



Collaboration

FALL 1985

Vol. XII No. 1



Photo Courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram

Editors' Notes

Four issues of *Collaboration* a year! Did we say that? Did we volunteer to publish this journal-newsletter twice as many times as last year? Yes friends, in the psychic euphoria of the All-USA Meeting (AUM), when it seemed clear that if there was to be more involvement in the Work in this country there needed to be more communication among us, we made that decision and now must start to follow through on it. The glow of AUM still sustains us and we are enthusiastic about the possibilities of *Collaboration*. With computerized typesetting and a new printer we hope to gradually improve the aesthetic quality of the journal and draw in more contributions.

Since there will be three instead of six months between issues, it will be harder to forget about *Collaboration*, especially for us. It means that we will be more exacting about submissions. Here are the dates when all material must be in: **December 15; March 15; June 15; and September 15.** Centers, study groups and organizations should take careful notice of these deadlines. We are very pleased with the greater amount of news from around the country and would like it to continue.

Our subscription rate has naturally gone up, and because of that we are more than ever dependent on increasing the number of readers who pay for the journal. Please be conscious about this. Send in your subscription renewal as soon as possible and encourage others to subscribe. Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center cannot absorb the unpaid subscriptions and increasing costs as it has done in the past. As always we want your support and participation, feedback and encouragement. Is there anyone out there interested in working on graphics with us?

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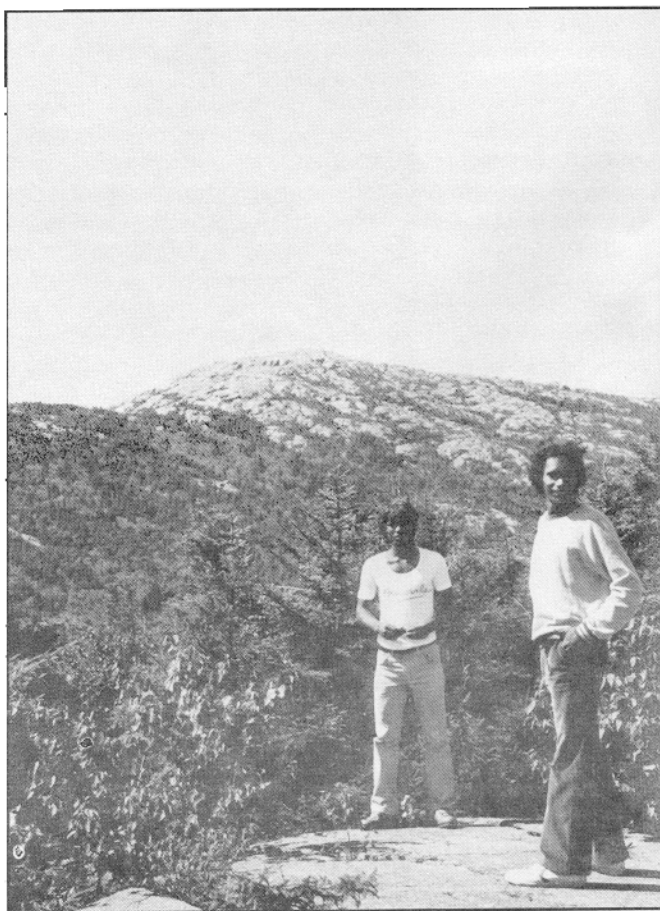
Any editorial material should be sent to Jeanne Korstange, The Meeting School, Thomas Road, Rindge, NH 03461.

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This issue includes Sri Aurobindo's autobiographical sketch written for Dilip Kumar Roy's book *Among the Great*. It is in the third person since he did not wish to advertise himself but wanted the outward facts of his life presented in the face of the legends and distortions which were already being circulated. We plan to present other documents from the journal of the Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research in future issues.

On a personal note we are pleased to welcome E. Harikrishna and D. Selvaraj (pictured below), two students from the Auroville High School, to the United States. They are studying here at The Meeting School, on a grant from The Foundation For World Education, for one year. If you would like them to visit your home or center please contact us. They are eager to meet people and see the country. Selva and Hari are available on weekends and holidays (Nov. 25-Dec. 2; Dec. 21-Jan. 11). In addition, they will need a work-study project, particularly one which could help them earn some money, for school intercession, March 1-April 5. They are fine representatives of Auroville and its future. Help us to make their visit worthwhile.

—Jeanne and Gordon Korstange



Sri Aurobindo: A Life-Sketch

Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta on August 15, 1872. In 1879, at the age of seven, he was taken with his two elder brothers to England for education and lived there for fourteen years. Brought up at first in an English family at Manchester, he joined St. Paul's School in London in 1885 and in 1890 went from it with a senior classical scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, where he studied for two years. In 1890 he passed also the open competition for the Indian Civil Service, but at the end of two years of probation failed to present himself at the riding examination and was disqualified for the Service. At this time the Gaekwar of Baroda was in London. Aurobindo saw him, obtained an appointment in the Baroda Service and left England in February, 1893.

Sri Aurobindo passed thirteen years, from 1893 to 1906, in the Baroda Service, first in the Revenue Department and in secretariat work for the Maharaja, afterwards as Professor of English and, finally, Vice-Principal in the Baroda College. These were years of self-culture, of literary activity—for much of the poetry afterwards published from Pondicherry was written at this time—and of preparation for his future work. In England he had received, according to his father's express instructions, an entirely occidental education without any contact with the culture of India and the East. At Baroda he made up the deficiency, learned to read Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages, assimilated the spirit of Indian civilisation and its forms past and present. A great part of the last years of this period was spent on leave in silent political activity, for he was debarred from public action by his position at Baroda. The outbreak of the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave him the opportunity to give up the Baroda Service and join openly in the political movement. He left Baroda in 1906 and went to Calcutta as Principal of the newly-founded Bengal National College.

The political action of Sri Aurobindo covered eight years, from 1902 to 1910. During the first half of this period he worked behind the scenes, preparing with other co-workers the beginnings of the Swadeshi (Indian Sinn Fein) movement, till the agitation in Bengal furnished an opening for the public initiation of a more forward and direct political action than the moderate reformism which had till then been the creed of the Indian National Congress. In 1906 Sri Aurobindo came to Bengal with this purpose and joined the New Party, an advanced section small in numbers and not yet strong in influence, which had been recently formed in the Congress. The political theory of this party was a rather vague gospel of Non-Cooperation; in action it had not yet gone farther than some ineffective clashes with the Moderate leaders at the annual Congress assembly behind the veil of secrecy of the "Subjects Committee." Sri Aurobindo persuaded its chiefs in Bengal to come forward publicly as an All-India party with a definite and challenging programme, putting forward Tilak, the popular Maratha leader at its head, and to attack the then dominant Moderate (Reformist or Liberal) oligarchy of veteran politicians and capture from them the Congress and the country. This was the origin of the historic struggle between the Moderates and the Nationalists (called by their opponents Extremists) which in two years changed altogether the face of Indian Politics.

The new born Nationalist party put forward Swaraj (independence) as its goal as against the far-off Moderate hope of

colonial self-government to be realised at a distant date of a century or two by a slow progress of reform; it proposed as its means of execution a programme which resembled in spirit, though not in its details, the policy of Sinn Fein developed some years later and carried to a successful issue in Ireland. The principle of this new policy was self-help; it aimed on one side at an effective organisation of the forces of the nation and on the other professed a complete non-cooperation with the Government. Boycott of British and foreign goods and the fostering of Swadeshi industries to replace them, boycott of British law courts and the foundation of a system of Arbitration courts in their stead, boycott of Government universities and colleges and the creation of a network of National colleges and schools, the formation of societies of young men which would do the work of police and defense and, wherever necessary, a policy of passive resistance were among the immediate items of the programme. Sri Aurobindo hoped to capture the Congress and make it the directing centre of an organised national action, an informal State within the State, which would carry on the struggle for freedom till it was won. He persuaded the party to take up and finance as its recognised organ the newly-founded

"Necessarily I have mentioned only salient facts, leaving out all mere details. As for an estimate of myself I have given none. In my view, a man's value does not depend on what he learns or his position or fame or what he does, but on what he is and inwardly becomes, and of that I have said nothing."

—from Sri Aurobindo letters on
"A Life Sketch"

daily paper, *Bande Mataram*, of which he was at the time acting editor. The *Bande Mataram*, whose policy from the beginning of 1907 till its abrupt winding up in 1908 when Aurobindo was in prison was wholly directed by him, circulated almost immediately all over India. During its brief but momentous existence it changed the political thought of India which has ever since preserved fundamentally, even amidst its later developments, the stamp then imparted to it. But the struggle initiated on these lines, though vehement and eventful and full of importance for the future, did not last long at the time; for the country was still unripe for so bold a programme.

Sri Aurobindo was prosecuted for sedition in 1907 and acquitted. Up till now an organiser and writer, he was obliged by this event and by the imprisonment or disappearance of other leaders to come forward as the acknowledged head of the party in Bengal and to appear on the platform for the first time as a speaker. He presided over the Nationalist Conference at Surat in 1907 where in the forceful clash of two equal parties the Congress was broken to pieces. In May, 1908, he was arrested in the Alipur Conspiracy Case as implicated in the doings of the



Sri Aurobindo's Room

Carefully shut-in silence
comes out to greet us,
graciously yet stern.
It is portioned out by sentinels
keeping us awake
through the mid-day heat.
At noon, one-by-one,
from different corners of the room,
the clocks call us back from many edges.
Did he too make long journeys
through golden worlds beyond the gates of time
toward their faint cacophony?
Did he return
even on that last midnight
when he was *losing interest*
in the tedious mechanics of the beating heart?

The clocks tick on, oblivious
like us to the far side of the sun
except
that old one, beside the bed,
stopped at 1:26, waiting in stillness
for the dawn of a different time.

Gordon Korstange

revolutionary group led by his brother Barindra; but no evidence of any value could be established against him and in this case too he was acquitted. After a detention of one year as undertrial prisoner in the Alipur Jail, he came out in May, 1909, to find the party organisation broken, its leaders scattered by imprisonment, deportation or self-imposed exile and the party itself still existent but dumb and dispirited and incapable of any strenuous action. For almost a year he strove single-handed as the sole remaining leader of the Nationalists in India to revive the movement. He published at this time to aid his effort a weekly English paper, the *Karmayogin*, and a Bengali weekly, the *Dharma*. But at last he was compelled to recognise that the nation was not yet sufficiently trained to carry out his policy and programme. For a time he thought that the necessary training must first be given through a less advanced Home Rule movement or an agitation of passive resistance of the kind created by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa. But he saw that the hour of these movements had not come and that he himself was not their destined leader. Moreover, since his twelve months' detention in the Alipur Jail, which had been spent entirely in the practice of Yoga, his inner spiritual life was pressing upon him for an exclusive concentration. He resolved therefore to withdraw from the political field, at least for a time.

In February, 1910, he withdrew to a secret retirement at Chandernagore and in the beginning of April sailed for Pondicherry in French India. A third prosecution was launched against him at this moment for a signed article in the *Karmayogin*; in his absence it was pressed against the printer of the paper who was convicted, but the conviction was quashed on appeal in the High Court of Calcutta. For the third time a prosecution against him had failed. Sri Aurobindo had left Bengal with some intention of returning to the political field under more favourable circumstances; but very soon the magnitude of the spiritual work he had taken up appeared to him and he saw that it would need the exclusive concentration of all his energies. Eventually he cut off connection with politics, refused repeatedly to accept the Presidentship of the National Congress and went into a complete retirement. During all his stay at Pondicherry from 1910 to the present moment he has remained more and more exclusively devoted to his spiritual work and his sâdhanâ.

