a large building under construction, a future international guesthouse with air-conditioning to withstand the blistering summer heat of Delhi.



Tara and Guest
Photo by Gordon Korstange

The other side of the compound is dominated by the Mother's International School, massive, concrete, and slightly forbidding from the outside, where 2000 students in dark blue uniforms receive an education. Beyond this building are basketball courts and a large soccer field surrounded by a track. Farther back are more gardens and another building under construction, shaped like Mother's symbol, with four sections that will accommodate the Mirambika school and centers for educational research, teacher training, and development of educational materials. The entire compound covers an area of about two city blocks.

Anilbaran then took us to the Mother's School for the Saturday morning assembly. Outside on the playground the younger students were engaged in various games supervised, here and there, by teachers; the men in the customary dark sweaters and pants of wintertime Delhi, the women in sweaters also, but with brilliant red or yellow saris billowing about them in the early morning sunlight.

The hallways of the Mother's School are large—spacious in fact. Cool in summer I thought. Remembering the claustrophobia of my school's passageways I began to think differently about the building. Halls are student turf, and this school seemed to acknowledge that. They seemed very comfortable moving about these halls—quite at home. In the basement, Anilbaran told us, were innumerable ping-pong tables, part of the emphasis on sports in the school, but also another touch of home.

Glancing into the smallish classrooms on the way up to the assembly, I remembered that this was a "regular" school: student's desks face the teacher; there are exams and marks. Yet it must have something special. Since 1956 (Mother had given the starting date as 23456 or April 23, 1956 since in India the day is written before the month) it had grown from 3 students and no buildings to 2000 going on 2500 and this three story, still-expanding structure. We entered and sat in the back of a room filled with several hundred older students seated on the floor, a sea of dark blue.

Morning assembly, Tara had said, was the key to discipline in the school. On a platform in front the music teacher was leading

devotional singing accompanied by harmonium and two tabla players, one a student. I looked around, checking participation, especially the older students. Almost all sang. Music is a fundamental part of the Ashram and the Mother's School. The Matri Kala Mandir, the fine arts section of the school, is kept busy after classes with private lessons in music and dance for students of all ages.

After singing, three students came forward to recite passages from Sri Aurobindo they had memorized. Their strong voices and vivid expression showed how much they had practiced. A short period of silence followed. After this, the assembly would normally have ended, but this was the culminating day of a National Integration Camp. There would be more.

The central government of India has set up these camps to bring together young people, ages, 18-25, from the different states of India to try, on a grass roots level, to create a sense of national unity. The Delhi Ashram has been involved with the camps for 10 years, organizing, recruiting, hosting, distilling some of Sri Aurobindo and Mother here and there, building up a network of young leaders throughout India. Many of the camps are *Mother's School*, held on the Ashram's property in Nainital, north of Delhi in the Himalayan foothills.

This camp was based on music. The 16 women and men had spent two weeks learning 12 songs in 11 different Indian languages as their major project. There were also games, small work projects, lectures in the evening (some on Sri Aurobindo) and meditations, but the songs (selected by the government for patriotic reasons but with deeper meanings also, we were told), the songs were the substance of the camp.

They launched full swing into the first one in Telegu, the language of Andra Pradesh in the south, and proceeded through all thirteen, their enthusiasm and involvement infectious. The students of the Mother's School listened good-humoredly, perking up on the songs they knew. My teacher's consciousness boggled at the absence of teacher-coerced discipline, thinking of the nightmare this long an assembly would be at my own school. I began to



*High rises in back of the sports ground at Mother's School
Photo by Gordon Korstange*

perceive the power that music has in the Delhi Ashram.

After the singing I wandered over to Mirambika where a young woman, Anuradha, was talking to parents of prospective students. It was Saturday, no school. A few students had come anyway and were making things together with teachers in the open-air classrooms. Mirambika has about 140 students up to the age of 13. The teacher-student ratio is 1-5. It is a free progress school. In the morning, after non-compulsory meditation to music, each student decides what to do that day and arranges it with the teacher. There may be some kind of written agreement.

"What about math?" one man asked. "When do they study math?"

"Only when they decide to," Anuradha replied firmly. "No-one is going to force them."

The man looked away, his resolve shaken, said something about discussing the matter with his wife, and left.

It is a big step for parents in a city as westernized and competitive as Delhi to forsake the comfortable rigidities of traditional schools and opt for something with the word "free" in it. Mirambika has all the students it needs, though, and many parents come into the school to offer their talents and knowledge.

Mirambika is dedicated to Mother's ways of education. Tara and Promesse were the first of "Mother's children" in 1945. Surendra Nath Jauhar literally gave them to Mother. They grew up with the Pondy Ashram school. As I read one of Mirambika's brochures, the influence was clear:



