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The Golden Chain

Alumni Journal of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education



SPORTING INSPIRATION

Mother said many times: "Whoever gets my touch, whoever has a second of true aspiration, true love for me, he is finished for life, for all lives — he is bound to me. I have put a golden chain round his neck, his heart is bound eternally to me."

It is a thing nobody can see, you yourselves don't see; but it is a fact, it is there. The golden chain is there within your heart. Wherever you go, you drag that chain, it is a lengthening chain. However far you may go, it is an elastic chain, it goes on lengthening, but never snaps. In hours of difficulty, in hours of doubt and confusion in your life, you have that within you to support you. If you are conscious of it, so much the better; if you are not conscious, believe that it is there. The Mother's love, Her Presence is there always.

Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta (to the final-year students of the Higher Course on October 26, 1976)

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On the Cover:

Saumitra (Werner Haubrich), the young coach from Germany, trains Ashram youth in the Sportsground in 1958. Manoj Das Gupta can be seen in the front row.

On the Back Cover:

Group photo of the former students who participated in the 2nd December programme, 2018.

THE EDITORS' PAGE

by Sunayana Panda '79

Our 75th anniversary celebrations had many different events and activities. One of the most interesting was a talk by a German gentleman, a former coach, who had come to celebrate this important milestone with us. He had first come to Pondicherry in 1958, invited by the Ashram, to train the students in athletics, gymnastics and also in swimming. He was given the name "Saumitra" by the Mother and he coached the students for a few months.

This training programme was held way back in 1958, only a decade since the country had achieved independence. Imagine Saumitra's surprise, when, arriving to teach sports in an Indian ashram, he saw the Sportsground, the Tennis Ground and the Swimming Pool. He could not believe how well-equipped the Ashram was. Speaking of the equipment in the Gymnasium he remarks that "there was something for every muscle group in the body!" The enthusiasm of the students also was very high. The experience he had teaching sports was so wonderful that he has not forgotten it in 60 years.

Cut to 2019. Not a day goes by when we don't hear about the lack of interest in sports that has set in among several of the students. There seems to be a notion among many of the young that the 7-day sports programme for the groups was made to keep the children occupied, and that it is not necessary now. Decades ago asking a student to miss group would have been considered a punishment. Now it would not make any difference.

The point of the Integral Education is to have an equally important programme in sports as in academics. Two hours a day at the Playground is not equal to six hours a day at School, but it is as close as it can get. The point is to have all-rounders. And the physical body follows the laws of the physical world where only regular practice makes perfect.

Ideally we should also give a lot more time to

the artistic education of the students. In fact there we have seen a growing interest and dedication. In sharp contrast with the past we have many more students who join dance, music and singing classes than they did twenty or thirty years ago. Is there a feeling that these skills are more "useful"? There are far more students learning to draw and paint than there were a couple of decades ago. For some the focus seems to have shifted from sports to the arts.

We are often told that there are too many distractions that did not exist in the past and that make sports seem less attractive. That may be true but elsewhere in the country there are sports enthusiasts who would happily do sports seven days a week if they had an opportunity — social media or no social media.

The point of an intense physical education programme is also linked to its spiritual aspect where we aim to make the body the perfect instrument of the Divine's work on earth. If that aspect is removed then the whole programme becomes quite banal and ordinary. So we come back to the question of the aim of our education.

When the whole country is crying out for a better system of education, for a more holistic education, why can't we value what we have more? Because this is human nature: Ja chai ta paaina, ja paai ta chaina. (What we want we can't get, what we get we don't want). Perhaps the aims of Integral Education are not so sharply in focus now. Perhaps, for many, the goals have changed. Perhaps our students don't have any role models.

Over sixty years ago when Saumitra came to the Ashram, he became a sporting inspiration. Perhaps we should find another Saumitra, another talented, specialized coach or athlete to re-ignite the enthusiasm. What can be more inspiring than to see a good sports person perform in front of you?

The time has come when the School must look at the future with hope and clarity. ❧

THE BEST BUST

SRI AUROBINDO'S BUST AT THE AUROMIRA CENTRE IN LONDON

Devika Murthy '81 remembers an experience

When I was in London in the summer of 1996, I was extremely fortunate to attend a special event at the Auromira Centre on Whitton Avenue East at Greenford.

I had arrived in the capital in June and was doing research on children's literature. At first I resided at Notting Hill, where the gardens, as in the rest of Britain, were bursting with blossoms of every shape and size and hue, the lawns were a lush emerald and the trees were laden with luxuriant leaves of several shades of green in a marvellous display of Nature that delighted my heart no end!

I later shifted to Kingsbury and was staying with an elderly couple who informed me about the event at the Centre of Integral Yoga on the eve of Sri Aurobindo's birthday. And so on August 15th we drove to the venue at around 11 o'clock in the morning.

Dozens of devotees had been invited to the unveiling of a bust of Sri Aurobindo. By the time we arrived, a sizeable number of people had already gathered there. The long and large room was almost full and the chairs that were neatly lined up against the walls had been occupied.

As the back was getting quite crowded, the

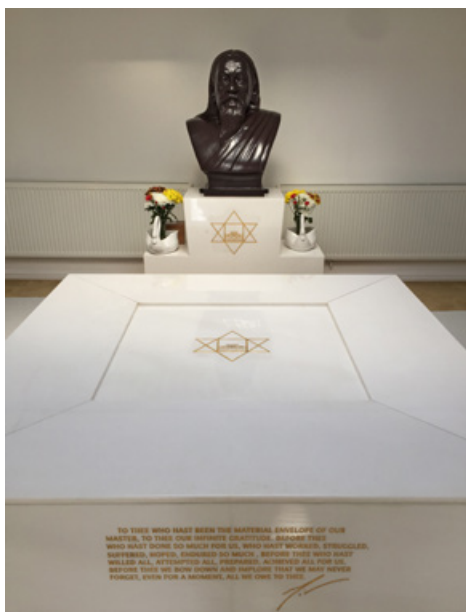
host asked me to come forward where some were sitting in a semi-circle around the solid base on which the bust had been set. I felt shy about moving to the front but as more and more people were coming in, I did so. There was a little space left where I managed to kneel down and thus I immediately found myself within a foot of the Master.

A heavenly fragrance filled the air from the myriad agarbattis and the many lovely fresh flowers that adorned the hall. A short meditation was followed by a brief speech. A serene atmosphere prevailed throughout as those present were conscious of the sanctity of the situation and aware of its relevance.

And it was such a poignant moment when the silk cloth covering was removed and Sri Aurobindo's beautiful bust was revealed.

When the project was initially conceived, the first step of course had been to identify a capable craftsman to do justice to the image of the Master, which is never an easy task to accomplish! And after a lot of searching, an able artisan had been found in India and the work entrusted to him because of his excellence in casting.

Now as much as the individual(s) who wished it to be consecrated was concerned, none was perhaps more anxious than the sculptor himself!



He obviously wanted it to be as perfect as possible and therefore to be fabricated rightly. 'I hope I will be able to make the piece properly and be worthy of the faith they have placed in me and carry out the process with precision!' he used to muse.

And so he would pray and say, "O Divine Mother, help me and let it be as true a likeness to Sri Aurobindo as practicable, otherwise people will think that because I am not your disciple I did not do the job with sincerity! So please let it be an authentic representation to behold, that they may not feel that I did not give it my all!"

The bust was then meticulously moulded, packed expertly and shipped across the seas to England where it reached its destination safely! He had spared no effort in bringing it as close to the original as was humanly and artistically attainable, and indeed he did succeed. For he had captured both the loftiness and the hu-



man dimension in spite of the limitations of an endeavour of this type. Metal or stone seem like cold and unyielding substances and yet the bust

had a warmth and a soft glow, which we all felt in an unmistakable way.