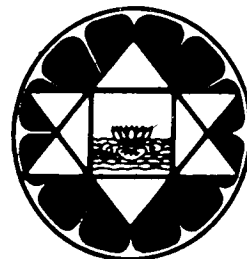
In 1914 after four years of silent Yoga he began the publication of a philosophical monthly, the *Arya*. Most of his more important works, those published since in book form, the *Isha Upanishad*, the *Essays on the Gita*, and others not yet published, the *Life Divine*, the *Synthesis of Yoga*, appeared serially in the *Arya*. These works embodied much of the inner knowledge that had come to him in his practice of Yoga. Others were concerned with the spirit and significance of Indian civilisation and culture, the true meaning of the Vedas, the progress of human society, the nature and evolution of poetry, the possibility of the unification of the human race. At this time also he began to publish his poems, both those written in England and at Baroda and those, fewer in number, added during his period of Political activity and in the first years of his residence at Pondicherry. The *Arya* ceased publication in 1921 after six years and a half of uninterrupted appearance.

Sri Aurobindo lived at first in retirement at Pondicherry with four or five disciples. Afterwards more and yet more began to come to him to follow his spiritual path and the number became so large that a community of sâdhaks had to be formed for the maintenance and collective guidance of those who had left

everything behind for the sake of a higher life. This was the foundation of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram which has less been created than grown around him as its centre.

Sri Aurobindo began his practice of Yoga in 1905. At first gathering into it the essential elements of spiritual experience that are gained by the paths of divine communion and spiritual realisation followed till now in India, he passed on in search of a more complete experience uniting and harmonising the two ends of existence, Spirit and Matter. Most ways of Yoga are paths to the Beyond leading to the Spirit and, in the end, away from life; Sri Aurobindo's rises to the Spirit to redescend with its gains bringing the light and power and bliss of the Spirit into life to transform it. Man's present existence in the material world is in this view or vision of things a life in the Ignorance with the Inconscient at its base, but even in its darkness and nescience there are involved the presence and possibilities of the Divine. The created world is not a mistake of a vanity and illusion to be cast aside by the soul returning to heaven or Nirvâna, but the scene of a spiritual evolution by which out of this material inconscience is to be manifested progressively the Divine Consciousness in things. Mind is the highest term yet reached in the evolution, but it is not the highest of which it is capable. There is above it a Supermind or eternal Truth-consciousness which is in its nature the self-aware and self-determining light and power of a Divine Knowledge. Mind is an ignorance seeking after Truth, but this is a self-existent Knowledge harmoniously manifesting the play of its forms and forces. It is only by the descent of this supermind that the perfection dreamed of by all that is highest in humanity can come. It is possible by opening to a greater divine consciousness to rise to this power of light and bliss, discover one's true self, remain in constant union with the Divine and bring down the supramental Force for the transformation of mind and life and body. To realise this possibility has been the dynamic aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

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Mother made the following comment while speaking on the subject of government.

The problem finally reduces itself almost to this: to replace the mental government of intelligence by the government of a spiritualised consciousness.

This is a very interesting experience: how the same actions, the same work, the same observations, the same relations with the environment (near and far) take place in the mind through intelligence, and in the consciousness through experience. And this is what the body is now learning, to replace the mental regime of intelligence by the spiritual government of consciousness. And this does bring about (it looks like nothing, you may not notice it), but it does bring about a tremendous difference, so much so that it increases a hundredfold the possibilities of the body. . . . When the body is subject to rules, even if they are broad, even if they are comprehensive, it is the slave of these rules, and its possibilities are limited by these rules. But when it is governed by the Spirit and the Consciousness, that gives it an incomparable possibility and flexibility. And it is that which will give it the capacity to prolong its life, prolong its duration; it means the replacement of the intellectual government of the mind by the government of the Spirit, of the Consciousness—the Consciousness. Outwardly it does not seem to make much difference, but. . . my experience is this (because now my body no longer obeys the mind or the intelligence, not at all—it does not even understand how this can be done), but more and more, better and better, it follows the guidance, the urge of the Consciousness. And then it sees, almost every minute, the tremendous difference that this makes. . . . For example, time has lost its value—its fixed value. Exactly the same thing can be done in a short time or a long time. Necessities have lost their authority. One can adapt oneself like this or like that. All the

laws, these laws that were laws of Nature, have lost all their despotism, one might say; it is no longer as before. It is enough to be always, always supple, attentive and. . . “responsive” to the influence of the Consciousness—the Consciousness in its omnipotence—to pass through all that, with an extraordinary suppleness.

That is the discovery which is being made more and more.

It is wonderful, is it not? It is a wonderful discovery.

It is like a progressive victory over all the imperatives. Thus all laws of Nature, naturally, all the human laws, all the habits, all the rules, all that becomes supple and ends by being nonexistent. And yet one can maintain a regular rhythm that facilitates action—it is not contrary to this suppleness. But it is a suppleness in the execution, in the adaptation, that comes in and changes everything. From the point of view of hygiene, from the point of view of health, from the point of view of organisation, from the point of view of relations with others, all that has lost not only its aggressiveness (for it is sufficient to be sane—sane and sober and calm—for it to lose its aggressiveness), but its absolutism, its imperative rule; it is all gone, it is gone.

So, one sees: as the process becomes more and more perfect—“perfect” means integral, total, leaving nothing behind—it is necessarily, inevitably, the victory over death. Not that the dissolution of cells which death represents does not exist, but it will exist only when it will be necessary: not as an absolute law, but as *one* of the procedures, when it is necessary.

Above all, it is this: all that the Mind has brought of the rigid, the absolute, the almost invincible. . . will disappear. And simply that, by transferring the supreme power to the Supreme Consciousness.

Perhaps it is that which the ancient seers meant when they spoke of transferring the power of Nature or the power of Prakriti to Purusha, transferring it from Prakriti to Purusha. It is perhaps that which they expressed in this way.

Reprinted from: *The Mother: Notes on the Way*, Volume II. pp. 106–107. (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1980)



*With a quiet
receptivity, prepare
yourself.*

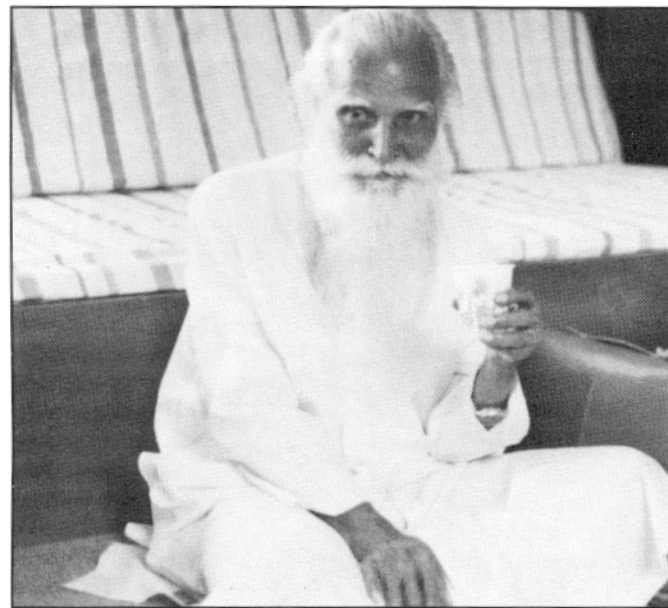


photo by Julian Lines

Champaklal at Matagiri

By Julian Lines

Champaklal, attendant to Sri Aurobindo and Mother for over fifty years, made his first trip to the U.S. this past July, as the guest of Dr. V. Reddy of Barstow, California. His whirlwind tour brought delight to those who met him along the way.

Accompanied by Kamalaben, an Ashram resident since her youth, Champaklal visited the East-West Cultural Center in Los Angeles, where many of his marbled paintings hang. With Dr. and Mrs. Claude Brun and their children, Justine and Auro, they experienced the diversity of America from Disneyland to the Grand Canyon, from the "canyons" below Manhattan skyscrapers to the Indian "Festival of Life" in Washington, D.C.

Friends gathered in New York and Mt. Tremper to greet him. As we tried to inform people of his visit, so many responded that they "had a special relationship" with Champaklal. Though there are many anecdotes concerning those special relationships and his visit, suffice it to say that whether tracing out a zigzag M on a piece of fabric at a Washington museum or starting the flow of ink in a pen by writing "Sri Aurobindo, Mother," Champaklal is with Them and Their living presence is with him.

Champaklal

By Madhav Pandit

Champaklal does not write. He may draw, he may paint, he may design new perspectives drawing encomiums from even such a profound artist as the Mother, but writing, no. He will tell you that he is not used to it.

Champaklal will not speak either. For did not Sri Aurobindo ask him as long back as in 1934 to be careful in what he speaks? He wrote to him: 'Be more guarded in your speech. You are in a special position and one of great trust and what ever you say is taken up and commented on, so you must be careful that nothing should go out from you which ought not to be said or known. To talk less and not too unguarded in your speech should be part of your discipline of sadhana.'

And yet who would leave him alone? Certainly not one like myself who has been used to his casual remarks revealing unsuspected depths, opening new dimensions, while waiting by his side for my turn to be called by Mother. For years I have listened and grown wiser.

For many of us he has been a model in more ways than one. I recall an occasion when someone asked Mother: Make me your child, like Champaklal. Mother replied: If you want to become like that you must undergo a very hard discipline. Ask him how hard a discipline I have given him.

Much later she was to tell Champaklal: When people ask for work and want to live with me, I give them your name and say, 'first you become unselfish like Champaklal.'

He will again protest that he does not know *yoga* and say that he is only a worker whose Mantra is Service. True, he is the embodiment of Service and the manner and the extent to which he has been privileged to serve both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for over five decades has no parallel. Neither food nor sleep has claims over his time. But the quantum of service has no value for him. Did he not one day say to the Mother in the anguish of his soul: Mother, all these years, I have served as I wanted to serve; now I want to serve as *you* would want me to do.

Raso vai sah. Nothing is too high or too low for him. He will listen to the talk of a child with as much concentration and glow on his face as to a profound conversation by the Mother. Music, painting (classical and futurist), handwork, manual labour—all claim his impartial and entire attention when they come before him. He exercises no preferences; to him all is *samam brahma*, the watchword of every *yoga*.



photo by Julian Lines

All-USA Meeting May, 1985



Closing Circle at Merriam Hill

photo by Julian Lines

Nestled in the rolling hills of New Hampshire, two neighboring centers, Merriam Hill and Another Place, jointly provided the necessary housing, nourishment, and meeting spaces for seventy disciples of Sri Aurobindo and Mother who came there from all across America to re-unite. In addition to sleeping lofts and rooms, there was a large refurbished barn, expanses of lawn adorned with flowering trees and plants, front steps and back porches, patios, paths and playthings. The weather remained sunny and pleasant throughout and even the anticipated black flies never left their larvae. All things conspired toward oneness.

The program for the weekend was carefully designed by the seven coordinators of Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center and Suzanne MacDonald of Merriam Hill. Plenary sessions alternated with small group meetings with results and feedback being posted for individual review. Slides of Matrimandir and the film "Passage to Auroville" were presented in the first evening and a theater happening (an all-inclusive, improvisational technique developed by the Merriam Hill Staff) surprised us on the second. During the day there was volleyball, walks, and long talks together.

After the first morning's getting-to-know-each-other activities, spokespersons from each of the working organizations in the USA told about their activities. These included Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center, Auroville International-USA, The Foundation for World Education, Willow Gold-Global View, The Learning Exchange, the East-West Cultural Center, and several representatives of study groups from different parts of the country.