*National Integration Camp Students
Photo by Gordon Korstange*



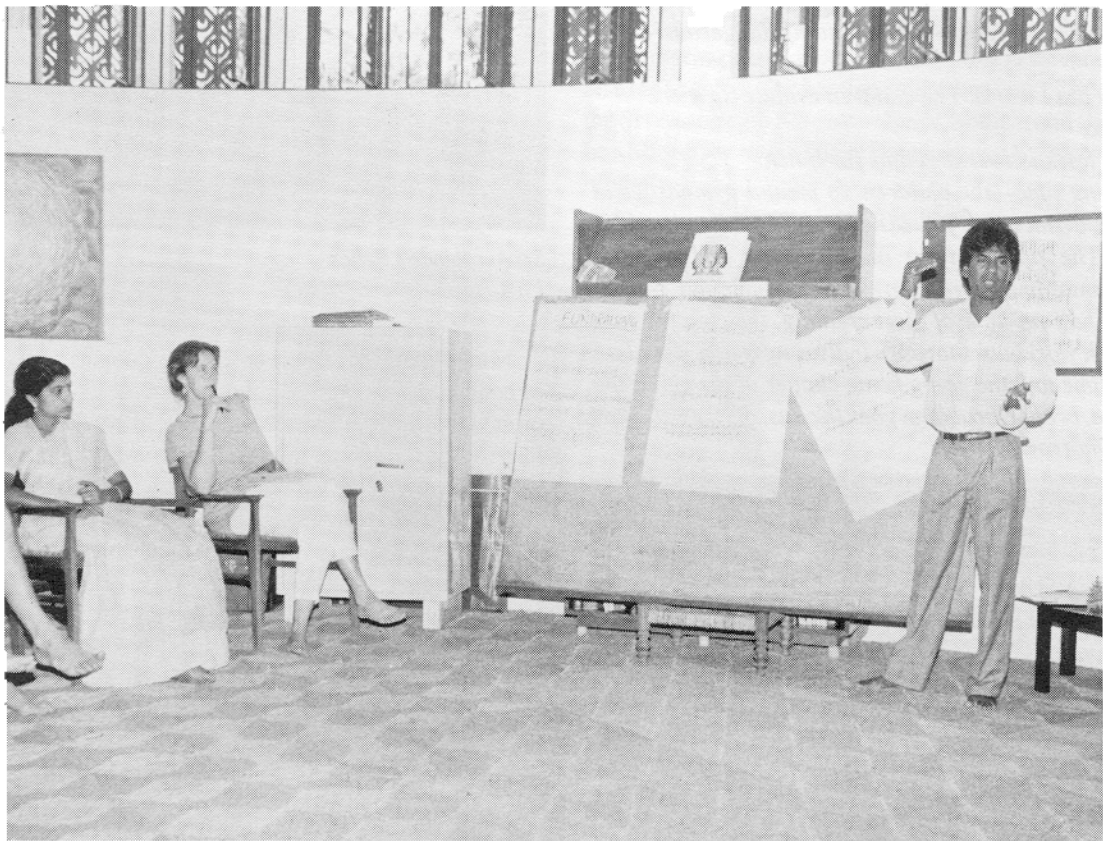
*Savitra and June Maher at AVI Meeting in Auroville.
Photo by Verne Henshall*



*Julian Lines at Co-Evolution Meeting.
Photo by Verne Henshall*



*Jack Alexander demonstrating solar technology in Auroville.
Photo by Verne Henshall*



*Vijay leading a fundraising workshop in Auroville.
Photo by Verne Henshall*

In Mirambika progress reports are not given as a means of increasing the output of the child. Not tests or marks are given. The reports are diagnostic and meant to bring about a closer contact between the parents and the school, and to be a means towards gaining a better understanding of the child.

We feel that rote learning makes children dull and uninterested, therefore we cannot allow children to learn from a school book that has no relevance to their daily reality. In Mirambika learning starts with topics.

Mirambika should be to children like a paradise, where their hidden possibilities will be revealed; no fixed time-table, no sanctions, only a tireless appeal to what is best in the child.

During a Mirambika-day the children work in the morning for about three hours on self chosen projects. This enables them to explore various aspects of their task. The afternoons are for creative and other special inputs such as clay modeling, carpentry, music, language development, computer, etc. A usual day with nine year olds, described by a teacher:

- 7:30-Teachers gather for a collective concentration.
- 8:00- The children arrive. The air is filled with sparks of laughter and joyful Good Morning's, that sound like a melody. Exercises and ball games to tone up the muscles and alert the mind.
- 9:00-Introspection with music.
- 9:10-Ah! It's drama time. Groups are made and they enact some inward theme . . .
- 9:30-woom! They fly into their cupboards, take out their practical books . Gaurav has taken 'Bridges' and continues to make his model.. Charvy is engrossed reading vociferously, the book 'Prehistoric. Animals..' Jacqueline is making her own dictionary. Kaushik is studying about 'Airflight.' He successfully made a mushroom parachute which is landing dangerously near my head.
- 11:45- How did I work? The children evaluate their Mmning's work.
- Noon-Topic work is over and time for lunch.
- 1:00-Training time—the children do mental gymnastics in English. We start with a story making round. One line is added after another. The story gathers in momentum and gains in character, grammar and expression—until the elephant catches the giant. After half-an-hour of alert creating, the children take out their English workbooks to work individually and silently.
- 3:30-Tiffin time and the going home chatter of the children.
- 4:00-Brooom, broom, broooooom goes the bus, off they go. Bye, bye; see you tomorrow.



Sri Aurobindo's Relics
Photo by Gordon Korstange

Mirambika offers teacher training courses of six months and is in contact with over 100 schools around India, many in villages, oriented toward Aurobindonian ideas of education. We would have liked to see the school in action, but our flight left Delhi that night.

In the evening we walked with Tara towards the back side of the compound, near the new building that will house Mirambika, to "the statue." It was, of course, Sri Aurobindo, larger than life, 20 feet tall in fact.

"A young man created it," Tara told us, "he had never done a sculpture before. Why not let him try we thought. He had so much enthusiasm and some kind of confidence. I got rather alarmed when I saw the potential size as he was going on, but he reassured me, and we were amazed when he unveiled it."

The story is characteristic of the sense of openness and possibility we felt at the Delhi Ashram. The years of investment and patience by Surendra Nath Jauhar and his children are coming to fruition. With its experimental school, Mother's International School, national camps, school of fine arts, and other projects, the Delhi Ashram is well worth a long look.



Photo by Gordon Korstange

The Divine Battle

Whenever I look back at the strange history of the Delhi Branch of Sri Aurobindo Ashram I am irresistibly drawn to the conclusion that the establishment of the Ashram here—on this particular spot—marked the end of a long-drawn-out battle fought on a higher plane. It appears that the gods wanted to invest this piece of land with sanctity. But perhaps due to its surroundings, full of the ruins of kings and their kingdoms, dilapidated mosques, temples and fortresses, the evil forces took a fancy to this waste spot and thus took possession of it.

It was in the midst of this struggle that between 1938-1940 this land was purchased. The Asuric forces . . . began to obstruct the process of development from its very inception. Three times the land was lost through legal or other action. Finally a big structure was raised, whereupon some architects and engineers came and declared the design and construction as totally wrong and dangerous, with the result that further work was stopped on that building and a new building was started close by. A 200 feet deep tube well was sunk and then abandoned because there was no trace of good and sufficient water.

The place lay a total waste for many years. Enveloped in darkness, covered by wild growth and surrounded by ruins and ravages, it became the favorite haunt of all those mean, vile and dreadful creatures who are born, bred and nourished in darkness, desolation and dreariness—a refuge for dacoits and desperadoes, a dwelling for rats, bats, and owls, a breeding place for snakes and a howling resort for jackals.