The advent, the spiritual ambience and the presence of a gathering of like-minded aspirants added to the emotions, and tears started to flow down my eyes, even I don't know why. And others too were much moved and no one felt like ending the ceremony. But slowly we started making our way out to the side corridors so that others could come in and offer their pranams.

I personally was at an impasse in my professional life at that point and had no idea how to make headway or in which direction to turn, something that everybody goes through at some phase or the other in their lives. I was looking for openings and guidance, and that is why I was supersensitive I suppose.

For I felt as if Sri Aurobindo was communicating that I should trust Him completely. Did I experience it or did I imagine it? I cannot say to this day, for usually it is a fine line between reality and imagination! And one must tread cautiously on that sharp razor's edge... Well, I did get the answer to my question, though not the solution still!

Anyway I felt truly blessed to witness the unveiling and to be a part of the celebration. I was uplifted. I learnt thereafter that the Relics were also enshrined at the Centre on New Year's Day 1998.

Thousands must have seen the bust since and whenever we bow before it, let us in graceful remembrance recall the person who prepared it with care and conscientious commitment to the cause. ❧

The bust was made by a sculptor from Hyderabad who had been contacted by Ananda Reddy. – Editors



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THE MOTHER AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Lakshman Sehgal '63 shares his own experiences and thoughts on the subject

“But for this Supramental work, the way the body is formed has an almost crucial importance, and not only in relation to spiritual elements nor even to mental power; these aspects have no importance AT ALL. The capacity to endure, to last is the important thing.”

My earliest recollection of the Mother goes back to around the mid 1940s. Our family was accepted in the Ashram by the Mother in 1944 when I was two years old.

I remember my pre-school classroom which was located in what is now the gymnasium. In around 1946, the Playground was acquired. The first physical activity I did in front of the Mother was rabbit race, hopping on all fours across half the length of the Playground under Her watchful eye. Being short I was pretty good at it! When the slide was constructed in the Guest House, Badol and I were the first ones to come sliding down, with Her standing at the bottom watching us!

My first memory of the 2nd December programme which was held in the Playground until 1952, was Dayakar attempting a summersault over the vaulting box — which is still there — and hitting his lower back at the far end of the box. He was bedridden, but the Mother visited his home across from the Harpagon every evening on Her way back to the Ashram.

Soon after, the Tennis Ground was acquired, and the athletics competition began to be held there. The running races were held in the morning on the ocean boulevard (Beach Road) with the finish line being the entrance to the Tennis Ground, closest to the tennis courts. The other events were held in the evening when She was present. I remember watching Gangaram and

Suman competing for first prize in high jump.

These competitions moved to the Sports-ground in 1952. She used to come to the Sports-ground after Her tennis. When She played tennis, I used to be Her ball boy, along with Sunil-da and my brother.

For all the running races, She held the tape at one end at the finish line. For all the other events, She was seated close to the venue watching every performance intently, not as a casual observer. Once I was doing hop step and jump and jumped from quite far behind the line. Arun Kumar put the tape down at the take off line, as he should have. After the measurement was completed She asked him to place the tape from where I had actually taken off!



Lakshman Sehgal on the vaulting box during the 2nd Dec programme, 1950



At the entrance to the tennis courts. The author, who was one of the Mother's ball-boys, is seen in the centre with legs crossed. This photo was taken by the Mother with Amiyo-da's new camera.

Nothing gave us more joy and excitement than being able to perform before Her. I recall, on many occasions over the years, finishing first in athletics events. And when I went in line to get prasad from Her, I got double the amount and a memorable smile!

An example of how closely She observed everything when we were in front of Her is the following incident. I lived next door to the Ashram, above the Atelier. One morning, I came racing out onto the street and was faced with a bicycle. Having no option, I jumped over the front wheel, landed on my legs and bruised my knee. I did not bother to get first aid for fear of drawing my parents' attention. That evening, I came in front of her for Prasad. She asked what I had done to my knee! I proudly stated "J'ai knocké mon genou." She laughed heartily at the new French word I had created! Nothing escaped Her gaze, internal and external.

Being good in gymnastics, specifically vaulting and agility (floor exercises), I had been participating in the 2nd December programs in

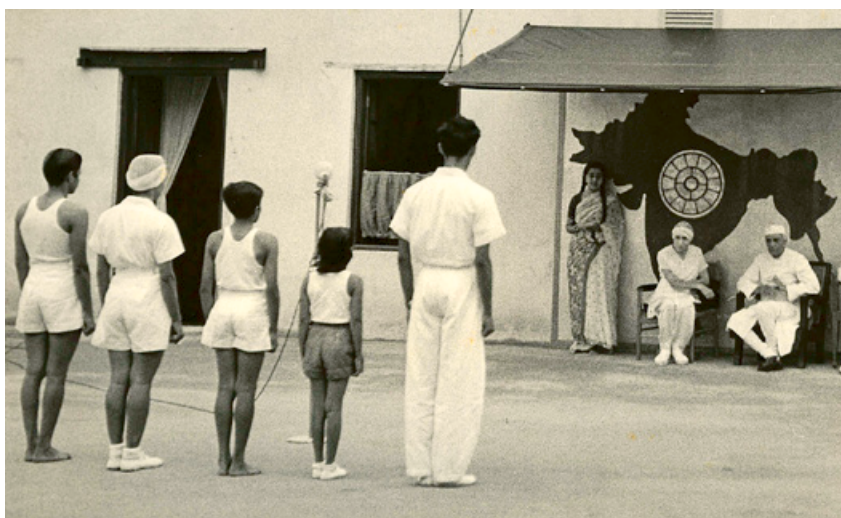
Her Presence from a pretty young age. In all the years I participated from the late 40s, I missed once in 1952, due to an ankle injury during the practice. I got to perform on Pranab-da's birthday, October 18th, every year. I was chosen to perform floor exercises in the Playground when Jawaharlal Nehru visited the Ashram.

Even after She had retired from external activities, She remained involved and informed about the Physical education activities. I recall that in 1961 or 62, I cut my chin while practising trampoline and required a few stitches. When Udar, who kept Her abreast of the preparations for the 2nd December program, informed Her of my injury, She wanted to know whether I would be able to participate on the 2nd, which I did.

I left Her physical presence in 1964 to pursue a doctoral program in Chicago. I left with Her Blessings and the love and discipline of physical education that I had imbibed by the example She set, day after day, year after year. I promised myself that I would make every effort to keep myself as fit as the last time I performed before Her.

In those days there were no gymnasiums or fitness centers of any kind in the U.S.A. I exercised in my small room in the attic of a house, where I used my chemistry textbooks as dumb-bells! Later, I had access to tennis courts but no place for gymnastics. The luxury of the facilities of the Ashram were non-existent in the richest country of the world! Note that She started the gymnasium in the 1940s, but health clubs came into existence in the US, and later in other parts of the world, four decades later. Note also that both girls and boys participated in the same activities together, based on ability, not gender. It is still not the case in most parts of the world. Neither was one's age an issue. I recall Nolini-da participating in long jump competition with children much younger than him!

From the time of our marriage (by the Mother in 1966), Hansa and I have both remained focused on keeping our bodies fit by exercising regularly, in addition to working professionally together for two decades and raising two sons, Niraj (name given by the Mother) and Uday (named by Champaklal-bhai).



Lakshman Sehgal (3rd from left) during a demonstration in front of the Mother and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (Playground, 16.1.1955). Tara Jauhar; Lata Jauhar and Manoj Das Gupta are also among the participants.

Every time we came back to Pondicherry was when I could practise my gymnastics. When we came to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Mother's birthday, as usual I was practising my back flips in the Sportsground. I was thirty-six years old then. Chitra-di must have noticed because she went and asked Pranab-da if I could participate in the Darshan day performance in the Playground. He consented, and for the first time I did multiple back flips, finishing off with a back somersault. Being permitted to participate after being away for fourteen years was, for me, an affirmation from Her.