The next day a plenary brain-storming session yielded 23 topics of interest which were then combined under eight head-

ings for small group in-depth discussions and action. These were: Education exchange; Inner networking; Future All-USA Meetings (AUM for short) and group process; Distribution of books and items from Auroville and the Ashram; Health and community; Matrimandir and the Agenda; and Communication. The results of these working groups can be obtained from Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center by requesting Packet I, Group Work On Selected Priority Topics. In addition a few working groups have continued to meet.

Then it was Monday morning, the last time of coming together. We stood in a circle in the Merriam Hill barn and thought about the intense interaction that had gone on during the first two days of AUM. Much had been done in meetings, but even more had happened outside. On the lawn, on the big porch of Another Place, during meals, old friends drank deeply of one another again, new friendships were made, and all of us renewed our commitment to the Yoga.

And in that circle it was as if all the individual conversations we had missed out on and even all our private experiences were communicated in broken words of farewell, tears, laughter, and silence. One-by-one these were offered up to the Presence among us that was suddenly so strong.

We parted, full of sweet sorrow and fresh strength, ready to expand our effort toward the work in the USA and India and ready too for another meeting next year. Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center will again sponsor it at Merriam Hill and Another Place, possibly from August 15-18. The January issue of Collaboration will have details on the next AUM. We hope that you will begin thinking about attending.

Rani Turner and Gordon Korstange

Confessions of an Attendee All-USA Meeting, Merriam Hill

By Lynda Lester

On Saturday evening, the second day of the All-USA conference, Savitra premiered *Auroville: The Movie*. The film packed a punch: Auroville in living color, alive and well, wild and wooly. It terrified the socks off me.

Sitting in the audience, I saw that to be in Auroville, one must be tough. But there I was, a weakling with failing health, and a physical mind convinced half the time that death was just around the corner. How could I survive the fierce tropical heat and harsh conditions of Auroville? The last (and only) time I visited the Ashram and Auroville, I stayed for eleven weeks, and was in the nursing home for eight.

Besides, I thought miserably as I watched the Matrimandir workers, I hardly live in my body. I spend most of my time above my head. Look at them passing cement in hand-held basins—I'd do that for about five seconds and faint.

When the ending credits flashed on the screen, everyone cheered, clapped, and whistled. I went back to my room shivering and quaking in my shoes, and crept into bed, my resolution to go to Auroville in ruins.

I'm glad I'm not there, I thought. I'll sleep on my old couch in Boulder with the crack up the middle and the stuffing coming out and the metal prongs sticking me in the stomach. Thank God I'm saved from hell, thank God I'm safe in the U.S.A. You fool, how could think you could ever go there. Are you insane? You'd be squished like a tamale. Auroville would wring you out and throw you on the slop pile in ten minutes.

And yet, I thought as I burrowed under the covers, what about the consciousness. The power from the inner chamber of the Matrimandir had blasted out from the screen, blown me over, given me chills and goosebumps. It had invaded the field of my body, emulsified by atoms with a vast, illimitable, dense magnetic charge.

"The AV Particle field was coming through, right up into the woods of New Hampshire."

And what about the call, and the compelling attraction? I could feel myself, in spite of misgiving, being reluctantly drawn into Auroville's infinite black-hole gravity.

I'd been seduced again. Fright or no fright, I needed to go. No matter what the environment, no matter how scrubby and hot, how full of crawly, bitey things. . . .

I lay there in bed, helpless, enticed, in love, thinking I could have all the fears on earth and would still go.

The next morning in the Merriam Hill barn, lots of things were going on, mostly external. We were all huffing and puff-

ing through business affairs, planting and plotting sessions, and I was a little disappointed. What I'd really come for was checking out the vibes, linking up golden currents of force and light, and building a base for the transformation, which I was expecting pretty soon. But so far it had been Conference City, and where was the sweetness, and where was the living Divine manifest?

Just before lunch Miriam Belov said, "Well, it's Memorial Day weekend, we ought to have an all-group meditation." We waded through more announcements, and then agreed to have five minutes of silence in honor of peace.

"I saw how the great meditations I'd experienced, so strong and vast, so wide and high, so full of power and limitless vision and delight, were peanuts."

As soon as fifty of us turned off our motors, the atmosphere mutated dramatically. For me, sitting under the stairway, it might have turned into a regular, deep, meditation experience, but for the fact that I was located near Savitra, who was only two days out of Pondicherry and was automatically trailing Auroville behind him like a sky canopy of stars and rainbows. And so instead of receiving general-issue high energy, what I got was the Auroville vibration.

The AV Particle field was coming through, right up into the woods of New Hampshire. Enchantment, contagion. You have to watch those Aurovilians, they'll do it every time. They're carriers, they've got that new-world dust all over them. The Auroville CIA, infiltrating.

Dimensions shifted, and another landscape was there, displacing Merriam Hill: Auroville, no mistake, Auroville, closer than things known, Auroville in my heart and before my eyes: the magic of its breath, the mystery of its atmosphere, its irresistible force.

I got it fiery, I got it red; I got it flaming. I got its passionate massive humming depth of infinite wakening, all in the land. It was absolutely material. I saw how the great meditations I'd experienced, so strong and vast, so wide and high, so full of power and limitless vision and delight, were peanuts.

When matter becomes conscious it's the end of the world.

Something was penetrating my heart, invading the soul's most secret recess; as if some kind of substance I'd always known but never seen. It overwhelmed and embraced me, stripped me naked. It was sacred touch, the ground of love. It was annihilation in material bliss, dissolution in concrete joy.

So there I was, demolished and waylaid, erased; a vibration only, singing with the electrons, oscillating with the atomic clock.

When the meditation was over I felt that the earth had just been blown to smithereens. I felt the immanent future, the pressure of the coming change.

Savitra was sitting there rough as a cob, but underneath the truth betraying him. Behind his facade was the body of Auroville. I saw something in him that was honest and pure; it made me tremble. I gave him a mushfaced look, but he was tough and knew all about these flakey weak-brained mystics with screws loose, and went on to talk nuts and bolts and practicalities with someone who was grounded. At least I didn't humiliate myself by saying anything.

That night, after all the meetings, when it was dark and quiet, I sat on the porch. Where love broke through, where mind and ignorance and ego were abolished and only remained a vast identity and ananda, I saw Her: a vessel of mystery before whom I lost all I was and ever had been, in whom separation was dissolved and was left only oneness, intimate and unutterable.

*"It's a good thing there are
fifty of us, I thought, this
would have decimated a mere
puny individual."*

On Monday, the final morning, the seige of consciousness continued. After Eric had reduced us all to psychic transparency by reading the last chapter of *On the Way to Supermankind*—when we were well divested of smallness and our souls vulnerable and exposed—we formed a circle, holding hands, for closing comments and goodbyes.

I glanced up at the wooden catwalk above. There, as part of a display, was a picture of the Mother, looking over the whole convocation and beaming at us all: balcony darshan revisited.

The power came down in a massive descent: waves and waves of it, on and on. Squinting, I could hardly see for the force and brightness. Like a firestorm, like fallout, brilliant particles drifted through the air in thick heavy invisible clouds. It's a good thing there are fifty of us, I thought, this would have decimated a mere puny individual. It's a good thing I'd been practicing back home, a good thing this is what I'd been calling for; I wouldn't want to be on the other side, and be crushed, crimped, crisped.

As the farewells continued around the circle, I could hear the motors of transformation, the engine of world change. A vortex was being created, a synchronicity, a movement of consciousness greater than the sum of parts. I saw golden nets of Sri Aurobindo's vibration cast across the land, the new world universalized and resonating in the atmosphere.

*"Unbidden,
the mantra started in me:
Om Namo Bhagavate."*

Then it was time to leave. I crawled into Jim Massa's Camaro, packing myself in the back with a giant suitcase and Ron Jorgenson. Bill Christen took the passenger seat, and Jim tooled us down to Boston, dropping a few mufflers and half the bottom of the car on the way because of the extra weight. Unbidden, the mantra had started in me: Om Namo Bhagavate.

At the airport we left Ron at one concourse and Bill at another. Jim dropped me off at the People's Express terminal. I waited an hour till check in, keeping an eye on my luggage and watching people run by: porters, flight attendants, executives catching the shuttle to Washington.

I had my journal on my lap to write what had happened at the meeting, but I couldn't. I was stunned. The mantra was humming: ONB, ONB. There was heavy consciousness in a capsule all around me, like heavy water, heavy air. It was rich, emollient, thick and tangible: ONB, ONB. One steel fabric of consciousness, no mind, only weighted awareness, and nothing that could assault or invade.

It lasted all the way to Denver.

But it pulls, relentless, feverish. My neurons start to smoke, my brain cells go up in fire, all the little quarks and mesons and particles of being go into excitation; and I wonder when will be the moment, the quickened alignment of polarized atoms, the right-weighted tilt of the world, that all these things may finally be no longer experiences that come and go, but realization: permanent, complete, forever.



Meditation at AUM, Merriam Hill

Reasonable Advice

By David Hutchinson

The sun has driven the cicadas wild; every bush rattles with crumbling leaves. Water?—only a memory in the dust, except for the trickle down my back and brow. Why am I here in the midday heat, stabbed by spines, blood pounding in my temples, wandering through the boulders of last century, lost to civilization?

The desert, bare and clear, a place to reflect. I am at home here. I belong.

The mountains rise seven thousand feet from the basin that is Tucson; from here they are gray and distant. At the base lie rock, cactus, scorpions. Trails don't deserve the name, being easily lost among the dry washes and open shrub—if you are lucky enough to find one at all. To explore you need resolve and preparation, and, in the beginning at least, a guide. When I was twenty years old I yearned for a guide. All the teachers in this country seemed to lack the synthetic visions that could link yoga to life—modern life, with all its masks, machines, formulas. Then, amidst the interesting and the bizarre on a bookseller's table in Chicago, I found *The Synthesis of Yoga*. What an unthinkable path! goals beyond measure! —but I knew it was the way. This man Aurobindo explained the unfamiliar ground of yoga, with its assorted schools, swamis, means and ends; the search was over, —a journey had just begun.

With the either/or approach of youth I pursued enlightenment, samadhi. But the teacher I lived with lacked the vision of Sri Aurobindo, and in time it became clear that when used to limit rather than motivate, our goals can become goals. There are habits of body and movement, there are habits of mind and soul. Knowing this, Sri Aurobindo tried to keep others from stopping at the various stations in self-knowledge. A thought or experience tends to repeat itself, if for no other reason than it is known and familiar. As the Reagan advertisers have made clear, repetition to the unreflective mind takes on the semblance of fact. As a species we follow the ways traced out by hundreds of generations before us: the inner world is a creation of man as much as our modern concrete jungle. Ignorance vs. habit. . . looking at the mountain peaks one day, a student asked me why anyone would want to go there. Aren't they as dry and barren as they appear from down here? She did not know, had not seen the towering pines and flowering meadows, the rushing streams and banks of snow. But I had—and could speak for their existence. Her voice and eyes grew animated, eager: now she could imagine, and one day, possibly, see them for herself.

Most people never attempt the mountain wilderness, and are content to stay within familiar streets and walls. The configuration of the city mind seems . . . quadrilateral. We have created the metropolis, and it is reshaping us, in turn.

Of those of us who *do* occasionally leave combustion engines behind, most sharply distinguish between man's creations and the natural world. I hear stories of endless days in the rain, of mosquitoes that chew through tents. In the freedom and silence one is driven mad by the whisper of the pines, and overwhelmed; the experience falls outside of imagination, and in recounting becomes totally other. The mysterious, mystical wilderness.