It was at this stage that something happened—something that defied explanation. An acquaintance I came across during the 1942 upheaval suddenly appeared at my residence one day in 1955. To all appearances he was an eccentric, and when he first met me, he said that he was a divine messenger and had come on a specific mission, which was to clear the said building by driving away its Asuric occupants. That evening he went to this abandoned place.

When I saw him early next morning he presented a horrible figure—exhausted, clothes torn and his long hair and long beard

completely ruffled. He said that the strength of the evil forces was much more than he had anticipated, and he had had to wage a very furious fight. "But I will beat them; yes, defeat them I must," he said and went away. He was again at my place the next morning and this time his plight was simply pitiable, he looked so beaten and broken. But there was a dazzling gleam of victory radiating from his eyes. In a voice charged with emotion he spoke: "They put up very severe opposition and fought a last-ditch battle. But their hour is over. They have been thrown out, completely and for good, from their haunt, and now the place is clear and open for receiving the descent."

Soon after this mysterious victory, a request from the Delhi Police was received. They wanted to comb the entire area in the vicinity of this building. Consequently a police party, armed with guns and bayonets, stayed in the second floor of the building for a week. It was thus a curious confirmation of the "Operation Eradication" initiated and launched by the "divine messenger."

Things began moving. Encouraged I drew elaborate plans to make the place a recreation centre with playgrounds, school hostel and so on and wrote to the Mother. In all these plans sent to Her, always at the top, something (not thought out) prompted me to put the proposal to erect a monument to Sri Aurobindo. However, no reply was ever received on these points. And then came the historic day on which I had the privilege of having that interview with The Mother, when I enquired of her whether She had seen those various plans which I had been submitting to Her from time to time and stressed that I had never received Her advice and guidance in the matter.

And then The Mother said something simply and suddenly, the enormous impact of which will continue to hover over my mind for all time to come. The Mother said, "But why? This place will house the Sri Aurobindo Ashram—Delhi Branch, and there will certainly be a Shrine for which I have been keeping Sri Aurobindo's precious relics."

Extract from *My Mother* by Surendra Nath Jauhar



*Surendra Nath Jauhar's tomb
Photo by Gordon Korstange*

A Visit to the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education

By Mario Sanatanasio

It has **been** my extreme good fortune in life to have become aware of the life and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. **First**, this awareness took the form of an intellectual study of the major works of Sri Aurobindo. As the study progressed it becomes more a daily practice of self-awareness, self seeking and soon encompassed all aspects of life. During **this period**, I was teaching physics and astronomy in a secondary school in Massachusetts. The classroom became the field of yoga and self-study, and it was in this way that my attention was naturally drawn to the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and the mode of education used there.

The Organization of the School

A central aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is the preparation of humanity to manifest upon earth a divine consciousness and life. Sri Aurobindo considered the formation of an educational **centre** as one of the best means of realizing this end. So it was that, on December 2, 1943, Mother opened a school for children. Continuing to grow and experiment with educational problems, the school was inaugurated as the Sri Aurobindo International University Center on January 6, 1952. In 1959, to give a wider scope and meaning to **the** education imparted at **the** center, the Mother changed the name to its present Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education.

Now, although I know of no plans for expansion, the center has provision for education from the age of 3 to 19 years. This takes the form of 3 years in Kindergarten, ten years in the school and 3 years in the higher course. There is also a possibility of studying engineering and technology in the higher course which calls for additional three years.

In accordance with the philosophy of the school, the kindergarten years are completely play oriented. There are both free and guided activities, but it is a play oriented environment including: singing, dramatic presentation, puppet shows, body movement and more. The medium of instruction is entirely in French with spoken Sanskrit being introduced during the kindergarten years. Since most of the students are from India, which has many different languages, students are introduced to their mother tongue and English beginning in the primary years, ages 6-10. Students have familiarity with at least four languages when they are ten years old!

The general organization of **the** centre consists of the 3 years of kindergarten, 4 years of primary, 3 years of lower and 3 years of higher secondary. Almost all students go onto the higher course which lasts for 3 more years. Students are an average of 19 years of age when they finish the higher course. Only students from the school are allowed to enter the higher course. A student may begin the school at a later age than the kindergarten years, but since the medium of instruction is French, the student must take a one year accelerated course in French before beginning the school and throughout the years of the school and the higher course, students are required to take physical education classes for 90 minutes each day. The physical education department is very well equipped and organized. There is a modern gymnasium, a sports ground and modern Olympic size swimming pool. Students compete among themselves only and stress is placed on developing fair-play, **self-**

reliance, endurance, coordination and strength. The education of the physical is an extremely important aspect of Sri Aurobindo and Mother's approach to education. **The** discipline acquired in the practice of gymnastics and sports is a very **defective** method of training and controlling both the physical and the vital parts of **the being**.

Yearly about 30 students finish the higher course and like students everywhere must decide the future. These days about one **half** of the graduates are remaining in **Pondicherry** as inmates of the ashram, while the other half **continue** in higher education or work in the world. All are made to feel that the ashram is their home and **they** may return at any time.

Subject Matter and Methods used at the School

From kindergarten through **the** primary years, no homework is assigned and students have no textbooks. Their classes are devoted to activities done qualitatively. For example, in the sciences there is observation without detailed explanation. Classes are organized on a weekly, 5 day basis. There may be typically, four days of classes of 40 minutes in length, one free day when students decide which activity to follow and another day may be devoted to a larger or combined meeting of several classes and teachers when there may be, for example, a field trip or music presentation.

Classes are always small **with** no more than 12-15 students and the method used is mostly student activity centered; however, there is some traditional lecturing or teacher centered activity. Methods differ widely among teachers and complete freedom is given to teachers regarding subject matter and method. In a subject like mathematics, students do exercises and problems in their notebooks. Students may understand the basic principles of various advanced theorems, but may not work out detailed examples of these theorems. In the sciences, teachers explain how to do an experiment and students keep records in a notebook. The laboratory approach in the sciences is used almost exclusively allowing students to learn scientific concepts by discovery. The most advanced courses in science given in the higher course may be taught from a more traditional lecture approach. By any standard, the laboratories are very well equipped with both sophisticated and homemade apparatus for teaching the sciences. Tests are sometimes given and evaluated, but only with the aim of giving students some feedback on how they are doing, never to give grades. Grades are not given at any level in the center, or to show who is doing better **than** another, etc. This seems to me to be the true function of the test - a learning tool instead of a measuring device.