Looking back at those years I recollect all the time She spent every evening, setting an example Herself, playing tennis every day from 4 to 5 in the Pondicherry heat, while we stood in the shade of the umpire's chair! She would then spend an additional hour or more, watching us very intently. There can be no greater motivation than to perform in front of Her. I feel incredibly blessed to have been able to do so, for over two decades.

One may ask, as many older sadhaks did, why She spent so much time each day participating and overseeing physical education. All of us who grew up in the Ashram know that we needed a chit from Nripen-da at the Ashram dispensary, if we were going to miss the physical exercises. That was not required for the School! I believe that is still true today. She had found the most able individual in Pranab-da to help maintain that strict discipline.

We did all the assigned activities each day of the week, thinking nothing of it because She was there.

Recently, Hansa and I have been encouraging our devotees at the Los Angeles Centre to exercise every day. It is in this connection that Vikas, who manages our Centre, brought to our attention what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have written about the crucial importance of physical education in Their Integral Yoga. That is perhaps the

most distinguishing feature of the Yoga.

The work She accomplished in Her own body in the final years of Her physical Presence, was to bring the Supramental Consciousness into the cells of Her body. That, She says, is out there for everyone. Sri Aurobindo says it best in His poem, *The Body*:

*Too small was it to meet the giant need
That only infinitude can satisfy
He keeps it still, for in the folds is hid
His secret passport to eternity.*

She has uncovered that secret passport for all of us.

The world is becoming increasingly aware of the value of physical education, with supporting scientific evidence of its benefits. The goal of Their yoga is to set the stage for the next species, the Supramental Beings. To achieve that goal, a more conscious, strong, elastic, enduring body is imperative.

Let us look at it from the evolutionary perspective.

The first human ancestors appeared on earth between five and seven million years ago, probably ape-like creatures who began habitually walking on two legs. The first humans, *Homo Erectus*, appeared 1.8 million years ago. The Neanderthals and anatomically modern humans appeared 300 to 200 thousand years ago.

The first Homo Sapiens, our immediate ancestors, appeared 200 to 100 thousand years back.

Based on comparisons of astronomical charts, Sri Krishna is supposed to have lived in India about 5000 thousand years back.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother brought the Overmental Consciousness down in the physical on November 24th, 1926. In 1950, Sri Aurobindo embodied the Supramental Consciousness. It was something even I could see, as an eight year old.

Walking by his body, one saw this indescribable glow, as though His body was being lit from below his bed. By contrast, when the Supramental Consciousness left His body on the 9th, that glow was gone and his body began to show signs that one expects to see.

By the late sixties, the Mother had been able to open the cells of Her body to that Consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother state that the Supramental species could be on earth in 300 to 1000 years, with some transitional forms in between. How is that possible given the pace of evolution to this point?

First, man is the first species that can consciously participate and collaborate. Second, the science of epigenesis is starting to define a path that can make this goal very possible. What is Epigenesis?

When a change in environment has biological consequences, long after the triggering event itself has disappeared, we are seeing an epigenetic effect, that is, outside the normal functioning of genes. In other words it is an effect that cannot be explained by the longstanding Mendelian genetics. Science is finally beginning to discover the missing link between Nature and Nurture. We can understand why the Mother started accepting families with little children in the early 40s. We were growing

up in Her enclosed bubble, with Her personally nurturing us by example and educating us with Love, without lecturing. Her classes in the Playground were always responses to questions posed.

As the preparation of the body is of crucial importance, the conscious practice of physical education, the sadhana of the body, can alter the expression of genes in the cells of our body. Our activities serve as new on and off switches that can control genetic expression rather than being slaves to random genetic events. Furthermore, these changes are passed on to the subsequent generations. Both our sons exercise regularly. Even our granddaughter Maya is taking gymnastic lessons in addition to other physical activities.

I would like to close with these words from the Mother:

"IT MAY BE GOOD TO REMIND YOU that we are here for a special work, a work not done anywhere else: we want to come in contact with the supreme consciousness, the universal consciousness, we want to receive it and manifest it. For that we need a solid base, and our base is our physical being, our body. We therefore need to prepare a solid, healthy, enduring body, skillful, agile and strong so it may be ready for anything." ❧



Performing in front of the Mother on the 1st anniversary of Sri Aurobindo Ashram University Centre (6.1.1953). Lakshman Sehgal is the one with the bandaged ankle.

SPORTING INSPIRATION

The transcript of a talk by **Saumitra** (Werner Haubrich) on 30.11.2018 at the Hall of Harmony

INTRODUCTION BY MANOJ-DA

Good morning everybody,

I have the honour of introducing to you Werner Haubrich. Does it sound too German? Well, he is German. But fortunately, this difficult name was simplified for us by the Mother who gave him the name 'Saumitra'. The name is very very befitting. It only takes two minutes for him to make friends with anybody he meets. Saumitra came here in 1958 and he was the first coach,



German coach, to train some of our young captains and participants in Athletics, and generally in all branches of Physical Education. Athletics though, was his strong point and every morning at 6 / 6.15, he would have Mother's Balcony Darshan and then go to the Sportsground and there for an hour and a half he would coach us. We used to do athletics in our own way, without knowing the basics of it. Our styles were just invented by us. Thanks to his correction of our styles, quite a few Ashram records were made in those days. I particularly remember Arvind Babu whom he taught how to do the shotput and also many others. And he became a very, very close friend of Mona and myself. We were more or less of the same age, so it clicked very well. And Mona kept a long contact with him after he went back from here. So we are really very, very happy and lucky to have him here with us to share some of his reminiscences. I think you are all impatient and are thinking, "When will Manoj-da stop?" and so I shall stop now. So, here is the German giant. Giant in everything. Incidentally,

he was very fond of singing and his favourite song was "Chalo Chale Ma, Sapano ke gaon me, kanton se door kanhi" after seeing the Hindi film. So he will sing it, and please don't forget to clap!

Let me say that I am so happy to be here today. There is one thing that bothers me — my English is not very good. I would prefer to talk in German and I have a suggestion: I will return in 10 years and in the meantime you study German and I will then speak in German!

There are two persons who are responsible for the fact that I am here. First, there is Mona (Sarkar). A few months ago, he wrote to me saying that there will be a 75th Anniversary celebration and he would like to invite me. And I was afraid thinking of doing this journey. You have learnt that I am also 83 years old. And there is a

second person who is responsible for my being here and that is Eckhart Karnasch, who comes here regularly. One day I went to him and I told him that "I have an invitation but I am afraid that I cannot go". I don't speak English very well, and so on. Then he said, "Saumitra, we will both fly to India". And that is the story behind my being here.

Sometimes I am asked, "How did it happen that there was a German coach here?" You see, in 1956, there was a group of Russian Gymnasts who came to the Ashram. There was a representative of the German Consulate in Madras who was here then and one of the Ashramites said to



Saumitra speaking in the Hall of Harmony on 30.11.2018

him, “Look what the Russians have done for us!”

Then the German representative asked him, “Tell me, what can Germany do for you, for the Ashram?”

He was told, “Send us a German physical educator, a teacher of Sports”.

I don’t know who this man was, who said this. Do you know who it was? Anyway, this is the reason I am here. This man of the German Consulate wrote to the German Foreign Office who sent it to Mr Carl Diem, who headed the most famous German University of Sports, Cologne University of Physical Education. Mr Diem, by the way, was the organizer of the Olympic Games in 1936 in Berlin. And so, he called me and told me, “Here is a letter coming from India. They need a sports teacher and I would like to entrust you this task”. And two weeks later my plane landed in India.

I had not the slightest idea what the place was like. The only thing I knew was that I would teach sports somewhere. At that time Madras was still very, very far from Europe. Today everything is nearer. And so I came here and Medhananda picked me up from the Airport (today Chennai). On the way here, we talked about this and that and he told me that for the moment the athletics season is over and the gymnastics season will begin. My heart sank. Gymnastics was my weakest discipline. Athletics was my discipline.