Freedom and autonomy, although reflected in nature—without-man, reach their true summits inwardly. Moksha, nir-

vana, samadhi: the state, described by numerous traditions, of consciousness apart from objects, of Purusha liberated from the mechanisms of Prakriti. The path can end here, indeed often does: after years of bodily prison, such a heady experience may overwhelm. Mysterious, mystical liberation. . . can there be more?

Years of study have led at least one “professional mystic” to conclude—no. *The Light at the Center* is a singularly limited account of mysticism. His few experiences and years of reading have convinced him that it is simply a zero-experience, divorced from any possible relation to the rest of life. The world is lost—necessarily—during the moments that a person is in this state. One does not affect the other. Nothing can be done to induce this mystical experience: tapasya, ethical behavior, aspiration are self-deceptions, irrelevant, useless. With a sarcasm and proud erudition he disposes of such poor souls as Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, who obviously couldn't see the limitations of this path and continued to preach their pointless sermons to the gullible mass.

Why then do such experiences exist? They are just another part of life, he says. Do not trouble yourself over them. You will be just as good—or bad—a person if you have them, or if you don't. Reason alone is the guide to action.

*“The configuration of the city mind
seems . . . quadrilateral. We
have created the metropolis
and it is reshaping us in turn.”*

If only the ghost in our machine were so compliant, we should do well to take this “mystical” advice. Somewhere in a marathon discussion that Rick, Drake and I had at the All-USA Conference, the place of reason came up. Inveterate thinkers all, we admitted the difficulty of using/allowing/opening to other, potential guides of conduct. But this is a mind-created problem. Who among us, having read *Savitri*, seen her transformation, will ever be lost again? Many times, faced with a disappearing mountain trail, I have been forced to relinquish compass and map; intuition, the body's feel for the earth, takes over. Reasoned thought is no longer called for—a surer faculty must lead the way. And it does! Mushy oneness is not the only consequence of surrendering the material mind.

Sri Aurobindo, searching the heart of matter, discovered that it is not the antithesis of consciousness. Freedom is not synonymous with escape; release is not integration. On the contrary, the only way to fully integrate the total being is to free our physical base from the sleep in which it has rested for ages. What did he find, in the depths of the unconscious? Resistance and inertia, certainly, but at the base—Ananda. The joy that dances in every wave of light.

“Is there any characteristic [of living things] more striking than the joy of life itself?” Joseph Wood Krutch, no stranger to the use of reason but, more importantly, one whose thought was a response to his total self, came to this conclusion 30 years ago while writing of the connections between different forms of life.

Rather than isolate any part of the human, he saw the unity that we share with all life, from sex (and death) in protozoa to the heroism of a solitary mountain ram. And he saw that our qualities are mirrored, however obscurely, across the sentient world.

Perhaps only misguided mystics talk this way. Perhaps. Thought is a curious thing: it can build bridges, but also fences; find hidden secrets, and stumble over itself. Ultimately, the separation of experience and self, like that of consciousness and the world, is spurious: the individual, culture, the universe carry the past in their very form. Science and the arts testify to the interconnectedness of all things, in time (history) as well as space.

Up on a ridge, windblown and cold, I once looked at the city a mile below. Light had melted from the sky; the dotted maze of miniature lights moved in slow motion far away. Two blistering days brought me to this lonely spot, where I could contemplate a new life in a new city. The past fell into place, the future relaxed its urgency. In the expanse, the vacancy of night, peace rolled in with the stars. I have been touched forever by that point of time: it permeates me. Shall I call it mystical? No matter. It is a part of me now, my history; a dimple of the soul.

In the desert, among creatures and creations as strange as any on earth, Krutch recognized the kinship—and the joy essential—of life. Another buried his head in Indian language, traveled to the land of Buddha and Sri Aurobindo, was initiated into ancient paths, —and found the light at the center to be a mirage.

A quick-step lizard is here and gone—as is my water. Time to return. Who is the cynic, and who the mystic? Am I to forever stamp inner experience with the stigma of irrelevance, or come back another day to climb a little higher toward the living heights above? Was there ever any doubt?

A Page From History

Editor's Note: Maggi Lidchi will be visiting the USA with her daughter, Ishita, from Nov. 12 through December. She will be speaking at a conference on spiritual healing on the East Coast and then traveling to California. We present here excerpts from an article about her in the August 1 *Service Letter* by M.P. Pandit.

If history is a process of the evolution of the human consciousness on its various levels, surely the Mother's life is a continuum of concentrated history, and that too not on the earth-plane alone but also on several other orders of existence. For a close observer it was an intense education to watch how she made and unmade things, how weaklings were transformed into heroes, age-long impediments were dissolved with one smile. Her course of action was always first to set things moving on the subtler planes and then to shape their results on the physical. Dimensions lost their meaning when it concerned the Mother: she could be at the same time high above and here below, concentrated on one point locally but at the same time aware of calls from all over the universe. She was supremely divine but equally intensely human. She held innumerable threads in her beautiful hands and knew which one to pull and when. She knew but would not appear to know, she could effect but did not want to. Some would say she was complex. But the way she operated was so natural. In her the divine and the

human elements were delightfully fused. No instance would be happier to illustrate this side of her life than her meeting with a long lost friend who had returned to her from beyond the gates of Death. We speak of Marguerite Lidchi, that little, blithe spirit who arrived at the Ashram early in 1960.

Maggy—for that is how Marguerite was known to everybody—happened to read Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* in France and was bowled over. Irresistibly she was held in the grip of Lord Krishna and she was, in spite of herself, drawn to Sri Aurobindo. She set out for Pondicherry forthwith. She knew

*"When word was reached to the
Mother about this visitor's arrival,
Mother made a cryptic comment:
'It is someone I know.' "*

nothing of the Mother at that time. And when she arrived she found herself quite at home. Every one liked her, her petite form, her agile gait and above all her perpetual smile. Inquisitive minds found out that at her home in South Africa there were fourteen servants working for the family. And here she was moving about without a care in the world—or so it looked.

All the while things were taking shape in another direction. When word was reached to the Mother about this visitor's arrival, Mother made a cryptic comment: "It is someone I know." We looked for further elucidation, but none was forthcoming. We had learnt not to press for more than what she would say.

Well, Maggy was presented to the Mother on the first of February, 1960. Champaklal remembers—as only he can—the full contour of Mother's smile and Maggy's tear-filled eyes. This was in the Pranam Hall where Mother was giving blessings to all.

Very soon afterwards Maggy met the Mother alone upstairs. Her first words to the Mother were, "I know you already, I have known you before," and tears streamed down her face. Both meditated together for a long time.

How did she feel she had known Mother before? Obviously her inner being knew it though on the surface Maggy could not perhaps explain. But Mother explained it in detail to Champaklal. And here is the story, or rather facts which look like a story.

When Mirra was young, pursuing her studies in art in Paris, she had a friend of her own age, a dear friend—'and the only friend' as Mother took care to mention—and her name was Valentine. Their friendship was deep, so deep then when after her marriage Valentine had to leave for Egypt, she was so miserable to part from Mirra that she lost all taste for life. No wonder she left her body—soon afterwards—at childbirth, a day before André was born to Mirra.

It is interesting to recall that Mother had painted a picture of this friend, a miniature which still retains its exquisite fresh pastel colours because it was painted on ivory. It is a portrait of a beautiful young woman dressed in the style of the times, just before the turn of the century, in a white gown with a white gardenia pinned to the shoulders. She wears a triple row of pearls. The face is sensitive but the eyes show the sadness at the impending parting. Mother had brought the miniature with her to India and later gave it to Maggy, telling her, "I loved you

very much then and I love you even more now. You came back very quickly." Of course to Maggy it seemed to have taken a long time. Once they met here, however, Mother showered her blessings and gifts, both inner and outer, so lavishly on her that all the longing of the past was forgotten.

In the beginning, things were slow to develop, but very soon the old intimacies seem to have returned, though of course with some new dimensions added.

Writing on 3rd November 1964, Mother turns Maggy into Maggi (Ma-ggi—close to Mother); she writes:

*Maggi, my dear child,
I am really happy with the manner in which your sadhana is
developing and your growing receptivity.*

Interesting developments followed. Mother became aware of a Fairy who had attached herself to Maggi and was always present. Of her Mother was to write:

*I have to tell you that my perceptions concerning you are
becoming more and more precise—and that I am convinced that
your vital is united to a charming little fairy, charming, smiling,
attractive, who likes to do pretty little miracles that give a
special flavour to human life, quite dull in general.*

*Your presence is a joy and your collaboration is precious . . .
And I too love you.*

That was not all. Maggi herself turned into Mother's Fairy. For on her birthday, Mother wrote:

*To my sweet little fairy who brings a ray of sunshine to this
earth.*

Mother would address her as her sweet fairy, her good fairy, on the cards and letters addressed to her.

Maggy once asked Mother if the fairy had been with her since her birth and Mother said, 'Probably,' but that in any case she had arrived with her in the ashram (in order to come into contact with Mother).

I hope I am breaking no confidences if I were to mention that Mother's Love for Maggy would flow at times in enveloping embraces, peals of laughter. Mother observed that when Maggi came into the room it was like being in a garden. The fairy used to weave gardens around them.

One day in a more solemn moment Mother asked Champaklal to bring a card. He brought one, she asked for a bigger card. Then she took Maggi's hand with her forefinger drew four circles in the palm and joined them with lines. Then she took a deep breath and put her chin on her chest and closed her eyes in concentration. "I have just created an order," she spoke. Thereupon Champaklal gave her the card and she wrote:

*Maggi
Chevalier dela Gentillesse*

which can perhaps be put in English,

Knight of the Order of Nobility

There was an interesting sequel. Much later, when Nata and Maggi started a home for children in Udavi where there is the

Auroshikha Agarbatti factory and the school, and Maggi was asked to give a name, she heard the Mother's voice saying:

GENTILLESSE

Speaking of Nata, Maggi considers that one of the biggest gifts she was to receive from Mother was her companionship with Nata. Nata it will be recalled was a splendid nobleman (Italian) who had settled in South America. On his very first visit to the Ashram, he had been taken to see the Lake Estate when the developmental programme had yet to take shape. But what he saw before him moved him so deeply that without a single thought, he took out all the money that was in his pockets—some thousands—and gave it as his contribution to the sadhak who had accompanied him there. He was responsible for initiating and developing the programme of publishing Sri Aurobindo's and Mothers's writings in Italian.

Mother's last Birthday Card to Maggi reads:

Good secretary and excellent disciple.

Incidents bringing out the depth of the relations between Mother and Maggi could be multiplied. I will only cite a couple of interchanges. In one letter Mother writes:

*Maggi, my dear little fairy, you are adorable and it is a great
joy to be served by you.*

With all my tenderness and my blessings,

Maggi writes:

*Adored sweet Mother,
I love you now and for ever.*

Your Maggi.

Mother replies:

*Adorable little Maggi,
I love you.*

And the LOVE continues. Mother's physical withdrawal has not interrupted it. Maggi is never alone.