Three Approaches to Teaching and Learning used at the School

There are three main viewpoints or lines of approach adopted by **the** teachers at the center. There are those who feel that a child should be left completely free to develop according to their own capacities and inner directions. This view is more like what Mother has said about education and teachers who take this position try to draw their inspiration directly from Mother's writings. There is another view **that** more of a stress must be placed on the subject matter and academics. Finally, there is a third majority view, about

80%, that feel there must be a balance between the two extremes of complete freedom and stress on academics. It is this balance that the center, as a collectivity, is continually trying to work out. One example of how it is being worked out is that students may choose their subjects of study, but once they are in the course they must adhere to the syllabus and methods of the teacher.

The Free Progress System

The advocates of the minority view of complete freedom are guided by Mother's ideas and writings on the Free Progress System. Free progress is progress guided by the soul of the student and not by any habits, expectations or preconceived ideas. For a system to be truly free progress, students must be free to choose what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. They must take charge of their own education. The teacher is present as a guide, consultant and general organizer and resource person. In one scheme, students are asked what they want to do for the next day and the teacher will prepare these activities for the students. The learning experiences themselves must be of a quality sufficiently interesting, challenging and stimulating to awaken the inner capacities of the student. Such an approach calls for much preparation time, but the reward of seeing the joy of learning is adequate compensation.

The obstacles to this approach seem to be completely in the attitude, energy and resourcefulness of the teacher. It appears a whole new type of teacher training is needed with an increasing number of model schools beginning with kindergarten and developing the free progress approach from year to year. Exactly such an approach is in operation at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch at the experimental school, Mirambika. This Free Progress school began with the Free Progress approach in kindergarten and has added one grade each year. At the time of this writing, they are at the seventh or eighth grade. The Sri Aurobindo Education Society of the Delhi Branch also offers workshops and seminars for teachers in the Free Progress System.

The Free Progress System is practiced by only a minority of teachers at the Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education in Pondicherry who opt for using this method exclusively and using Mother's original ideas on education as a guide. The approach is very much in the minority in the school and except for a few teachers who are actively trying to implement it with their students, it is not being used to any great extent. Some teachers also feel that the mental education is not the important thing and the real matter is the inner development, the awareness of the soul. This soul development, is best achieved by being in the ashram atmosphere with other sadhaks and here lies the real value of the school. Everyone surely agrees with this view, but they are quick to point out that the method of education might be an additional help in effecting this soul development goal.

The Higher Course

When students reach the higher course, about 16 years of age, they are old enough to understand certain deeper aspects of their personal psychology and yet not so old as to be fixed in their ways. Students are asked to step back to observe the what, how and why

of movements, the why being the most important. There are five stages in this why of actions:

1. Total involvement, no separation of ego and self.
2. Some separation, but still a seeking after justification of actions for the satisfaction of the vital.
3. A luminous part (the influence of the psychic being) develops, but there is still justification.
4. The luminous part imposes its will. There is conflict with the vital still imposing its will; so, due to this battle, this may be a dry period. The vital is not converted.
5. Wanting to know the truth, although one part seeks pleasure, we act based on this high ideal of truth seeking. This brings spontaneous joy. The central truth seeking becomes the motive power behind all actions. The vital is not converted at this stage.,

It is the fifth stage which is sought to be brought out in students. Although teachers may not have realized this fifth stage completely, they have it as their goal and this aspiration can be awakened in the students. Here lies the power of the school. Its teachers are sadhaks and all to a greater or lesser degree came here wanting to know and realize the Truth. This contact with the sadhaks of the ashram is the most important influence the child can have and it is what makes the school unique. These are echoes of Mother's words: "One must be a very great Yogi to be a good teacher."

Students have the freedom to pick subjects and teachers and to change at any time during the year or to study a subject for as little as one period a week or as many as six periods a week. If students feel at anytime that they would like to drop a course or to change teachers of the same subject, they may do so. Two lists are given to students at the beginning of the year. One list includes all the subjects offered for study and along side each subject is a list of teachers who are teaching that subject. The other list is of teachers. Beside each teacher's name is a list of subjects taught by that teacher. Students can, at anytime during the year, change subjects or teachers or both. Classes often contain only 1 or 2 students and instruction is carried out around a table in the individual rooms or the large hall of the building called Knowledge. Knowledge is also the home of the Applied Science Unit which has many solar energy experiments in progress, the Computer Science Department has several computers for teaching computer programming and electronic equipment for teaching modern digital electronics. There is also a fully equipped machine shop and equipment for testing construction materials and structures. This shop is part of the six year engineering program of the higher course. Knowledge is a very beautiful setting for learning. With its location on the beach road, the sounds of the sea and a cool breeze permeate the open rooms and halls.

Evaluations are given 2 or 3 times yearly and students have a chance to see what their teachers think of their attitudes, abilities and academic accomplishments. Certificates are given to graduates of the school as not giving any recognition would tend to place too much pressure on the student when confronted with what to do after graduation. The certificate is recognized by the government of India and allows students to enter any University in India for further study or to obtain work. Students who go out are universally successful in whatever they do; having self-reliance, knowledge

and an inner strength born of the Grace of the Divine.

The works of Sri Aurobindo and Mother are taught widely and may students freely elect to take them. Almost all study them to a greater or lesser degree. About one third take science at the advanced level. Languages are also very popular subjects. In 1982 there were 93 students in the higher course and 84 teachers, some teaching only one subject and working in other departments of the ashram as well. There are 350 students in the school through the higher secondary where 100 full time teachers are involved and many part time teachers as well. The kindergarten has about 100 students; therefore, the total number of students in the center is about 600.

Mother's Words on Education and Freedom

In summary and conclusion I would like to quote an article entitled "Education and Freedom" appearing in a recent book, *The Sunlit Path*. Here are Mother's words about education in the ashram.