He brought me to my hotel and told me, “In the afternoon, I will pick you up at 3 o’clock and I will present you to Mother”. And at 3 o’clock he came. We went to this street where I saw a long line of people standing quietly, dressed in white. Medhananda stood before me and I was behind him.

After a while I bowed to him and said,

“Medhananda, how must I address Mother?” No answer. After a while I asked him a second time. “Medhananda, how must I address Mother?” *[Gesture to show that the question was dismissed]*. He was in a trance. Then the line moved. Then we came to a house with a staircase. It was quite dark. At the top of the staircase I saw a person sitting in a mellow light and with a scarf on the head. I was so afraid! I went up and suddenly I stood before the Mother. She smiled at me and gave me a flower and everything in absolute silence. I turned and I didn’t know where I had come. You cannot imagine that because it is all familiar for you, but for me it was something I had never seen. And I didn’t know where I was. I was confused. Totally confused.



Saumitra, in dhoti, in the Ashram in 1958.

I will read from my diary. Every day I took down notes.

“In the afternoon I was shown the sports facilities. Seeing the gym and the equipment, and hearing what is being done for body building, leaves me speechless. That matches up to American standards. A dedicated room with weights, dumb-bells and equipment for every conceivable muscle group. Did I need to come here to Pondicherry to see all this equipment? What should I teach these people who have such equipment and are doing these things.”

I was introduced to some persons, to Pavitra who was at that time the director of education.

Before long there was a gang of boys around me and they asked me about my achievements in athletics. Fortunately, they were impressed. At least it was something.

“Do you play handball?”, I asked.

“No, handball is a game for girls! Do you play football?”, they responded.

“Yes, a bit.”

Children used to come all around me. I asked Medhananda, “Why do they come near me?”

And he said, “They admire your big calf muscles”.

And then they asked me to give examples of my strength. I had to do everything. They asked me to blow and show how much breath I had. Obviously, they were pleased. I felt like Hamlet. He was also faced by the question: to be or not to be. I saw a sports festival organized by the youngest. And I saw how Mother distributed the prizes.

Medhananda answered all my questions. And I had a lot of them and he answered them patiently.

[Projecting the photo given above] This is a wonderful photo, the only one I took of Her and I remember that I was told, later, that normally it was not allowed to take photos. In the photo you can see Gangaram, Udar and Parul. You must remember this was 60 years ago. Exactly 60 years ago I stood here as a coach. At that time I was 23 and it was an adventure for me. I cannot imagine anything which I could do today to have such a feeling of adventure.

The light went out and meditation began. And I, as a European, had difficulty sitting down on the floor cross-legged. I was allowed to sit normally. Half an hour's meditation



The Mother awarding prizes in the Playground. Photo by Saumitra

is a long time for a normal European. I said to myself, “Well, over the whole day there have been so many things which have happened to me that it is good to make myself a bit quiet and think of what has happened.”

And after this meditation I was accompanied by a German lady — that was Subodha. She said, “I know you. I saw you in Egypt”. I had never been to Egypt! Can you imagine all these things happening? She said, “It was good that you watched Mother playing tennis. Did you notice how she smiled at you? She has already taken you in her heart”. In fact, I had seen that Mother had smiled at me when she came from the Tennis Ground.

The mosquito net invited me for sleeping. I was so confused. And suddenly I heard from a neighbouring house, there was someone trying to play Mozart's sonata in A Major. He did not play very well but for me, at that moment, it was Germany. It took me back to my homeland. It was what we call “Heimat”. This word doesn't exist in English. So

that was my first day, the 1st of September.

Three days later I wrote in my diary, “I am



With Tara Jauhar and Manoj Das Gupta



Athletics training

back to my normal cheerful self at last". I must say that during the first two days I had pretty much been in limbo.

When I left Germany my biggest worry had been, "How can I bear to be without a piano for 3 months?" But fortunately the next day I found a piano and I found sheets of music. I cannot play by heart. I always need sheet music. I was so happy.

Some people had heard that I played the piano. So I played and it was recorded and on the 16th of September, I had the great honour of it being played in the Playground.

Now from my diary on the 6th of September: "Tonight from 9 to 10, I was in the Library and there was a session with music, songs from Rabindranath Tagore. I never cease to be amazed by the intellectual curiosity of the boys and girls of the Ashram. Indeed, it is fair to say what once was tried in ancient Greece, the harmony of mind, body and soul, is realized in a wonderful way here in the Ashram." I have great respect for what has been made possible to be taught to the young people here

in the Ashram.

I write on the 9th of September: "Will I be catching any sleep in the future? My work is now getting very serious. Yesterday Pranab made a schedule".

Manoj has already told you that from 6 am to 7.30 am, I had to train and in the evening I was allowed to visit any group I wanted to and to help them a

bit. But what was very tough for me was that every Sunday I had to give a lecture in English on a subject which they gave me. The first subject was "The history of sports in Europe and especially in Germany". Further subjects were: "How to be a successful physical educator?", "The qualities of a successful athlete", "Body mechanics", "Biological interpretations of Physical Education" and so on. All my lectures of those days were recorded and there was one person who transcribed all this. And that person is among us now. It's Tara.

We started with swimming. I was amazed how things were controlled, how they checked



Explaining the fundamentals of running

the body. I had some pimples here and I was not allowed to swim at that time. So it was wonderful how hygienic it was here.

At the pool I gave a course in life-saving. Twenty-five of my students, male and female, fulfilled the conditions required to be able to receive the life-saving certificate issued by the German life-saving association, Deutsche Lebens-Rettungs-Gesellschaft. Twenty-five persons! And after my return to Germany, I was able to send them the certificates and the Life Saving Society's pins. The last discipline is swimming in clothes. You know, when someone is drowning you must jump into the water as you are. And here in India



Coaching the swimmers

training we sang it. Mother had heard about it and sent word to me that she too wanted to hear it at the end of the demonstration on Pranab's birthday that was to take place in the afternoon. Some students asked me to rehearse another song with them. The words of that German song were: "Gute Nacht Kameraden, Bewahrt euch diesen Tag [...]." The song can be translated as: "Good night, Comrades, remember this day, the stars move out of the fir trees up into the blue tent and sparkle down into the world to banish the darkness".

There were 10 boys and girls, and within one hour they had learnt to sing this song in three different voices. The days before Pranab's birthday it kept raining. "So, what will happen during the



Training in Life-Saving

some girls came in their natural clothing, in sarees!

From my diary on 20th of October: "Right now it is raining cats and dogs. The rainy season has begun. Early in the morning we began our training with a song in German: "Froh zu sein bedarf es wenig [...]" The song means: "It takes little to be happy, and whoever is happy is a king. Wake up, wake up, the cockerel has crowed, the sun enters its golden orbit."

This canon I had rehearsed with my group for Pranab's birthday on the 18th of October. On Saturday morning before



Final Life-Saving test: swimming with normal clothes on, including sarees!

demonstration for Pranab's birthday if it rains so heavily?" That was my question.

I put it to Medhananda. And Medhananda stared at me and he said, "No, no, tomorrow there will be sunshine".

I asked, "How do you know?"

And he said, "Mother will take care of it. Mother will arrange everything".

The next morning in the Playground there were about 50 students who stood turning eastwards and were saying a prayer which Mother had formulated.

She was, as you know, French, so the prayer was:

*O soleil, notre ami,
Dissous les nuages
Absorbe la pluie
Nous voulons tes rayons
Nous voulons ta lumière
O soleil, notre ami.*

I stood there, I watched them. They repeated it 18 times with a short interruption. I stood there, far from them. I was thinking, "Such a faith I have never seen in Christians", because I had the impression that this prayer was being recited from the bottom of their hearts.

And behold, the next day, there was sunshine. And at 8 o' clock at night, when the celebration was over, it began raining. That was one of my deepest experiences. We have a saying: Faith can move mountains. Perhaps it is true, Faith can move mountains and clouds.