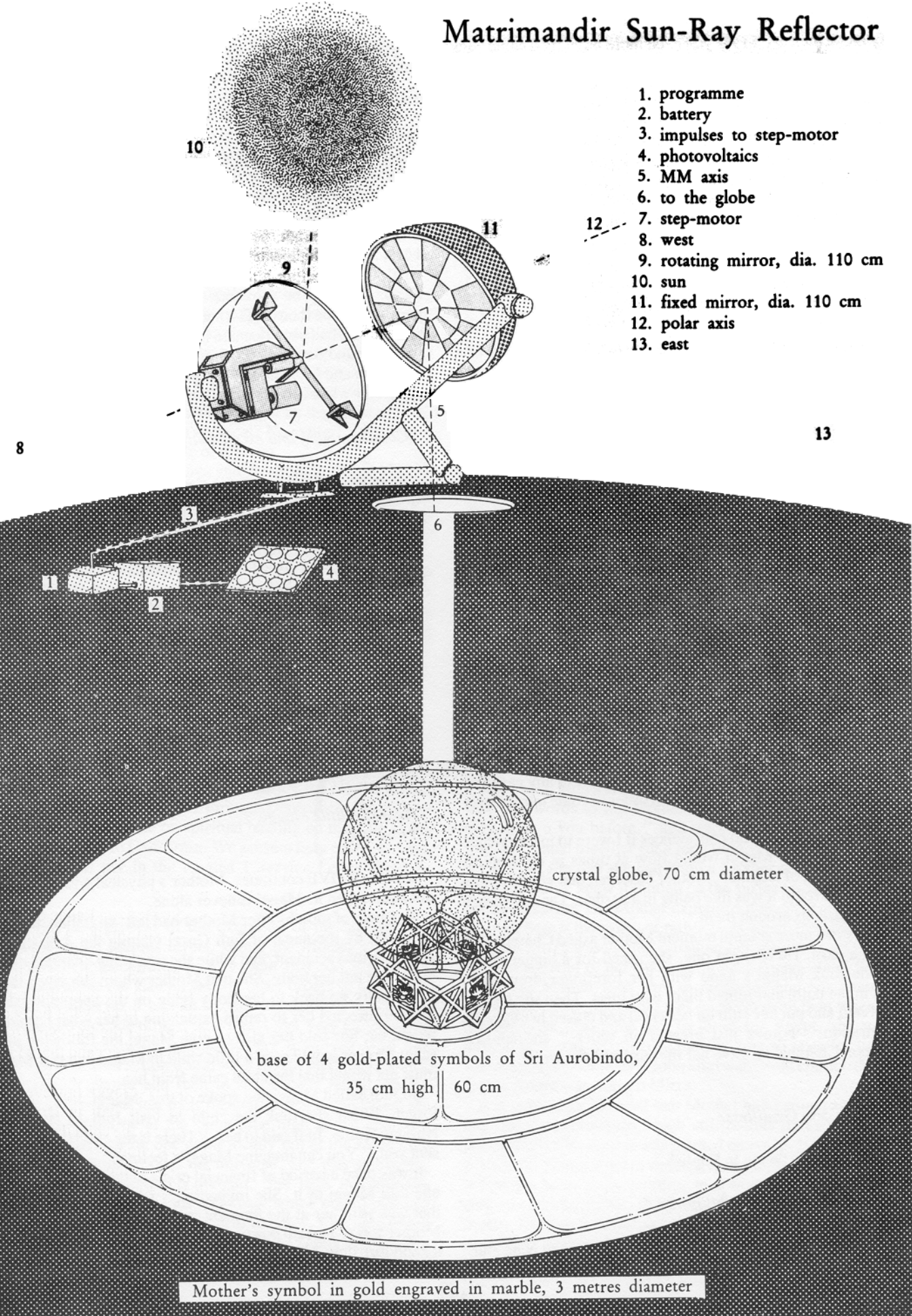
A couple of months after Mother had left, an Italian disciple, an artist, by the name of Judi Cozzi visiting the Ashram met with a serious accident, and while she was being operated on the table, she left her body. She met Mother whom she asked if she must really go back to her body lying on the operation table. Mother directed her to return explaining to her what her work would be. She told her also to give Maggi the following message: Mother would send a little child to Maggi and that Maggi must not forget that the child came from her.

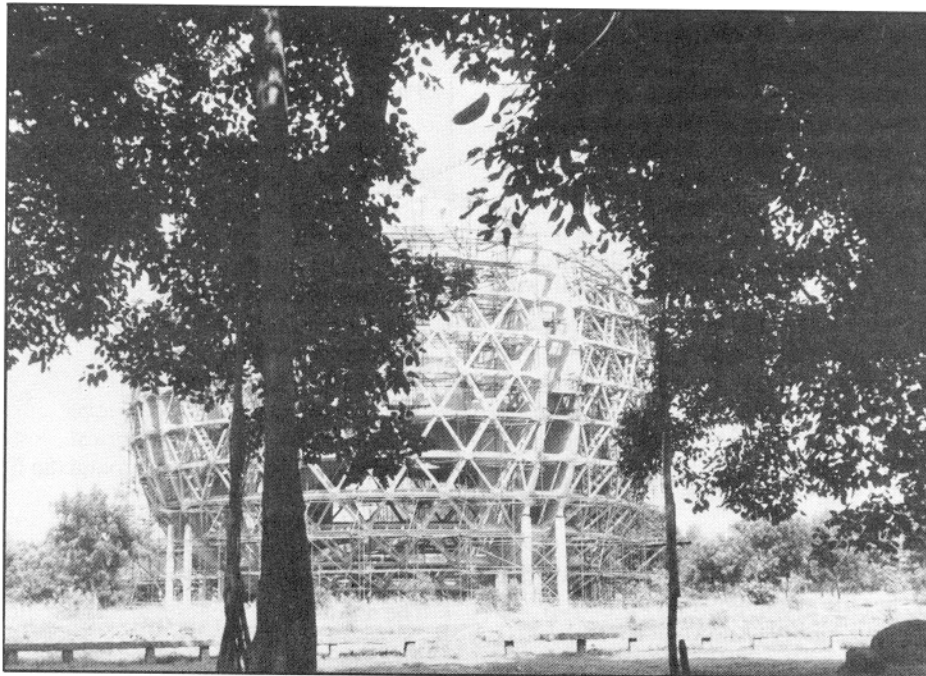
So Judi called Maggi and spoke of this. Maggi, however, did forget. When she took the child to visit Judi in Dr. Sen's Nursing Home, Judi said to her, "There is the child that Mother sent you." You can imagine Maggi's feelings.

It was once a period of financial crisis in the Ashram. Someone told Maggi of it. She immediately took out all the money that was with her at the moment and made it over to Mother. Mother was to narrate this to me much later, adding, "Maggi is a good girl." And beautiful too, beautiful of form and soul.

—M.P. Pandit

Matrimandir Sun-Ray Reflector





The Year of the Crystal

By Himanshu (Tom O'Brien)

"Build Matrimandir, put my symbol in place and Sri Aurobindo's, and the globe. I take it upon myself to make it into a very strong center. Only those who are capable will perceive it."

The Mother

This globe that the Mother spoke of, which she actually saw through her inner vision, has begun to take manifestation. In June, the first payment (one third of the cost) was made to the foundation of Carl Zeiss in Oberkochen, West Germany. Another step towards Matrimandir's completion had been made.

It was a step forward, but one that had many steps preceding it. Two days after the 1970's began, the Mother related her vision of Matrimandir's inner room. Regarding the very center, she said: "And right at the center there is on the floor my symbol, and above four symbols of Sri Aurobindo made of some transparent substance and with (or without) light in it. But the sun will have to strike on that globe. . . . There will always be an opening with a ray. Not a diffused light; a ray which strikes, which will have to strike the globe." Later on, she spoke of the significance: "And the important thing is this: the play of the sun on the center. Because that becomes the symbol—the symbol of the future realisation."

The Mother also gave the dimensions. The globe was to be 70 centimeters in diameter. Such a transparent globe has never been in existence before! To find or manufacture such an object would entail numerous visits to glass and crystal manufacturers around the world. Many ideas were considered and discarded. Should it be glass/crystal, transparent/translucent, solid or hollow? When Carel Thieme of Auroville International Netherlands discovered Zeiss would be willing to try, he was enthused. Zeiss has a reputation of working for quality and precision rather than simply for profit.

For Zeiss the project is commercially uninteresting, but the

endeavor is special on two other counts. They never get to work on purely spherical objects. Their work is more typically with lenses and/or telescopes. Secondly, this 'ball' will be placed in what they referred to as a 'monument' for generations to come, preserving the name of Zeiss far into the future. Piero, the Matrimandir engineer and architect, was concerned about any imperfections that may occur in the sphere. The Zeiss representative responded: "Yes. The bubbles will be of the magnitude of 1 to 29 micron, that is, a thousandth of a millimeter." Even the perfectionist Piero was silenced by that exactitude.

Next Spring we expect to have a special visitor from Auroville who has been working on the Matrimandir from the beginning. Ruud Lohmann, the steel bender for much of the Matrimandir's frame, plans to come to the United States on a tour. He will be bringing with him a slide and music show chronicling Matrimandir's progress, and his enthusiasm for this "soul of Auroville." Rani Turner has offered to help coordinate his tour here and would like to know if there is anyone who wishes to host Ruud and his Matrimandir presentation. If so please write her at: Box 86 Brown Road, Ashfield, MA 01330. This is a great opportunity to be with someone who has known Matrimandir very intimately over the years and will surely present a loving view of its progress.

Meanwhile, we are all invited to participate in the funding of the crystal glass globe that the Mother spoke of with such significance. There remains approximately \$60,000 to be raised for the payment of the globe. Here in America we have been sending monthly checks through Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center and AVI, USA to the Matrimandir fund. Happily, our checks have been gradually increasing in size. Regular monthly donations are the most helpful, but all offerings are appreciated. If you wish to participate, simply send a check to Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center earmarked for the Matrimandir. Please include your full address, for you will then receive monthly Matrimandir Newsletters direct from Auroville, and quarterly statements of your tax deductible donations from Matagiri.

A recent Matrimandir Newsletter quoted Mother's message for fund-raising: "Give your money to the Divine work and you will be richer than you would by keeping it."

1

Departure

Second class, Dadar Express; a box on the floor:
BENGAL LAMPS/BANGALORE CITY, the label half torn:
Being: it is. As the train jerks forward the cry
Of sweet vendors frames the enigma: But why?

Ugliness. Even if essence is beautiful, here
All is magnificent ugliness. All but the curve
Of the brow of a Pallava princess; but even she
Turns from discourse in Tamil to 'Filmfare': Being: it is.

But, oh, that it is what it is, but that name and form
Could have woven the maya of 'Filmfare.' The actress's face
Is symbolic of beauty, her life symbolic of joy.
As for us, we are left to our misery. And yet it is.

Between Poona and Bombay the rails rise up to a place
That men have hardly been able to ruin. The fields
In the valley appear so tranquil, as from the hills
Rush the waters that give the grain its breath-taking green.

2

Interlude

Foreign watch ticking,
Baggage in my hand
And a fat wallet sticking
Out of my pocket as I stand
Like a patsy. Now the train stops,
People pushing in . . .
Can't believe it, get out, call the cops:
Big city sin.
Ripped off in Bombay blues, O lord,
Ripped off in Bombay blues.

3

At Elephanta

How false I am
And no less crude
Than those who planned
To blast away
The face that is
Infinitude
Made visible,
But even they
Did not dare in
Their drunken play,
Almighty Lord,
To fire at you.
Like them I stand
Before the true.
How false I am.

Point Clear, Darjeeling

The mist has lifted and the hills,
But not the mountains, are revealed.
Cedars and mansions; this must be
What men call beauty. Even the words
Of the Hindi film song manage to blend
With the lazy twittering of the birds
And the sound of the human thigh-bone horn
Blown in the temple far below
"Mera koi nahi," intones
The film-star symbolically in love
Transformed to a sacrificial priest.
The bride and groom walk around the fire.

"Mera koi nahi . . . nahi . . ."
I too have no one in the world.
In one fire my body is consumed;
The one that might consume that has died.

The body reverts to its elements.
The soul's acts never die.
The script of the past is smeared in blood
On a cloth no Ganges can cleanse,

Or else ineffaceably is scratched
On the pure white marble of a tomb
By hands of the nameless and obscure
Who hope to share its immortality.