You see, the great thing here is that the principle of education is a principle of freedom, and to put it briefly, the whole life is organized on the maximum possible freedom in movement; that is the rules, regulations, restrictions are reduced absolutely to the minimum. If you compare this with the way in which parents usually educate their children, with a constant "Don't do this", "You can't do that", "Do this", "Go and do that", and you know, orders and rules, there is a considerable difference.

In schools and colleges everywhere there are infinitely more strict rules than what we have here. So, as one doesn't impose on you the absolute condition of making progress, you make it when it pleases you, you don't when it doesn't, and then you take things as easy as you can. There are some - I do not say this absolutely - there are some who try, but they try spontaneously. Of course from the spiritual point of view this is infinitely more valuable. The progress you will make because you feel within yourself the need to make it, because it is an impulsion that pushes you forward spontaneously, and not because it is something imposed on you like a rule - this progress, from the spiritual point of view, is infinitely greater. All in you that tries to do things well, tries to do it spontaneously and sincerely; it is something that comes from within you, and not because you have been promised rewards if you do well and punishments if you do badly. Our system is not based on this.

It is possible that at a certain moment something comes along to give you the impression that your effort has been appreciated, but the effort was not made beforehand nor are they balanced by equivalent punishments. This is not the practice here. Usually things are such, arranged in such a way, that the satisfaction of having done well seems to be the best of rewards and one punishes himself when he does badly, in the sense that one feels miserable and unhappy and ill at ease, and this is indeed the most concrete punishment he has. And so, all these movements, from the point of view of the inner spiritual growth, have an infinitely greater value than when they are the result of an outer rule.

The Awakening

by Rose Kupperman

It just stood there, right in the middle of Grand Central Station; a rather odd shaped envelope like bag, made of a strong natural hide. It was artistically tooled, a multifaceted pattern covered its entire surface.

What a labor of love it must have been for someone to have planned and created a work so intricate. I found myself looking at it long and hard, thoroughly fascinated with it. As I looked I became aware that this masterpiece was mine. It really belonged to me! No one else claimed it, nor took notice of it. It created no stir or sensation to anyone else but me. Why? What was I doing just standing beside it, as though I had never really seen it before? I had no recollection of this designer bag that seemed to belong to me. I could not take my eyes off it. I kept looking at the intricate design. How delicate! How sensitive the artist! Surely this represents a life's work.

The platform was swarming with evening commuters, all rushing about with the same objective; a seat on the train. I too had dashed about, but now was too consumed with curiosity. What kind of treasure was concealed inside? I realized that I had picked up the bag. I carried it, yet I had not instantly recognized it as mine. My excitement was mounting, the anticipation of what lay ahead permeated my being. I no longer felt weary from the arduous day.

The train came roaring into the station. I lifted my new possession as I prepared to get on the train. Its weight burdened me. I glanced at it again and again. It became more familiar. Its freshness had disappeared but the intricacy and complexity of the design remained.

The train was unusually crowded. Everyone trying to get in or out at once. A sense of urgency filled the air as I breathed. I grasped the handles of my bag determined not to lose it. I sat in silence, swaying with the motion of the train to still the uneasiness I felt. Suddenly aroused from my introspection by the realization that the train did not slow down or stop. It passed one station after the other without a stop. I panicked wondering; "Where am I heading? Have I boarded the wrong train?" My anxiety mounted as dusk fell and the train rushed on. Trying to calm myself, I turned to the person sitting next to me to inquire where this train was going. No response. I tried another person. Still no answer. I thought, "My god their not real!" I stood up and started to run thru the cars to find the conductor. I reasoned that he would know where I was heading. I heard my voice shrieking through the cars asking "Where am I? Where am I going? I'm lost, I'm lost." The train rushed on as I searched in vain for the conductor.

Fear took over my body as no one responded to my cries. I moved towards a seat that mysteriously became available and I sat down. Fear numbed me. I resigned myself to the never ending train ride. I thought, "Soon I will become like the others on this train. A face without a voice or an identity. I need something to give me an identity. The bag, the bag, my one possession. I must guard it. As long as I have this one possession I have an identity. With it I am someone."

But the bag had brought me on this never ending train ride. I decided that no matter what I had to look inside it. Now. I opened the zipper. But I couldn't look inside. I decided to feel what was inside. Gingerly I placed my hand deep into the bag. I touched a single solid mass. It felt cool, smooth, moist and pitted. It took a

great effort to lift it out of the bag. I looked at a huge oblong stone. A red and blue marbled surface contained a bright light that shone from the center of the opaque stone. I ran my fingers over its smooth worn body. They noted the depressions and elevations worn by time and exposure to harsh elements. The stone appeared to be filled with life. It became warmer as I held it. The hardness seemed to soften as I continued to explore it. Such a burdensome thing to carry about, no matter how interesting or precious it appeared to be. Really, it was a burden!

What was it doing in my bag? Is it possible? Could this cold stone be mine? Was this the heavy weight that I had felt myself carrying around. I lifted the stone tenderly to place it back into the bag. After all, it was mine and I could continue to conceal it. Now certain that this stone was something I had built - grain by grain, I wondered: why hide it? I could keep it secure, but in an open and visible way.

I had never thought of myself as cold or stone like. My mind filled with misgivings. Who had I hurt? How many times? Where and why had I failed to give love to others? I looked into the open bag. Light penetrated the stone. It had become translucent. I looked about for someone to share this new treasure with. There was a smile on the face next to me. Another was looking over my shoulder to catch a glimpse of the light that shone through my window. I no longer needed to guard or look at my bag because it occurred to me that all the others had bags too. They were all burdened like me. Compassion filled my heart. I let it flow out hoping to ease the weight. My mind called out; "Let go! Don't be afraid!" The train stopped with a sudden jerk. I got off leaving my bag behind.

People

May the truth conquer the world by love, knowledge, power, beauty.

Hi Dear Friends of America!

Here I am sitting alone in between Matrimandir kitchen and Matrimandir structure, under the tall-grown Eucalyptus trees which are about 12 to 15 years old. What a nice morning after some good rainfall. I can see the blossoming Transformation trees at Matrimandir Camp and the Kitchen. They are fully covered with white flowers and mixing their fragrance to the chill morning breeze.

I started making a small sketch in front of Lakshminarayan's room to accompany this report. After spending two and a half hours there, I saw people working at Matrimandir. They were breaking the concrete at the uppermost ring where the crane was kept and the noise drew my attention. Then I heard some noise from the workshop, and I said to myself, "You better hurry up, it is time to work."