During my stay here, there was a competition between the Ashram group and a particular club and I had the honour of taking part in the competition. The night before, I had a meeting with the students and everybody brought something to eat and everybody wanted that I should take something of what he had brought. And so I had an upset stomach the next day. I was not quite fit. But nevertheless I participated and there I am [showing the photo above]. My timing for the 100 meters dash was 11.1 seconds at that time. [claps] And 3 meters behind me is Chinmoy. I was a bit sorry for him because at that time he was the Decathlon Champion. And I never would have guessed that years later he would become a world



Winner of the 100 m dash in 11.1 seconds.

famous guru in the U.S.A.

Every fortnight there was a film show at the Playground. You can surely guess what a punishment it is to see a film of which you don't understand one word. There was a film I saw and in that film there was one scene which touched me so much. It was the film "Jagriti", from 1954.

There was a scene where there was a boy sitting with a friend on a swing. Then he gets up and we see that he has two crutches because his left leg is amputated. And then his mother comes to him and he sings a song. And this song touched me so much. I didn't understand the words of the song, but I was touched. And I had the desire to learn it. I was fortunate to have a teacher who was a very good singer. The person who taught me was Ravibala.

[Saumitra sings the song 'Chalo chale Maa' from the film "Jagriti"] [claps].

Now the day of my farewell, the 4th of December. In the morning was the last gathering at the Sportsground. On the board it was written "Aurevoir, Bon Voyage et Bon Retour". And for my farewell, Chinmoy who was also a good poet, had written a poem of 5 verses. Here is the first:

"Who dares to chant farewell, brother Saumitra?

Your memory dwells in our bosom's sky
Once in the loving arms of the Mother Divine
No wakeful child away can fly".

Then some of the students put me on their shoulders and sang,

"For he is a jolly good fellow



With close friend, Mona Sarkar

For he is a jolly good fellow
For he is a jolly good fellow
So say all of us”.

That was the farewell at the Sportsground and in the afternoon Mother gave me a farewell. She blessed me and presented me Her golden book with Her signature. While I had my short speech of farewell, Wilfy was already waiting outside with the car because I was to go on a tour later. I will never forget how Mona stood before me with tears in his eyes. He said in German, “Auf Wiedersehen”. That is, “until we meet again”. Indeed Mona had become my soul mate. And he is so until today.

And when I said in my words of farewell that I had a desire to come once again to the Ashram, they were not empty words. My wish was fulfilled in 1992. I came here 26 years ago with my wife Antje and our youngest son Wolfgang. We took

some pictures. That is my wife Antje in a sari. At that time she was 57. This sari was presented to me by the Mother. For my mother, she had said. Because at that time in 1958 I was not yet married.

And we visited Medhananda and Yvonne in their garden. Also our eldest son Hartmut had the opportunity to visit the Ashram in 2012 and 2013 because he had some business tour in Madras and he came to the Ashram. He got to know Chanda and Mona and Manoj and some other people. He is an electrical engineer. Our son Hartmut has a feeling for yoga and for what is done here in the Ashram. And he writes the following wonderful words;

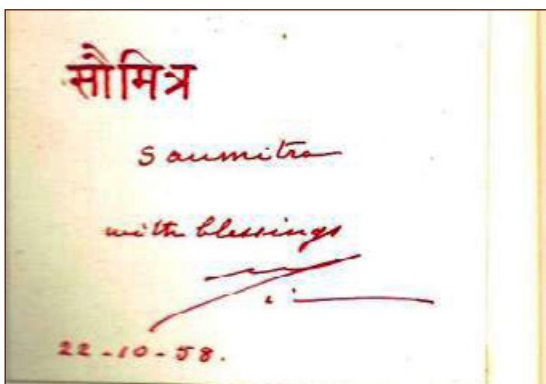
“Before my departure I felt the need to say goodbye to the Samadhi and express my gratitude for everything I was allowed to experience here. At the onset of the wild monsoon everybody fled and I remained alone at the Samadhi. I knelt down and laid my forehead on the Samadhi. And then it was as if a voice said to me, ‘you are not in danger’. Since then I feel connected to India by singing mantras. Many of them in Sanskrit.



Wife Antje in the saree presented by the Mother



Group photo for the farewell in the Sportsground.



A new name given by the Mother

Sometimes feeling goes beyond understanding". I find that last sentence very beautiful: "Sometimes feeling goes beyond understanding."

Now about my name. The Mother wrote it and added "with blessings". And it was Mona's father who told me, "I will tell you a secret. You have got a new name from the Mother". And that was, as you can judge, a great, great honour for me. Saumitra means "a fraternal friend, a good friend of all". Indeed, we all became very close. And in the evening before meditation I had always 4 or 5 small children around me. One of them, Ujwal, used to always call me, "Mon ami!"

I could very well have just stayed here as some

people wanted. Some even suggested that my parents should be brought here so that I could stay here. One thing was clear. Rarely had I lived a life so carefree and sustained by friendship as here in the Ashram.



With Ujwal, for whom he was always "mon ami!"

I served as a coach in the Ashram for three months and after that I went on a tour through India. I visited Madras, Mysore, Bangalore, Konark, Puri, Calcutta, Shanti Niketan, Varanasi, Delhi, Jaipur, Sanchi, Ajanta, Ellora and Bombay. And everywhere I was accepted by member devotees of the Ashram. I will never forget Benares and the river. I was in a house beyond the river. Every morning I could see the people being burnt. These were most special moments for me.

Upon my return to Germany after a journey of four weeks, I found 15 letters and more for the

26th of January, which is my birthday. For Indians it is a special day – the Republic Day. I tried to answer all the letters and in one letter, I said, "Sometimes I feel like 'Paradise Lost'". And then I got a wonderful answer: "'Paradise Lost' can always become 'Paradise Regained'". These are two titles of poems by John Milton: *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

I had taken many slides during my stay in India and I gave many lectures in Germany about my journey to India and especially about my stay here in the Ashram.

Every year for New Year, Mother used to write to me, "Blessings to Saumitra". Also when I got married to Antje, I sent a photo to the Mother and she wrote "with Blessings" on the back of this photo. This continued until 1973, the year in which She left Her body. And for me this is the most precious letter:

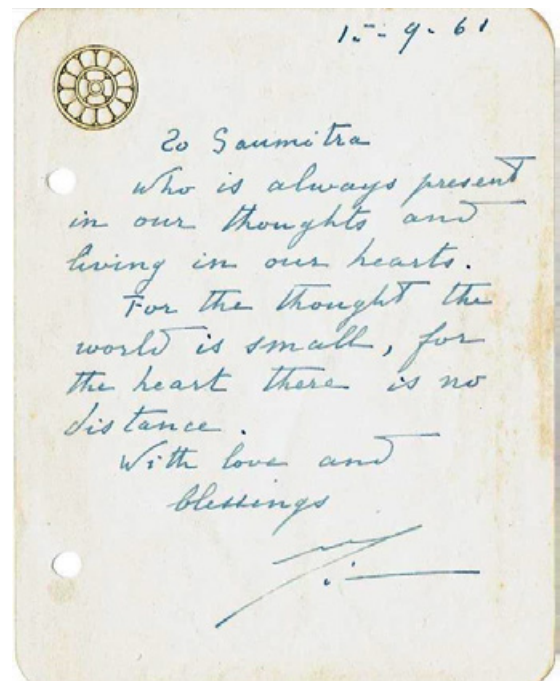
To Saumitra,

Who is always present in our thoughts
and living in our hearts.

For the thought, the world is small,
for the heart there is no distance.

With love and Blessings".