They too have no one . . . no one:
"Koi nahi" . . . immortality for us
Can come but by passing on the seed
The drunken god dropped long ago.

5

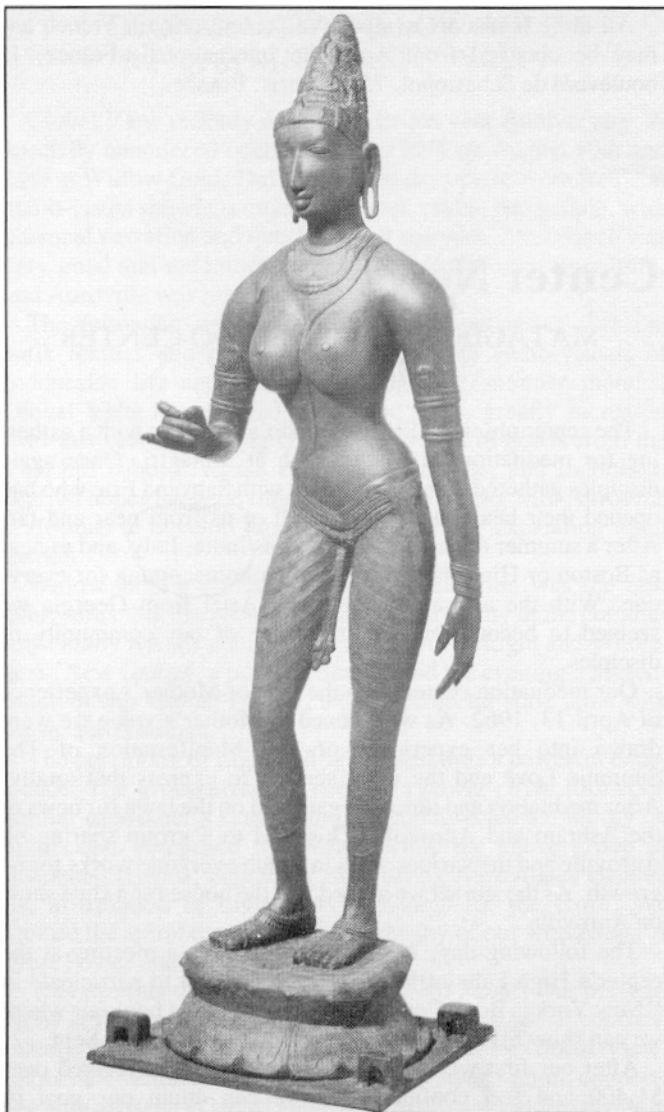
Fragments once worshipped

A Stone Buddha

A moment with the deep vibrations,
But only a moment.
The quick modern chopping
Cuts across the grain of the flow
As old barbaric depredations
Marred this flawless perfection,
Knocking out hunks
Of the drapery that flows
Down to the feet
That his rapt disciples adore.
Spoiled! Spoiled!

Mutilated MS of genes:
Spoiled! The perfect form spoiled!
DNA in tatters, enemy-scrambled code:

Father's sins visited on the son.



The talons of death seize hold
On the lax underbelly of life,
Dragging it down
To the overturned sky
Where the black-winged raptor wheels round.
All that exists by food
As food must die.

Sap oozes out
Of the branch as it burns.
Ashes at last choke the fire.

Water and earth flow down.
Only, encased in the seed,
Some last spark
Of creation remains,
Looking below
For a crevice in which to grow.

A Bracket Figure

Coquettishly she writes
Turned coyly so her breast's bright

Burden, like a low bent
Mango tree's in June,
Is peeping from behind
Her nail-notated back, spine
Curving in a long S
(Strange medieval script!)
Down slowly to the great
Round buttocks spreading wide.
Hardly anything remains to hide.

A place to deposit the seed.
Water and earth flow down.
Death eats the eater
Gashing him from below.
Life-force in the seed follows the path.
Fragmentary helix, strip of a sculptured whole
Looking for a complementary half.

6

Fire Icon

I saw the ancient temple at Srirangam,
The many-gated home of the Great God.
I saw the shrine where Shiva dwells in fire
The Brahmin said.

In Coimbatore there are no ancient temples.
It is a factory town.
They took me to a foundry and I saw,
When the seal was torn from the dark cauldron's womb,
The goddess manifest in liquid fire
Enslaved to her worshippers.

7

On Dawn-Mountain

The holy city is a squalid place
And even the temple crawls with hustling priests
And the shrines are counters of a penny-arcade.

From this remove a different-patterned plan
Appears superimposed upon the old:
The temple is a model built to scale
Of the terrestrial city of the gods.

Four-sided is the hall of sacrifice
Within whose "sacred-made" periphery
By stone seven times encinctured burns the stone:
Omphalos self-erected, self-controlled;
Of all that moves unmoved progenitor.

There where Idea penetrates the World
The meaning of her ritual is laid bare;
For every gesture is by him informed,
He witnessed through the lattice of her dance.

From this world-navel, east and west and south,
Run seven highways, rays of the rising sun,
To Bangalore and Coimbatore, Madras
And Pondicherry where the earth meets sea.

About Books

By Eric Hughes

Three books of special interest have recently come out in France. *La Vie sans mort* (Life without Death) by Satprem and Luc Venet draws together passages from the works of Sri Aurobindo and Mother outlining the evolutionary vision and task on earth, including transformation of the physical body on earth and the implications this would have for the change of conditions on earth now, which seem only to worsen with each new attempt by mental man to solve or ameliorate them. No other work juxtaposes so dramatically Sri Aurobindo's words with those of Mother taken from the record of her work in her body. The second part of the book consists largely of remarks by Satprem, taken from letters and recorded conversations, recounting his own experiences in the same vein. Satprem, of course, was Mother's confidant for 20 years and recorded her extraordinary experiences (published as *Mother's Agenda*). She repeatedly said that of all the people around her, only Satprem understood what she was doing and so she poured out her observations and feelings to him, and drew him along with her on her odyssey. What he has to say therefore has a special value for those seriously interested in following the trail blazed by Sri Aurobindo and Mother, to find a life without death.

The two other books are by scientists and offer unique viewpoints on the evolution of a new species as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and Mother.

Sri Aurobindo-Mother: Shiva-Shakti, ou le laboratoire de l'homme de demain (the laboratory of the man of tomorrow) is by Dr. Therese Brosse. Dr. Brosse is the former head of the Cardiology Clinic at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, a former member of the Secretariat of UNESCO and of the Harvard Research Center on Creative Altruism, and in charge of a scientific mission in India to carry on neurocardiological work with yogis. This book is the result of her research. "It is a question for us," she says, "of bridging the abyss that separates two worlds: on one side, that of birth, illness and death; on the other, that of immortality on which suffering and death have ceased to exist. It is from this power of Consciousness that 'the New Species' will arise. The abyss is only imaginary, created by our mental blindness; a change of 'look' can open the door for us to the passage. Such is the adventure to which Sri Aurobindo and Mother... invite us, an adventure into man's unknown." The book covers the lives of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, their common work, the Agenda, and the yoga of descent, with a special section of religious, metaphysical and scientific concordances.

Les Aveugles eblouis. Les etats limites de la conscience (The Dazzled Blind. The Limits of Consciousness) by Pierre Etevenon explores altered states of consciousness (including those brought about by drugs and sensory deprivation), dreams and dreamers, states of consciousness voluntarily modified in yoga, and draws on the work of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. (The author has long been associated with the Paris Auroville center.) A doctor of science, Etevenon has, since 1972, directed a laboratory where he studies waking states, the typology of mental illness, and the effects of psychotropic drugs, and became fascinated by accounts of dreams. His study here concludes with a discussion of a new consciousness, that of "spontaneous joy" in the "miracle of daily life."

All three books are available at present only in French and may be obtained from Auroville International—France, 10 boulevard de Sebastopol, 75004 Paris, France.

Center News

MATAGIRI SRI AUROBINDO CENTER HIGH FALLS, NY

The center observed Sri Aurobindo's birthdate with a gathering for meditation on August 17th at Matagiri. Once again disciples gathered in the livingroom with Sam and Eric who had opened their hearts and house to all of us from near and far. After a summer of being as far away as India, Italy, and as near as Boston or High Falls it was truly a homecoming for everyone. With the arrival of Drew and Ariel from Georgia we seemed to become even more aware of our community of disciples.

Our meditation centered on the tape of Mother's experience of April 13, 1962. As we listened to Mother's voice we were drawn into her experience of The Manifestation of The Supreme Love and the work she did to express that totally. After meditation and lunch we gathered on the lawn for news of the Ashram and Auroville. This led to a group sharing on Auroville and the various ways in which everyone works for its growth. As the sun set we moved into the house for a slide show on Auroville.

The following day, August 18, there was a meeting at the center's High Falls office. The group agreed to participate in "New York is Book Country" which is a street bookfair where we can show Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's books on Sept. 22.

After our first week of fundraising, we have received over \$1,400 and feel confident that we can attain our goal of \$10,000. The small amounts have added up and are deeply appreciated. The shipment of incense arrived safely and plans for a new display are in the works. We hope to have a flyer similar to the enclosed for the books available for the incense. If you can recommend outlets for our books or incense, please let us know.

We are trying to be aware of how best to serve you as a Center. Please help us by completing the enclosed form. Many of you are interested in forming or joining study groups, or knowing if visitors from the Ashram or Auroville will be in your area. This questionnaire is designed to help achieve a better flow of information.

It would greatly facilitate the processing and upkeep of our mailing list, inventory and correspondence to have use of a computer. Those with expertise, used equipment, or funds should please get in touch. In the short term, we could use a good electric typewriter, since ours is on loan.

It gives us great joy to be able to send your contributions to the Matrimandir each month, joy and appreciation which flows back when it's received. To participate, simply send whatever you can, whenever you can to Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center with the notation "Matrimandir." If you especially wish to give to the Crystal, that should be noted as well. If your donation is more than \$12 yearly, you'll receive the Matrimandir Newsletter direct from Auroville.

GLOBAL VIEW/WILLOW GOLD RT. 3, SPRING GREEN, WISC.

Global View recently celebrated its 5th year Anniversary. A specially announced open house was held on August 10th and 11th at Willow Gold. During the two days there were frequent audio-visual showings on Indian travel, crafts, and people, with personal narration and questions and answers. Attendance was very good and the information shared about India, its culture, and Auroville was highly appreciated.

The following weekend an exhibit of Indonesian *ikat* and batik textiles and crafts was featured with audio-visuals of Indonesian life and culture. Through the summer months, Global View has enjoyed very good sales, greatly increased over last year, reflecting continued interest in goods from the Thai hill tribes, Tibetan refugees, Auroville, and Indonesia. Marion hopes to spend time this winter working with Auroville craft units to develop more products for our expanding retail market.

Willow Gold's Summer Solstice Celebration was the best ever, reflecting the growing harmony and clarity of the community. Many friends attended the ceremony of Light and Wholeness, New Games, a pot luck dinner, and the evening's presentation of *Our Global Family*, a three-projector slide show with music and readings.

The ceremony of Light and Wholeness was a powerful experience. The group arranged itself in a *power circle* formation similar to Mother's symbol and Marion directed the liturgy on Wholeness composed by Duane, while the entire group of residents, friends, neighbors and visiting Aurovilians chanted the affirmation of Light and Wholeness for the Earth. We danced the spiral dance, singing in the joy of our wholeness. A great Power and Presence was felt.

That evening the slide show *Our Global Family* was presented by several members of the community. It is one of approximately 75 audio-visual presentations offered by Global View. Other new ventures are tours to the Himalayan region, connecting with artisans in Nepal and Northeast India. Future travels to Thailand and Indonesia are being planned. *Our Global Community* is in the spirit of the *Family of Man* exhibit and reflects the combined efforts of several here at Willow Gold. It is a portrait of the human family in many moods, colors and countries. We are hoping to make a videotape of this presentation available.