What more to say? Oh, yeah, my son, who is 14 months old, is now wandering a lot around the house where I am living in Kottakarai opposite to Bakery. He is so happy running, singing and learning new words. I am really having a good time with him. His name is Arasu.

My good wife Kamala is now teaching in New Creation School and taking care of Arasu. I believe she is having both a tough and joyful time. I am working every morning at Matrimandir and helping Kamala in the afternoon as "baby sitter."

With lots of love from,
Raman, Kamala and Arasu.

Dear Friends,

My name is Aurassi Pougault coming from Auroville as a ninth grade student in John Woolman School for a year.

I greatly enjoy myself here, and I feel that being away from Auroville made me realize how much Auroville means and how lucky I am of having had the chance to grow up in such a special environment, and when I go back I wish to do a lot more than I did.

But now being here in this school, I find myself with not enough money to pay the second half of my tuition fee, and I was hoping that you could help me, even if it is just a little bit, I would forever be grateful.

I love the school and do not want to leave before the end of the year. This school has made me feel a lot stronger inwardly.

I am learning my third language, Spanish and studying languages is one of my biggest goals.

I got a scholarship of five thousand dollars but I left expecting my father to pay but he will have great difficulty in paying and so I was hoping if you could help me even just a little is already that. I still have to pay five thousand dollars soon or I will be asked to leave the school.

I appreciate any help and will be forever thankful for this wonderful experience.

Sincerely yours,
Aurassi Pougault
12585 Jones Bar Rd.
Nevada City, CA 95959

Plan to Attend
AUM '88
which will be held
July 7-10
at the University of Colorado
in Boulder, Colorado

Conference Facilitator:
Larry Tepper
531 Buckthorne Way
Louisville, Colorado 80027
303-673-0008

Sri Konana Chennabasappa will be visiting the U. S. this summer. Helen Lee from Cheshire, CT met him in Pondichery last February. She hopes that he will participate in our AUM meeting and encourages others who would like to host Sri Chennabasappa for a lecture to contact her at 409 Mountain Road, Cheshire, CT (203) 272-64 19.

Sri Chennabasappa will speak on any of the following topics: Yoga and how to practice it in the light of Sri Aurobindo's teaching, Mother's solution to the human problem, the relevancy of Sri Aurobindo to the present day world, Mother and integral yoga, the practical yoga of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Sri Aurobindo's Life Divine and Savitri.

Nolini Kanta Gupta

The Sri Aurobindo Bhavan in Calcutta has organized a birth centenary celebration for Nolini born January 13, 1889.

They hope to publish a collection of his Sanskrit words, a popular edition of Nolini's collected works in English, set up an endowment for researching Nolini's thoughts on Future Humanity, to create awareness about Nolini's contribution to Bengali literature, his involvement in the **Freedom** Movement in Bengal and his contribution in interpreting Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's works.

Anyone wishing to make a contribution to this centenary project or interested in obtaining more information about this project write to:

Himansu Niyogi
Sri Aurobindo Bhavan
8 Shakespeare **Sarani**
Calcutta-70007 1
India

Auroluigi and Ilana Lillenthal organized a number of events in New York City to celebrate Auroville's 20th birthday. Auroluigi curated a benefit art show for the Matrimandir at the Jadite Galleries in midtown Manhattan, February 25 through 30, 1988. The Auroville birthday show displayed works of spiritual **art**: visionary paintings from **Ilana's** series **Aura of Flowers**. Many people came and responded enthusiastically. **Gene Bone, composer-writer**, wrote the **following poem after viewing the show**.

The Aura of Flowers (for Ilana)

The aura of the flowers is luminescent,
Its radiance is inner-outer born,
It speaks of kindredships beyond imagining,
Pervaded by light, it sends out love, and only love.
The petals and the pistils and the stamens
Evoke a wonderland both near and far.
Their loveliness is meant for human eyes
And deep, interior seeing, fanning out
To claim their world-relationships
To everything and seeming nothingness...
Stand close, and listen to the music,
Coming from ancient chants to songs of now!
Breathe in the fragrance, emanating
Foreverness and cycles beyond time!
Some gifted ones may see our human auras,
Yet all can sense the secret of the blossoms,
Enormously delineated by the Artist,

Challenging the viewer and his latent powers
Of intuition, for his strong delight.
There is a global clasping, sweet embrace,
For those of Auroville and far beyond...
Bring to us always, Lovely Artist, your
Own fine-tuned comprehension of the flowers!

Auroluigi and **Ilana** appeared on TV as guests of **Ingrid Leacock's** talkshow, **Cable Magazine**, which devoted an entire half-hour to Auroville, on February 22 and 29 at **11p.m.** Auroluigi presented forty slides of Auroville and spoke about life and work in the city of the future. **Ilana** announced her benefit exhibition. The show will be re-run on March 26 at **8:30 p.m.** and will continue to be aired at regular intervals.

Dr. Vivienne Thaul of **Today's World**, a weekly half-hour radio broadcast in New York's **tri-state** area every Saturday morning, interviewed Auroluigi and **Ilana** for three consecutive shows that will be aired March 13, 19 and 29.

They discussed Auroville, **Ilana's** paintings and Auroluigi's new book of poems, **Sun-Fire Kisses: Poetic Meditation**.

Sun-Fire Kisses reflect Auroluigi's spiritual experiences during his eleven years in India at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and in Auroville. The publisher, Amity House in New York, released the book on the occasion of Auroville's 20th birthday. The following poem is from **Sun-Fire Kisses**.

Mother: Alchemist of Life

Time-traveler hailing from future fields,
You came from vistas yet invisible,
Death's decomposing chemistry to end
And free the secret Godhead locked in clay
That deathless hidden lies in dying cells,
O Superalchemist who turn life to gold
With mystic formulas of immortality
And your magical white fire's absolute force.

One-pointed Ray that focuses all suns,
The concentrated laser-will of God
Penetrates into matter's ultimate core
And, tireless, bombards the atomic night,
Hammering prospector at work to release
From inmost nuclear mine pure spirit-gold.