What wonderful words! Wonderful words! ❧



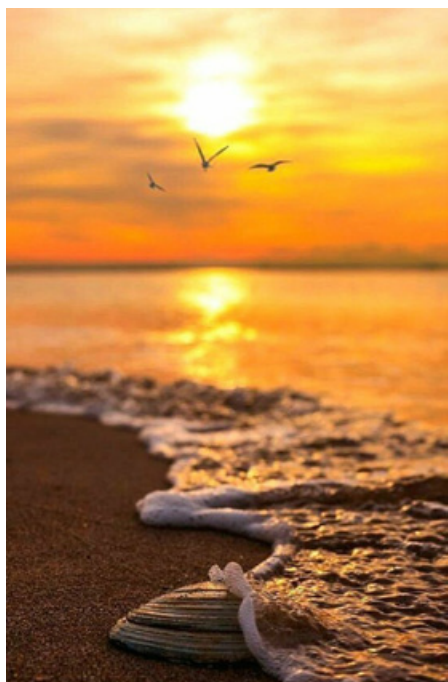
TO A CHERISHED FRIEND AND TEACHER

By Gaurav Bose '05

Every day as I go to work,
I see a tree on my way,
Like a figure that assures
Love, a promise of the day.

Such is the love of men
Who stand by your side,
Growing like a tree of love,
A place where you can hide.

Man can grow into love alone,
Like a tree with the warmth of the light;
And all the rest are into ashes burnt
While the soul takes on its flight.



TWILIGHT

By Anjan Sengupta '78H

The sun sank deep in the west
And twilight in an arduous quest
To keep alive in simmering light
Pushed back behind a descending night
A veiled darkness to bravely defy.
For it was still crimson in the sky
Waiting for birds that fly
Homeward bound to roost nearby;
Scattered rays of faded gold
Earth and sea in twilight's hold
The moment of truth as sublime
As silent prayers near a shrine.
And a poem's captured flow
From the last of twilight's glow!

TRAVEL AS PILGRIMAGE IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MOTHER

Sachidananda Mohanty '75 reviews Sunayana Panda ('79)'s new book on the Mother

Mirra Alfassa – the Mother, Her Life and Work
Sunayana Panda, U.K. :
First Features Ltd., 2019, pp.145.

There have been excellent biographies of the Mother available in the public domain. Readers may recall the works of authors such as K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar, Prema Nandakumar and George Van Vrekhem, among others. The biographies of all the three cited here are well regarded in academic circles, their work marked by empathy and objectivity.

In her latest publication, under review, Sunayana Panda finds a fresh compelling reason for a new biography: 'The time,' she says in the back cover blurb, 'has come to introduce [the Mother] to a wider audience who will find in her a role model...' Indeed, the present work breaks fresh ground and is likely to be of interest to readers outside the circle of disciples. There are two additional reasons that could justify the making of the present volume: Sunayana is a former student of the Ashram School and has taken the trouble to visit the habitats of the Mother in Paris and Japan to record her experience. Indeed, one might say that many of her chapters represent 'travel as pilgrimage' in the best sense of the term. We might recall the spiritual travels of Sister Nivedita in this respect.

A caveat is called for at this stage. Sunayana does not unearth 'new' material in the conventional sense of research, although there is arguably wide reading here; rather she uses for the most part earlier writings in the field and infuses new life into them for a fresh creative effort. Further, there are very few citations in the book that could be checked by interested readers for veracity of her sources allowing for further reading.

Sunayana herself might say that that was not her intention, that she was not writing an academic book; she is honest in saying that she has brought together earlier published articles in the Ashram journals in the last fifteen years and she admits to a certain degree of repetitiveness that has inevitably crept in here. It is hoped that these could be avoided in the next edition.

The strength of her book, however, lies elsewhere. It is with regard to the journeys she undertakes in the footsteps of the Mother at various places. As she travels, she aspires ardently for new understanding and for new realizations. In that way it becomes her own spiritual journey. She intermingles effortlessly the memories of the past and those of the present: the sights and sounds of present day locations in Paris and Japan haloed by the onetime presence of Mirra Alfassa, known to all of us as the Mother. That is the main reason as to why I term this labour of love essentially as travel as pilgrimage. She evokes sights and sounds of Parisian art schools, then and now, as well as Japanese cherry blossoms that the Mother describes so lyrically in her *Prayers and Meditations*.

The 'forces of ignorance,' contends the author, 'seem to be getting the upper hand'. The vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, she believes, can be an antidote to the rise of regressive forces in the world.

Divided into 18 chapters, the narrative serves as a useful introduction to the Mother, her vision and work for mankind. Narrated in a linear fashion, the biography brings in the key details of her life: birth in Paris in 1878, marriage to fellow artist Henri Morisset, motherhood, and separation from Morisset after ten years of married life, travel to Tlemcen in Algeria as part of her quest

for mysticism, visit of her future life companion Paul Richard to Pondicherry in 1910, marriage to Richard in 1911, travel to Pondicherry in 1914 and meeting with Sri Aurobindo, return to Paris on account of the onset of World War I, travel to Japan in 1916 with Richard, return to Pondicherry in 1920, and subsequent parting from her husband, taking up a full-fledged life at Pondicherry with her travelling companion Dorothy, named Datta by Sri Aurobindo, taking charge of the institution named after Sri Aurobindo in 1926, founding the Ashram School in 1943, later named Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education, starting of the many Ashram departments, including the important Department of Physical Education, inauguration of the international township of Auroville, in 1968, based on Sri Aurobindo's *The Ideal of Human Unity*, and her 'Dream,' and finally her passing away in 1973 at the age of 95.

The surface details of Mirra's life need to be seen along with the pivotal aspects of her inner realisations; we are struck by her indomitable spirit of courage, her unflinching sincerity, her absolute surrender to the Divine, her life-long commitment to a youth that never ages, and most importantly, her resolute faith in the transformation of Man whom Sri Aurobindo aptly defined as a 'transitional being' whose destiny is being worked out in Nature's living laboratory.

What then are the signal contributions of the Mother in the organizational, philosophical, spiritual and civilizational sense, as Sunayana sees them?

According to Sunayana, there are several features that lend uniqueness to the Mother's Mission in the world: first of all, Sri Aurobindo treated the Mother as an equal. It was the Mother, she adds, 'who instilled in every one the sense of the spiritual family and of equality'. There was also

the role of the Mother to bring a 'huge family together' in a 'very human way'. Next, in whatever she did, she set an example. Next, the Mother's life-long interest in art and beauty is a radical departure from the negation of art and the acceptance of asceticism in the Indian spiritual traditions. Her firm belief that men and women should be equal partners in the spiritual path is again contrary to the notion of the segregation of the sexes emblematic of the monastic traditions prevalent

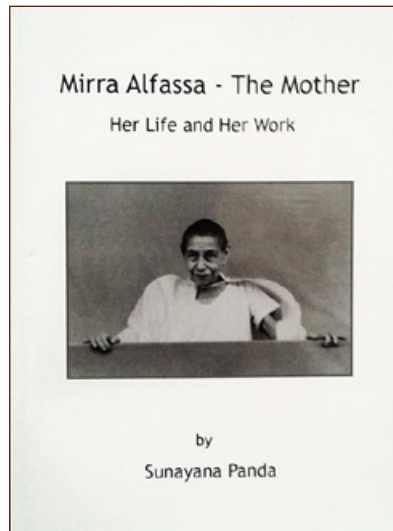
in India and the West. Sunayana argues that the Mother's life in France and Japan were preparatory for the leadership role she was destined to play in the Ashram at Pondicherry. The Ashram Guest House, Golconde was built with the help of the Japanese architect-engineer, George Nakashima and his team.

We learn from Sunayana that the *Prayers and Meditations* were translated into English by Sri Aurobindo and several disciples like Nolini-da and Datta, and that the collection was closely reviewed

by Sri Aurobindo before its publication. We are also reminded that the Mother was invited by figures no less than Abdul Baha and Rabindranath Tagore to take charge of the institutions they had founded, and that the Mother was single-minded in her resolution to follow the Ideals of her life.