The summer's bountiful and beautiful gardens nurture us, while the rains, the green rolling hills, the big valley sky and the sun's radiance all remind us of Mother's love, Earth's beauty, and our natural place in it all.

In the Spirit of Truth and Wholeness
The Willow Gold Family

INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE STUDY CENTER PENSACOLA, FLORIDA 32503

Today on August Fifteenth friends from all over the country are here with us to observe Sri Aurobindo's Birthday. Our programme is simple: a brief address, Mother's music and recorded statements on Sri Aurobindo, Bande Mataram as

rendered by the Ashram chorus, followed by a collective meditation in the garlanded room where Sri Aurobindo's Relics are kept. Following the meditation, as each departs, a Blessings Packet is taken. A communal lunch ensues, and the abundance and harmony of the day together smiles from every heart.

Since our last newsletter several lecture series, studies, and seminars have been presented to the public under the auspices of the Center. On Wednesdays, "The Wisdom of Ancient India" began in February and concluded in May after poring over each verse of the Isha, Katha, and Mundaka Upanishads with an attempt at a full elucidation of the texts. Along the ways the Vedic background of the Upanishads was depicted, typical and illustrative anecdotes from India's spiritual heritage were added, and throughout a serious group of seekers participated in the weekly exchanges. Other Wednesday night offerings included talks on "Conscious Evolution" and "Collective Sadhana." Most recently a seminar in this series entitled "Towards a Music of the Soul" drew a quite enthusiastic audience, and instead of concluding in one evening, the sessions filled three and could well have continued. As expressed recently to a good friend, the workshop attempted to discover differing levels of inspiration and consciousness in music so that the medium of sound could be used as an avenue for deepening and enriching personal consciousness.

Future topics for presentation are "Gurus, Guides, and Going Your Own Way," "An Integral Psychology," "Work and the Inner Life," "Towards a New Society," et al. The 1st would represent a several weeks' study.

The Sunday study and meditation group continues to probe *The Synthesis of Yoga*, having reached a midway point in the section "The Yoga of Integral Knowledge."

A final notation for those interested. The Internal Revenue Service has recently reconfirmed the tax-exempt status of the Center. Donations for the Mother's Work continue to be welcome. In addition to sponsoring gatherings, seminars, and intercultural contacts, we are planning future publications of significant spiritual literature. Occasionally we are referred to other spiritually inclined groups, as when a talk entitled "Sri Aurobindo and the Emerging New Consciousness" was given on June 15th at the Still Waters Centre here in Pensacola by Rand Hicks.

AUROVILLE INTERNATIONAL NEWS APTOS, CA

The annual meeting of the International Council of Auroville International was held in Italy on June 21, 22 and 23. Board members June Maher, Rani Turner and Constance attended. With Julian Lines, representing the Foundation for World Education, the delegation from the U.S. was the largest ever to participate.

The meeting concerned itself mainly with organizational matters and reports on the activities of the various centers. The most worthwhile result of the meeting was an agreement to sign the contract with Zeiss for the manufacture of the crystal for the Matrimandir. The minutes of the International meeting will appear in AVI-Information.

Auroville International USA has now opened an office in Sacramento, California. The mailing address is P.O. Box 162489, Sacramento, CA 95816. Phone: (916) 452-4013. The street address is 3112 "O" Street, Suite 13.

New officers have been elected for the year 1985-1986. Jack Alexander replaces June Maher as President, Constance is Vice-President, Theresa Boschert replaces Ardis Hanson as Secretary and Don Cox is the Treasurer. The other board members are June Maher, Rani Turner and Shyama Zelnick. A part-time salaried position has been created for a "Coordinator"—a person who will be responsible for most of the day to day work of AVI/USA. Mary Alexander has been hired to fill this position.

AVI/USA continues to support the formation of "Working Groups" which would parallel the existing Working Groups in Auroville. This would create a distributed network of responsibility which would allow a large number of people to involve themselves directly in the work—exactly in the area where they would like to participate. The Education Working Group, for instance, (which by the way, is already functioning) would be in direct contact with its counterpart in Auroville—collaborating in the design and implementation of projects. These Working Groups need not be AVI Working Groups, but at least one member of each group should be a member of AVI (preferably a voting associate). If this experiment is successful, AVI will encourage the formation of corresponding groups in Europe. This type of decentralization is seen as an effort to maintain the complexities of Auroville's development at a personal level of functioning where all the details of this work can be readily attended to.

All suggestions and inquiries should be directed to Mary Alexander AVI/USA at the above address.

THE BAY AREA STUDY GROUP SAN FRANCISCO, CA

The Bay Area group continues to meet weekly and currently is focusing on The Life Divine's last six chapters. The last meeting of the month is reserved for the study of M.P. Pandit's introductory works *How Do I Begin*, and *How Do I Proceed* which has been very helpful.

We have also started the computerization of the mailing list which our group offered to compile. We would like to remind centers, study groups and individuals who find themselves on the 'Integral Path,' to forward their names, addresses and phone numbers to us c/o P. Molinari, 526 31st St., Richmond, Ca. 94804.

THE EAST-WEST CULTURAL CENTER LOS ANGELES

Our most important news of course, is the departure of our dear friend, Gopal C. Bhattacharyya, who left his body on June 6. Our lives are enriched by his continuing presence. We are grateful to Mother for Her bringing him to us, even though we were blessed for only a short time.

Even as he left us, Mother was preparing a remarkable continuity to his work: the Vedic prelate who performed the Fire-ceremony which Gopal's family requested, turned out to

be not only a profound Sanskrit and Classics scholar, but a warm, helpful friend—with a bouyant and infectious optimism. He is now teaching Sanskrit, Hindi, Gita, Vedas, Upanishads and Eastern Philosophy at East-West Center, dedicating his work to Gopal's memory. He is Professor S.P. Sharma, of Bangalore.

We have several new goals set for current growth. Most important of these is our hope to re-locate the Center, moving it out of its increasingly over-crowded area. Another, is to complete the updating of our well-known, well-used library.

Of course a real highlight for us (and for several groups) was the joy and inspiration of having the beloved Champaklal from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, with us for some very special occasions.

The nucleus, the central inspiration of this Center is Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. In that light, the purpose of our Center is to share the spiritual best of the East and the West, and to expose as many souls as possible to that integral environment. As a result, we offer to the public an interesting variety of cultural programs, the scope of which can be seen in these highlights of recent events: An East Indian Doctor discussing "The Gita and Modern Society"; A Peruvian offering "Unity Between Religion, Moral Values & Science"; An American scientist with a film from N.A.S.A. showing "Spiritual Values of a Trip Thru Outer Space"; A Tamil gentleman presenting the "Wonders of Satya Sai Baba"; A local surgeon giving "Physical & Spiritual Relationships to Disease"; An artist-musician with an audio-visual on "Art, Energy & Consciousness"; A Vedic Missionary, "Yajna Worship and Yoga" with a Fire-Ceremony; A Doctor of Anthropology with his film, "A Buddhist Monk in Sri Lanka"; A Sociologist discussing, "Religion & Culture of Early American Indians"; An American sadhu on, "Problems on the Way to Self Realization".

Always there is the motivation to enrich the being toward a higher and wider spiritual life.

With Mother's Blessings

CONFERENCE

A conference/workshop entitled *Spirit and the Flame* was held at St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco on August 17 to honor Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, founder and president of Cultural Integration Fellowship, who passed away in June 1975. Dr. Chaudhuri came to the United States in 1951 at the invitation of Dr. Frederic Spiegelberg of Stanford University and suggested by Sri Aurobindo. Two-hundred, twenty-five people were in attendance.

The theme of the conference was to explore the outer limits of creativity towards the possibility of a new being. The three speakers were: Jack Schwarz, an internationally recognized authority of voluntary controls, human energy systems, and holistic health; Nancy Rosanoff, founder of Energy Strategies in New York City which is a development of working with the chakras toward self understanding of one's creativity and intuition; Nancy Evans Bush, executive director of The International Association for Near-Death Studies at the University of Connecticut.

The event was introduced by Mrs. Bina Chaudhiri. Wayne Bloomquist was conference coordinator.

Passings

•**John Kelly** died 5 May 1985 in India. He was 58 years old. John was known and loved by many in America and India. He lived for several years at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram before moving to Auroville, where he worked on the Bharat Nivas. He returned to the United States in the early 1970s and lived at his family home in Brooklyn, N.Y., until 1984, when he moved to Matagiri in upstate New York. In January 1985 John left for India, stopping in Ireland, his ancestral land, on his way. John is dearly remembered for his great generosity, loving nature, and fascinating and colorful stories of his spiritual experiences of Sri Aurobindo and Mother on the battlefields of Europe in World War II. An interview with John appeared in the Spring-Summer 1984 issue of *Collaboration*.

* * *

AN ANTHEM FOR EAGLES

By John T. Kelly
Version II

*Lonely goes the last Great Eagles left in time,
Who shall above all high mountains one day fly,
Pressing frayed wings on tireless space.
Bold Eagles, Flying on heaven in raging sigh,
Cold feathered breasts enflamed with wanting love;
Wounded, winging lamely on in lost sobbing flight;
Calling, always as they go, ever up ethereal walls,
Wild sharp crys echo along ahead, They are on the wing,
Striking for the very source, seeking their unloved mates.
Even now the gods look down through spiralled space,
And thrill with expectation of their coming wings;
To their eyes a supreme day in an eternity of marvels,
Even now they prepare the chamber, for the Spirit's slumber,
And guard the vacant portal, where dream clouds play.
For in a little while their raucous word offends the Silence
In a little while their waning Strength pretends no more.
Poor birds whose courage one day shall make all heaven cry,
Yet vain shall they weep for you, for they must fall;
For he who dares wake, to find no meaning in his days,
Must, an outlaw, whirl and make the steep austere ascent, alone.
Climb through the passive acres, to the Golden Eagle's home;
And so they shall with gaze unwavering, fastened on the sun.
On some high perihelion outpost, the tassel plumage shed
The fierce ardour in their eyes, bursts their mortal breasts
But knows first their frenzied talons plung deeply into flames,
Scorched rustling wings victorious, smothering the Sun.
They shall glide—, arching silent across the grieving calm,
Then plummet down corridors of wailing air,
Hushed in the bosom of God, now lay their final nest;
And from the faint vapor trail, their spirit wings create;
A banner upward vanishing, over the last mute horizon,
Shall come myriads of the golden plumed, they were searching
for.*

John T. Kelly
8/8/84

•**Louise Forest**, who was known to many on both the East and West Coasts, died at her apartment in New York City in May 1985.

* *

•**Nata**, a longtime Italian resident of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, died there in March 1985. Nata established the Auroshikha incense unit and edited *Domani*, a publication in Italian that presented Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's vision.

* *

•**Eleanor Montgomery's** ashes were interred at Casanov, the Ashram cemetery in Pondicherry on August 14th. Dimitri Von Mohrenschildt, a long-time friend of Mrs. Montgomery and Udar Pinto of the Ashram personally laid the ashes in the ground. Mrs. Montgomery was born November 19, 1909 and died February 21, 1983.

•**Gopal C. Bhattacharyya** left his body at 3 P.M. on Thursday, June 6, 1985, at the home of Markell Brooks in Pacific Palisades, California. He was 68 years of age. The end came after an intense three-month illness. When he had been diagnosed as having a malignant tumor on the pancreas, he chose to follow a holistic metabolic treatment. He fought bravely throughout the illness, facing every day with equality—the same yogic equality which he lived and which he taught to hundreds of students throughout his life.