Since the 1986 AUM in New Hampshire, Auroluigi and **Ilana** have been working to inform people in New York City about Auroville. They recently attended a seminar on peace education at the Canadian Mission to the UN in New York. They received a positive response to Auroville from Douglas **Roche**, Canadian Ambassador to the UN who told them; "Since decades I have been in committees and conferences at the UN and elsewhere, but never have I heard something so beautiful as now, when you spoke on Auroville."

Willow Gold Farm

Route 3 Spring Green, WI 53588

Winter storms and cold snaps have given Willow Gold some difficulties and surprises this year, but those of us braving **them** have managed well. Marion Nelson is still in India, Indonesia, Thailand and China taking in new experiences, making new friends, finding new arts and crafts, and conducting the Global Views Tours. Mote tours are planned for the current and next year.

Our Global Views Foundation, Inc. is off and running as the non-profit entity that will sponsor and organize the 1988 educational festival programs. This year's season will begin with the **Festival of India** on May 28 through **29, 1988**. Presentations on Auroville will be a part of the events planned for that weekend. That will be followed by:

The Festival of Costumes and Textiles July 23-24, 1988

Indonesian Excellence August 13-14, 1988

Our Global family September 3-4, 1988

Himalayan Art and Ritual October 1-2, 1988

Grant applications to help support the events are pending with Wisconsin's Arts Board, Humanities Committee, Tourism Division, and Land's End and several other organizations. Lots of good programming for **the** festivals will be coming from our annual cooperation with the South Asian Studies Center of Madison's University of Wisconsin. Anyone who is interested in presenting a program at our festivals is most welcome to do so.

Wilmot Center

P.O. Box 2

Wilmot, Wisconsin 53192

The Institute for **Wholistic** Education, a non-profit organization sponsored by the Wilmot Center, was incorporated on October 19, 1987. It has two division; one for educating young children according to the principles of Integral Education and an alternative adult learning center for the study of Sri Aurobindo's yoga, Vedic studies and Ayurveda. We are now printing the first catalog of courses for the Ayurvedic Certificate Course **that** will start in September of 1988. This course is offered in conjunction with the Ayurvedic Medical School of the University of Pune, India and is the first Ayurvedic course offered in the U.S.

The Institute is still seeking an elementary educator to develop an integral education course and curriculum starting this summer or fall. Funding for the position has been approved. We are looking for a teacher who wants the opportunity to integrate the principles of Integral Education into classroom work, as well as develop a model framework and curriculum for state certification for the program.

Lotus Light Publications is bringing out 3 titles this spring and summer. They are as follows:

Vedic Symbolism, compiled from the writings of Sri Aurobindo by Sri M.P. Pandit. It is a new edition of the Keys to Vedic Symbolism.

Planetary Herbology by Micheal Tierra, includes detailed sections on Chinese, Western and Ayurvedic Herbology and their integration into a widened understanding of herbology as a natural alternative to the medical/drug model.

Gems from Sri Aurobindo, First Series, compiled by Sri M.P. Pandit

The Network Pages project is moving steadily forward and compilation of the book has begun. Anyone who has not sent in their names and/or business affiliations or centers this is your last chance to get listed. Our deadline is June 1. Everyone who sent in their names will receive a free copy of the first edition.

In collaboration with Auroshikha Auroma International, our importing business, has sponsored the development and production of the new Herbalvedic Ayurvedic Incense. The fragrances are developed according to the principles of aromatherapy. Free samples of this new line are available through Auroma International.

The Wilmot Center has started some new classes on meditation and the Puranas. Friends in the area are invited to take part and to join us for Darshan Day Meditation throughout the year.

Matagiri

Mount Tremper

New York 12457

914-679-8322

Twenty people braved the winter cold and snow to observe Mother's birthday at Matagiri. The following readings were presented by those attending: a poetry recitation by Auroluigi, a reading of the **Darshan** message by Miriam. Music followed and **then** Anie Nunnally asked everyone to remember Eleanor Montgomery, who died on this date five years ago. (Mrs. Montgomery established **the** Foundation for World Education and **the** first Sri Aurobindo Center on the East Coast.) There was also a display of items from Matagiri's archives, including a manuscript letter of the Mother, a signed first edition of Sri Aurobindo's **Life Divine, a veil** of Mother's and a sari worn by Mother (loaned by Anie), and rare editions of works by Sri Aurobindo: **Yogic Sadhan** (his experiment in automatic writing), **Songs of the Sea** (his rendering into English verse of a translation of poems by C.R. Das), Anandanath (a novel by **Bankim** Chatterjee partially translated by Sri Aurobindo), and a set of the Arya, Sri Aurobindo's "philosophical" **journal Everyone shared** in a pot luck lunch following the session.

A smaller number of people came to Matagiri to observe Auroville's 20th birthday, February 28, and the Golden Day, February 29.

Sam Spanier, the founder of Matagiri, had a one-man exhibition of his paintings in March at the Limner Gallery in New York City.

Sri Aurobindo's birthday will be observed at Matagiri on Sunday, August 14, 1988 at noon. Everyone is welcome to attend. Please call or write in advance. This year is the 20th birthday of Matagiri. The Center began in May 1968 and was given its name by Mother on August 2, 1968.

Sri Aurobindo Association
P. O. Box 372
High Falls, New York 12440

The Association met on March 12, 1988 in the High Falls office to elect a new board. The meeting opened with a meditation followed by review of membership and by-laws in order to establish the a common understanding of what role the board plays in developing the organization and how the members support the activities of the center.

The members agreed to expand the board to nine members in accordance with our by-laws. The following people were nominated to the board: Miriam Belov, Advait Dwivedi, Eric Hughes, Jorg Hunziker, Sudha Hunziker, Jan Maslow, David Mitchell, Tom O'Brien and Jayant Parel.

Following the nomination and approval of the new board the membership adjourned the meeting and the board met to elect officers and set up committees.

The new officers of the Sri Aurobindo Association are as follows: Tom O'Brien, President, David Mitchell, Treasurer, Jan Maslow, Secretary. Committees were set up to work on specific aspects of the Association.

The Association will continue its work of distributing Sri Aurobindo and Mother's works in the U.S. and organizing events for its members and others who are interested in the yoga. It will continue to publish Collaboration. Due to the change over to desktop publishing we will produce only three issues for the 1987-88 year. Center News can be called in to Jean Korstange at (603) 357-0906.