Sunayana has devoted two slender chapters to the Mother's vision and experiments in education and 'Auroville-Human Unity'. One wishes she had spent more time in these crucial areas, since it is these two domains that have a crying need in the contemporary contexts. Indeed, it is essentially the two that engage powerfully the attention of the modern youth today.

Similarly, while talking about the details of the Mother's journey to Japan, she could have brought in perspectives from the autobiography of Paul Richard whose role in the Mother's work is duly acknowledged by her.



As Paul Richard states in Chapter V of his autobiography: "In September [1914] we left Pondicherry, but as we boarded the ship in Colombo, Mirra said with great feeling and assurance 'we shall come back'"¹

Similarly, as regards the purpose that took the Richards to Japan, we may see the following declaration from Paul Richard from his autobiography, as an explanation contrary to the one offered by Sunayana, who writes "...It was because Paul Richard had found an opportunity to represent some French business houses in Japan that led the Mother to go there." (p.48). There is a contrasting account in Richard which gives primacy to the Mother in decision making. As Richard recalls:

"We were not to remain in Paris much longer. One evening when I returned home I told Mirra the news that the Suez Canal had been closed as a result of the German submarine warfare. Without any hesitation she replied: 'That is the sign that we must go to Japan.' But then her unexpected conclusion became so obvious that I immediately began preparation for the long voyage. After a stop in England, we would sail down the west coast of Africa and finally to Singapore before reaching Japan."²

Likewise, Sunayana states on page 70 of the present volume: "On our list of places to visit this time were Yokahama and Kobe. When the Mother came to Japan her ship probably touched land at Kobe...." In contrast, we may see the way Paul Richard records the event in his memoir especially regarding the landing at Kobe:

"Kobe, the city of green rooftops (which some have called the city of the dragon's scales) was our first stop. On the day of our arrival, we were told that there was a big Buddhist festival in a place called Taimadera...."³

It is, however, while capturing the atmosphere that Sunayana excels. Such instances include her recounting of the staging of *Vers L'Avenir*, by the Mother, staged by her in 1949, and later by Sunayana herself in 1995, as well as her observations of what Japan could teach the world in terms of the importance of peace and civility in public life. Allow me to quote this fine passage from page 60 of the present book:

"The bullet train glides into the station not even a second later than its scheduled arrival time, and I stand amazed at the level of perfection that this country has achieved on the material plane. Then when the woman ticket-checker comes towards us, I am even more amazed. She apologizes several times for the inconvenience she is causing by asking us to take out our tickets, then bowing down deeply she takes two steps backwards before she turns and goes to the next row of seats. There is hope for the world – outer perfection can meet inner perfection."

In *Mirra Alfassa – the Mother*, Sunayana has woven a fine narrative; it is her offering to the Mother for all that she and all of us have received during our life time. This book should reach the hands of the Ashram children and the former students of the SAICE as indeed interested readers from the outside world.

(Endnotes)

1. Paul Richard, *Without Passport: The Life and Work of Paul Richard*, edited by Michel Paul Richard, New York: Peter Lang, 1987, p.71. For more details regarding the life and work of Paul Richard, those interested could refer to: 'Utopian Longings and the French Connection: Paul Richard and the Politics of Friendship', in *Cosmopolitan Modernity in Early 20th Century India*, by Sachidananda Mohanty, revised second edition, London and New York: Routledge, South Asian and Global editions, 2018. (First published in 2015). Available at SABDA.

For Richard's eulogy of Sri Aurobindo's role in the future rise of Asia, please see *The Dawn Over Asia*, by Paul Richard (translated from the French by Aurobindo Ghose), Madras: Ganesh and Co Publishers, 1920. In the opening page, Richard writes: "These addresses were originally delivered in Japan and interpreted from my French into Japanese. I am indebted, with deep gratitude to my great Brother, Sri Aurobindo Ghose, for their present English translations'

Pondicherry, October, 1920

P.R.

2. Richard, 1987, p.79.

3. Richard, 1987, p. 80. ☞

THE STORY BEHIND *THE DAWN OF AUROVILLE*

Kiran Kakad '72 on the new book brought out by the Ashram Archives

As the curator of photographs at the Archives, I have always believed that the unique visual treasures in our photographic collection should be shared with everybody whenever possible. It is not just a casual walk down memory lane, which of course can be interesting, but something more – the photographs connect us with the deeper reality of the Ashram and its ideal; they help us to renew our quest for the higher life. This is why the Archives puts up exhibitions from time to time. These exhibitions take long hours of research and lots of work, but it is worth it.

About three years back, while arranging our collection of Auroville's photographs, it struck me that these beautiful visual moments etched in time should see the light of day in the form of an exhibition on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Auroville. It would be a fitting contribution from the Ashram on this special occasion.

I had noticed that when people spoke about the formation of Auroville, little did they realise how much the Mother was directly involved in the decision-making and day-to-day running of Auroville. Nor did they know about the dedication of the Ashram and its school in making the Mother's dream come true, especially in the formative years when there were hardly any Aurovilians!

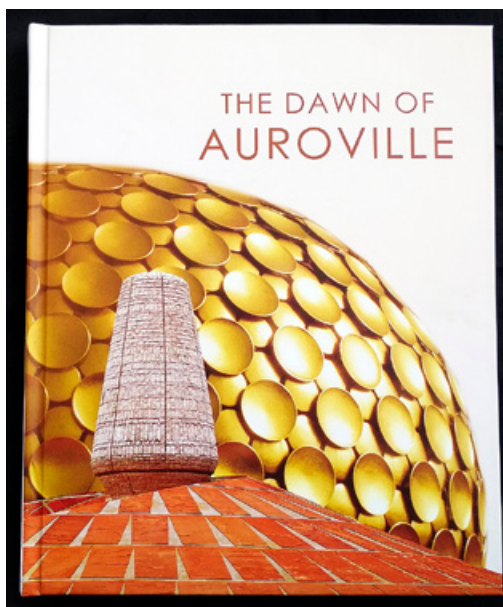
I suppose one could safely say that the Ashram was the cradle of Auroville. No doubt the official birth took place at a meeting of the Sri Aurobindo Society, which played a leading role in

the early years, but it was the dedication and involvement of Ashram sadhaks and students, with the constant encouragement and support of the Mother, that made it possible. Later, the dedication, sacrifice and hard work of the early settlers from all over the world led to the incredible progress that has been made. Auroville now stands out among the foremost experiments of mankind in its quest for human unity.

I still remember vividly, as a seventeen-year-old kid, my own participation in the inauguration ceremony and the construction of the Matrimandir pillars. The cosmopolitan ambience, with people from so many corners of the world united in this unique endeavour, was uplifting and invigorating. That was my first concrete experience of unity in the midst of human diversity; it helped me to realise that, after all, this world is one large family.

The research work for the exhibition on Auroville started early in 2017, but what made the real difference was the collaboration with Gilles

Guigan of the Auroville Archives. We shared each other's resources, the rare material we had both gathered in the course of the work. Gilles extended his unconditional help and support to the Ashram Archives. In return we shared our images and information on Auroville with him. Though most of the photographs in the exhibition were taken from the Ashram Archives collection, the various drawings, maps and models of Auroville and the Matrimandir, as well as many photographs, were generously provided by



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Auroville — 28 February 1968-2018 — the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is bringing out *The Dawn of Auroville*, a book of photographs with a simple history of Auroville's conception, inauguration and growth during the Mother's lifetime. The book is based on an exhibition of the same name, prepared by the Ashram Archives in collaboration with the Auroville Archives. The exhibition was presented in February 2018 simultaneously at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Exhibition Hall in Pondicherry and at Kalakendra, the exhibition hall in Bharat Nivas, Auroville.

The book deals briefly with the conception, planning and official endorsement of Auroville, then covers in some detail the inauguration day, 28 February 1968, and the preparations for it. It highlights the role of the Mother and the participation of Ashram sadhaks and students of its school, for at that time only a handful of Aurovilians were living on the land itself. The planning of the new city was done in Paris and Pondicherry; the surveying of land, the

improvement of roads and the elaborate preparations for the inaugural day were largely done by sadhaks and students. The section on the inauguration concludes with a number of inspiring reminiscences by participants.