Although he suffered from pain, nausea and all types of general body discomforts, he never showed any signs of depression. He never complained. He accepted whatever was given to him or not given to him. The generous, loving friends who cared for him day and night, and the nurses who came on a daily basis, marvelled at him. He would talk to them of God, and so inspire them and all who were around him. Most of all, he gave his love to everyone equally. The many friends he had made in his short stay in California visited him regularly, and almost to the end he insisted on giving his Saturday afternoon class on the Gita.

That Gopalji touched the lives of so many people during his life was obvious from the many letters and phone calls he received from friends all over the world. They all cared for him very much and wanted to see him well and with them as a friend and helper on the spiritual journey. From a recent national meeting of Sri Aurobindo devotees, 24 friends sent him notes of sustaining love. His family members were a support to him and their love for him was obvious from their many visits to his bedside.

We at the East West Cultural Center who have been blessed by Gopalji's close touch, thank the Divine Mother for this rare gift. He, himself, his presence, lifts us all higher in the Light. We are very grateful.

Mazio and Robert Fozewcc
East-West Cultural Center—Los Angeles

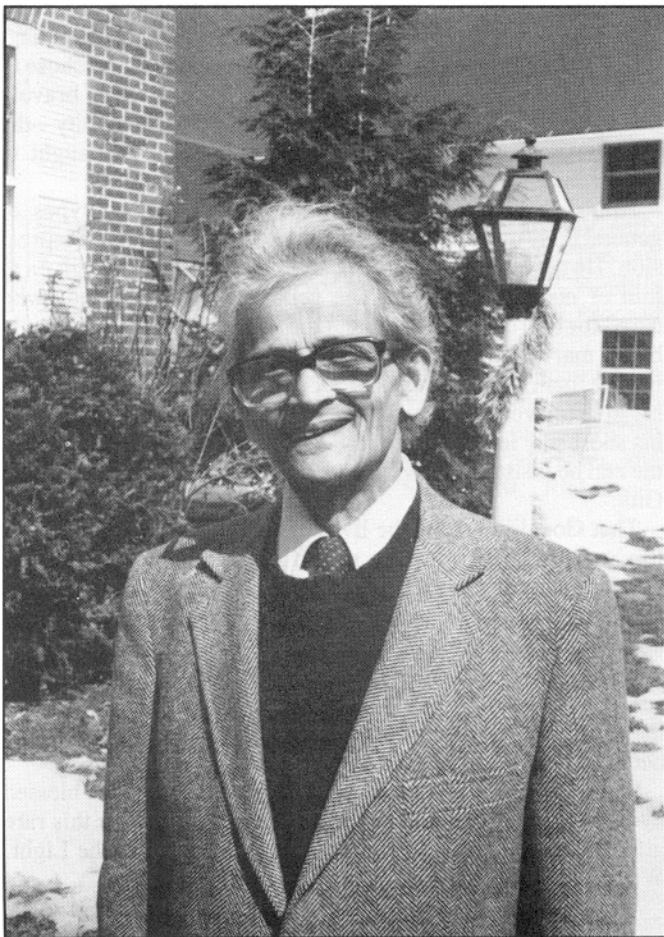
Gopal at Matagiri

Gopal Bhattacharyya came to live in Mt. Tremper six years ago. His "retirement" to community life at Matagiri meant caring for chickens, walking dogs, gardening, packing book orders, making yogurt and instructing groups and individuals in Hindi, Sanskrit, Philosophy, Education and the Saints and Sages of India which always culminated with Sri Aurobindo and Mother. A warm host, a patient teacher, an ardent driving student, Gopal exemplified the sweetness and depth of India.

He commuted and eventually moved to New Paltz, where he taught for Continuing Education. He organized a highly successful conference on "Sanskrit and Related Studies" attended by scholars from the U.S. and abroad. But a few weeks afterwards, he appeared jaundiced and returned to India for an operation.

After a prolonged recovery, he returned to the States in the Fall of '83 to live in Rosendale, N.Y., from where he continued to commute to New Paltz to teach and to edit the proceedings of the Sanskrit Conference. In addition, he taught Sanskrit privately, conducted a weekly study group on *Essays on the Gita*, met often with his students and friends and delighted in his growing godchild, Alexander.

At the age of sixty-six his perseverance was rewarded with a driver's license. With the help of his friends Rita and Harold and assistance from his nephew, Amit, Gopal found a sturdy grey Plymouth to drive to the college and back.



Among the most special times were the two weddings he performed. Joe Ferrara and Linda Sobel had their ceremony blessed and abbreviated by a passing shower, while Larry Seidlitz and Lucille Massa requested translations of the Sanskrit verses. All were obliged by Gopal who knew them as longtime devotees who were close to Matagiri.

News of Gopal's popularity and scholarship spread to California, where the East-West Cultral Center had been without a resident director since the death of Jyotipriya (Judith Tyberg). As an ecumenical Center, based on the teachings and philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, East-West needed a special individual who was respected and was knowledgeable about other traditions, yet grounded in the Integral Yoga. Gopal was thought to be a perfect choice and in January of 1985 left for Los Angeles with the plan of returning in the summer to put the final touches on the Sanskrit Conference proceedings.

Shortly after his arrival, he experienced some stomach pain and loss of appetite. Despite heroic efforts by his devoted friends and students who gave generously of their time and assistance to help him with the alternative treatments he chose, Gopal left his body in early June.

His nephew, Amit, visited him during his last week and reported Gopal's wish to have the proceedings of "Sanskrit and Related Studies" published. Those wishing to assist with this project may contact the Matagiri office in Julian Lines.

For Gopal

Old bones
the sun comes up.

The earth moves back.

The night descends.

Old, old soul
sinking through
the body
back to the soul.

Your spirit returned
to the mountain,
your true home.

The one you love
was there . . . he
kissed you on your journey.

All this, millions
of times has happened,
but for one as rare
as you, once with such peace.

You have blessed
us by your life.

Your Mother holds you now.

Lucy Barbera
June 1985

Mother's Symbol; A Section of the Ribbon

As many of you may already know I, Jeanne, made a section for the Ribbon which was organized as a peace demonstration in Washington DC. I was not able to attend the demonstration but I did go to a recent performance by folksinger Sally Rogers, and she not only participated in the day but had also written an article about it for her newsletter. I found the article to be very touching and felt that others would appreciate it. Thus I asked her if I could reprint it and she replied with an enthusiastic and generous yes. So here it is along with a photo of our section of the ribbon. I say ours because I felt that the Mother's symbol was going there for all of us, for the transformation into a humanity of peace and bliss.

One of the most unusual peace demonstrations in our nation's history took place on Sunday, August 4, 1984. The media barely took notice when the 25,000 participants arrived in Washington D.C. from all corners of the country. They came not to chant slogans or to hoist placards of protest into the air. Rather, they came to unfurl and tie a fifteen-mile long ribbon of love around the Pentagon, the Capitol, the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and the White House, calling for a halt to the arms race in the interest of all of us and of our children. People whose views and beliefs ran the gamut of the political spectrum came together as one that day, to celebrate their common interest in life on this planet.

"The Ribbon" (as it has come to be known) consisted of thousands of panels of cloth, each 36 inches long by 18 inches wide, depicting its maker's interpretation of that which they could not bear to think of as lost forever in a nuclear war. The protest took place to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. People came to join The Ribbon tying from every state.

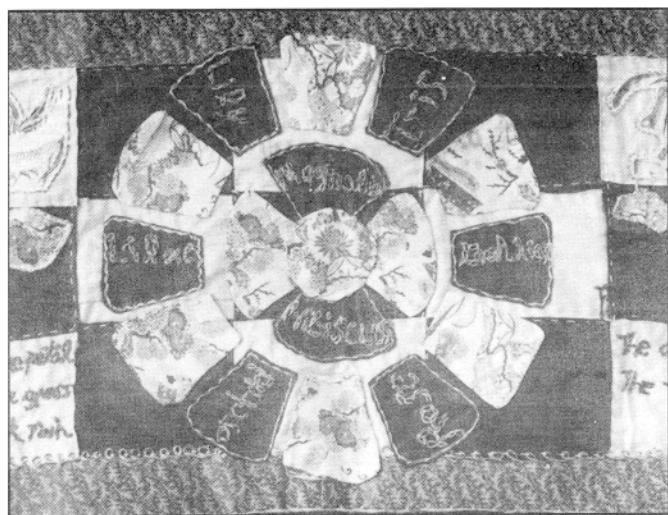
The Ribbon project didn't just happen, however. It was the brainchild of Justine Merrit, a 61 year old grandmother from Denver, Colorado. Throughout her life she had always "maintained a distance from the peace movement". But in February of 1982 she went on a retreat to pray for guidance in her life. During that retreat she realized for the first time her calling to work for peace at home. In March of that year, the idea of tying a ribbon around the Pentagon occurred to her. She said, "The Ribbon I envisioned would be a symbol of peace encircling a symbol of war, and it would be tied around the Pentagon in August of 1985, the fortieth anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. . . I see the Pentagon as a symbol of my own nation's violence, and of my own. I wanted The Ribbon to be a gentle reminder to the nation that we love the earth and all its people."

So who were the banner makers and what did they have to say? Many were not dyed-in-the-wool peace activists. In fact, many of the contributors had never been involved in any demonstrations until they laid down their thoughts and feelings on a piece of The Ribbon. One woman said, "I had no intention of speaking, writing or organizing, but when I read about The Ribbon I said to myself, 'I will sew.' The Ribbon was my way to make a personal statement about a problem that no one knows

how to describe or how to solve". The making of banners put people in touch with their deep-felt fears of a nuclear holocaust on a very personal level. The designs on the banners ranged from rough drawings to delicate needlework, from paintings to fine embroidery, and from hand-lettered messages to detailed works of art. The participants ranged in age from small children to great-grandparents. A woman in her 80's from the Scarsdale Congregational Church in New York, made a banner with the help of members of her church, reproducing a favorite poem. Two days after completing her banner, she passed away and her Ribbon segment became a part of her memorial service before it was added to the completed Ribbon. An eight-year old Colorado girl wrote, "I would miss being alive and I would miss dancing and writing stories and having fun. I could not move to England because it would not be there. I could not be myself because I would not be here." Many pieces expressed love of family, friends, nature, music and the arts.

The tying itself was quite incredible. When the final section was tied, balloons were sent aloft from the three major staging areas; the Pentagon, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Capitol. Within a few hours of that, a similar event was staged at ground zero in Hiroshima. I'm sure many prayers for peace were said in the moment of silence that followed the cheers, before the Ribbon was dismantled and panels were returned to the state committees.

Many people didn't go to public demonstrations even if they agree with the sentiments being expressed, because of a fear that they will become mob scenes. But at the Ribbon tying, people picked up their banners like thread unwinding from a spool and moved along in their lines with a quiet sense of purpose, dignity and commitment. But it was not a solemn occasion. Children laughed, people got to know each other and talked about what their ribbon panel meant to them, and expressed their hope for an end to the arms race. Many remarked on the incredible fact that the event was taking place at all, and on the beauty of The Ribbon. The 25,000 marchers were spread out from the Pentagon to the Capitol and the White House, carrying their labors of love, some segments representing dozens of people who couldn't make it to Washington that day. The whole event, rather than being plagued by disturbances and hold-ups ran like clockwork and was finished a half hour earlier than had been anticipated. Policemen even wore smiles on their faces when looking at the Ribbon and commented that they had never witnessed anything like this demonstration.





perception

दर्शन

प्रीति नारायणन
प्रस्तुत
१५ मार्च १९७७
१५ मार्च १९७७