Auroville International U.S.A.
P.O. Box 162489
3112 'O' Street, Suite 13
Sacramento, California 95816

The AVI Board agreed that fund raising would be the priority for the 1988. To this end they hired S. Vijayarangan as a consultant to develop a strategy for raising \$75,000 during the coming year.

Linda Lester took on the AVI Yearbook. She collected material from Auroville, typeset and published the booklet in March. Write to AVI-USA if you have not received a copy. It's of high quality and contains writing from many Aurovilians to give readers a sense of where Auroville is in its journey to the future.

To celebrate Auroville's twentieth birthday Auroville International Centers agreed to meet in Auroville over the February 28th birthday. Jack Alexander, June Maher, Constance, Chris and Jocelyn Gray, and Vijay went as representatives of AVI-USA. The A.I.M., Auroville International Meeting, was well organized and a big success. Many people from Europe attended and Aurovilians planned a number of special cultural programs for the birthday celebrations.

Abhinav S. Dwivedi
8512 Banyan Blvd.
Orlando, Florida 32819

Following a successful gathering on December 5, 1987, the 21st of February was celebrated by a group of approximately 35 people at the home of Abhinav S. Dwivedi. Dr. Chitta R. Goswami, his wife, Sheela and Professor Arvind Jani traveled from Daytona to participate in the event. Dr. Goswami gave a talk covering the life and work of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. Many participants did not know the highlights of their lives which Dr. Goswami elucidated simply and in a captivating way. Sheela sang several devotional songs and prayers both at the beginning and at the end of the program. Her melodious voice and her mastery of harmonium created a proper atmosphere. The whole program began with the Mother's organ music. Professor Arvind Jani brought information on Auroville which he shared with everyone. He summarized the concept of Auroville, what it stands for and the work building Matrimandir. He invited people to support this effort.

Dr. Deen Khandelwal brought a large collection of Sri Aurobindo and Mother's books. The program was coordinated by Shri Anil Deshpande and was conducted under the auspices of Sunday School. One 60 minute and one 90 minute audio cassettes of the program are available for \$5 from Sri Abhinav Dwivedi. Write or call (305) 351-2214.

Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi
Sri Aurobindo Marg
New Delhi, India 110016
Phone: 669225, 667863

The Delhi Ashram has published its calendar of Summer Camp Programs for 1988. The Camps will be held at "Van Niwas" Nainital, which is situated at the height of about 7400 ft. surrounded by Himalayan peaks and forests. There will be a live day course in rock-climbing, spiritual talks and discussions, bhajans and music class, sightseeing trips and treks. The schedule is as follows:

International Youth Camps: May 19-28, May 28- June 6, June 6-15. Activities: rock-climbing, trekking, yoga, games, bhajans, meditation, and cultural programs.

Sri Aurobindo Study Camps: May 19-28, May 28-June 6, June 6-15. Activities: Lectures and discussions on spirituality, yoga, bhajans, meditation and sightseeing.

Music Camps: May 19-28, May 28-June 6, June 6-15. Activities: Voice training, devotional and community songs, yoga, meditation and sightseeing.

Camp fees are Rs. 400 per person for each 10 day session.

Travel from New Delhi to Nainital is Rs. 150 round trip.

Two special trips are planned. May 12-26 a pilgrimage to **Badrinath, Kedarnath**, Gangotri and Yamunotri. Fee is Rs. 1700 per person. Limited to 35 people. Trekking in Leh and Ladakh is being planned for August 1988.

The details of this trip are available from the Delhi Ashram.

Write to Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch to reserve a place in any of these programs.



*Students and Teachers at Isaiambalam in Kottakarai.
Photo by Verne Henshall*

Co-Evolution Auroville's Village Action Center, Auroville 605101

The village action team is growing. Saraswathy, Stephenraj, Sundaram and Gnanasekharan are in the villages taking up the concerns of a paraplegic child, working on a playground in Alankuppam, settling a quarrel in Bommayapalayam and supporting a group of young children collecting money for cricket equipment. This team of workers requires salaries, regular meetings, trainings and flexible programs to respond to the villagers who they serve. So project development is now concerned with funding the core group who keep up the field work and personal relationships with villagers.

Here's an update on projects that Co-Evolution supports.

Annainagar Night School: This project was funded by Le Secours Populaire Francais. Construction started in July and is now finished. The labor was done mostly by children and turned out to be a handsome building on a narrow strip of land between the road and a rice field at the entrance to the village.

Annainagar is the harijan colony of Alankuppam village. Devaraj, a local man, lives in a room attached to the school and tutors the children. Every night classes in music, drama and puppetry are taught by Margo, a new resident in Kottakarai.

Lakshmiapuram Evening School: This little school near KUILAPALAYAM is growing up around the carpentry cooperative. The boys apprenticed at the workshop during the day felt the need for

evening classes in reading and writing. Volunteers teach classes to the 25 students.

Family Planning Films: Fourteen villages were visited in the last month with a one-hour film promoting family planning. Produced by the Family Welfare Board of India, these films use Tamil film stars and lively plots to get the message out to villagers. Ponnuwamy, an Aurovilian who works full-time with Altechs, and Ramalingam, chef and head of Bharat Nivas Kitchen, took on the job of showing the film.

Environmental Education: Ganavel, an Aurovilian who has worked in the Nursery for 15 years, has joined Sundaramurthy and Umesh in the forestry education program. Bio-gas plants and solar cookers for the villagers of Kottakarai is the next project for this team. They have to help people understand how bio-gas works and get it accepted as an alternative source of fuel.

Suggestopedia: A 21 day course to learn Tamil through relaxation techniques was held in January. Meenakshi and Mary Premila directed the course and people reported that it "really does help break through the language barrier." Another course will be held in April.

Trickle-Up: A low interest loan program for widows started a group of five women in the idili business. They were given Rs.100 to buy supplies in order to make and sell idilis. The women are successful in adding Rs. 10 to their daily income as they pay off the loan. Village Action workers have also helped them to save Rs.2 per day as a personal emergency fund.

Benedictions
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universal town where men
and women of all countries
are able to live in peace
and progressive harmony,
above all creeds, all politics
and all nationalities.

The purpose of Auroville
is to realise human unity.

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