The next part of the book covers the conception of the Matrimandir and its construction during the final years of the Mother's life. Finally, there are some words of the Mother on the aims and ideals of Auroville. An appendix at the back gives small photographs of the delegates of the various countries and Indian states that took part in Auroville's inauguration.

This book is based upon research done by the Ashram Archives and the Auroville Archives. The story of Auroville's inception is made living by hundreds of photographs culled from the collections of the two archives. The text is a brief account intended for the general reader, but of considerable historical interest. The book is dedicated to the Mother, who conceived, planned and inaugurated Auroville, "the city the earth needs".

the Auroville Archives. It was this free and warm collaboration between the two for more than a year that made the exhibition a success when it

was put up in February 2018. We made two sets of posters so that the exhibition could run at the same time in the Ashram and in Auroville.



Inauguration Day-28 February 1968



Aurovilians and Ashramites work together for the excavation at the Matrimandir site

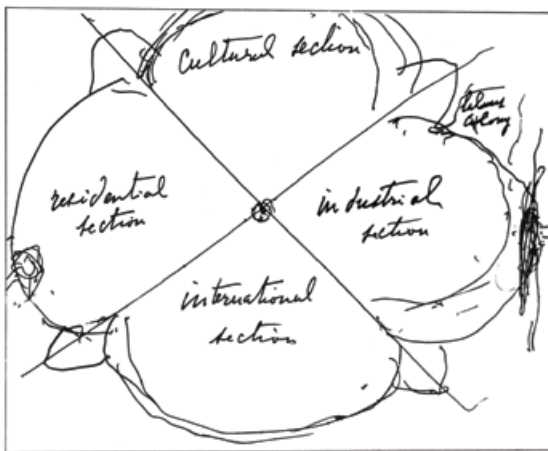
Many people appreciated the exhibition, with its new information and rare photographs. There were a number of earnest requests to turn it into a book. That is when the Archives took up the challenge to publish a book in eleven months — by the 21st of February, 2019. We went back over the research material and made doubly sure

about the authenticity of the information; we modified the exhibition layout to have it fit into a book format. This whole exercise of fine-tuning the write-up and layout several times over was done with regular verification and feedback from Gilles at every stage.

The Dawn of Auroville is the production of a

Ashram boys and girls working on an Auroville road.





The Mother's sketch of her plan for Auroville, with four sections (or zones) and, at its centre a Park of Unity.

dedicated team. First, the various photographs and negatives were patiently scanned at the Archives; then somebody painstakingly touched up each and every image to remove scratches and blemishes, till her eyes almost popped out; finally, the photos were carefully catalogued on computer, till the operator asked for eye drops. Meanwhile the text editor and his collaborators poured over the written contents again and again till they were sure that, apart from the language, all the 't's were crossed and the 'i's dotted. Only then could our book layout specialist complete her elegant

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

The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.

8-9-65.

Mother's message

formatting work and send it to the Ashram Press for printing. The Press went all out to produce the book in record time. This collective effort to bring out a beautiful and special book finally bore fruit, just in time to dedicate the work to the Mother on her anniversary, the 21st of February 2019. The book was the culmination of a happy and willing collaboration between the archives of the Ashram and Auroville. ❧

Ceremony for the beginning of the Matrimandir's construction, February 21, 1972



REMEMBERING MAMATA-DI

Charismatic and colourful, Mamata-di (Choudhury) had style and was in a class by herself as an English Teacher. Sachidananda Mohanty '75 remembers.

If we were asked as to what lent uniqueness to the education we received at the Ashram School, we are likely to say in one voice that it was student-centric. Indeed, the child or the learner, as the Mother explained, was at the heart of the 'Free Progress' system. It was the learners who determined the subject of study without parental, societal or peer group pressure; the learners determined the pace of progress according to their aptitude for the various branches of learning: the sciences, arts, social sciences etc without bothering about career, success or money. If the student did not perform well, the teacher was taken to task!

The emphasis throughout was on the child: no rote learning, no examinations, no divisions or marks to decide the academic pecking order or caste system, and certainly no public shaming of the child for the alleged failure to follow parental claptrap or the unfulfilled desire of the family for name and fame. This was a bold departure from the time-hallowed colonial system of education of Macaulay that saw merit and virtue in Western supremacy in all fields especially in education.

In contrast, the Ashram system, based on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of National Education and Integral Education, was radically different. While it restored the child center-stage, paradoxically enough it was also teacher-centric, in the Socratic sense. In fact, as the Mother once said, in order to be a good teacher one had to be a perfect Yogi. The ideal teacher had to be an ideal learner, a seeker after knowledge with a thirst for life-long learning. As Sri Aurobindo aptly said in the first decades of the 20th century, the teacher was the guide and pathfinder, someone who had respect and empathy for those he was tasked to bring up.

While my former teachers at the Bhubaneswar school were all a serious-minded and dedicated

lot, they were, on the whole, more stern and conservative in approach. Many of them believed in the adage: 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. Corporal punishment, a euphemism for beating, was a rule for deviant behaviour. We dreaded the hour of punishment. In contrast, I found their counterparts in the Ashram School more liberal, dynamic, encouraging, articulate, caring, humane and helpful. Here, there was freedom to experiment and freedom to err. Learning was not a draconian affair; it was a joy. Also, as part of a residential school, we shared company and companionship with our teachers and sports-instructors, practically throughout the day and late evenings. We met them in the classes, outside the classes, on the road, at 'Darshan' time, in the Sportsground, the Tennis ground, film shows, the Dining Room, the Corner House, the dispensary, the Theatre hall, outings and picnics.... We never got bored or tired of our teachers, they too never did. Familiarity did not breed contempt; rather the closeness among us led to a greater sense of bonding and a sense of life-long endearment.

As I moved from the School to the Higher Course in 1973, passing out eventually in 1975, there were several teachers whose classes I attended. I remember all of them with a great deal of respect, fondness and gratitude.

In this piece, I would like to commemorate the time I spent with one of my most memorable teachers. The basics of English grammar I learnt from her have remained with me all through my life. If class-time was fun-time at the Ashram School, then she took the cake. She was forever lively, a wonderful person full of zest and joie de vivre. She was Mamata Choudhury, known to us as Mamata-di.

I had a wonderful set of English teachers all through. All of them were gifted and outstanding in their own ways. I recall them with a great sense of appreciation and privilege: Jayashree-ben, Mohini-ben, Bani-di, Priti-di (Ghosh), Mamata-di, Amita-di, Tehmi-ben, Nirod-da, Manoj-da(Das) — all of them contributed immensely to my growth as a student of English language and literature.

In my first class in 1966 when I joined the Ashram School, my first English teacher, Jayshree-ben took my test, was happy with the result, and straightaway took me by the hand to Mohini-ben's class which was then held upstairs. Mohini-ben, I recall vividly told me: "Welcome! Hope you get a double promotion in my class."

Mamata-di taught me for one year, and yet in that very short period her personality and teaching ability, marked by intelligence, wit, humour and motherly love, left a lasting impact on me as well as on all her students. If youth was a virtue, then Mamata-di had passed her prime by the time we came under her influence. The onset of age made no difference to her teaching ability and vibrant self.

What distinguished Mamata-di from the rest was the fact that she was aristocratic in approach, had style and carried herself in a manner that took our breath away. Immaculately dressed invariably in a white saree with close-cropped hair, a dash of talcum powder on her cheeks to beat the summer heat of Pondicherry, with a hand fan for company, she made a royal entry to the School in her hand-drawn rickshaw that one saw later in films like 'Do Bigha Zameen', ably directed by the legendary Bimal Roy.

While most teachers seldom spoke about their personal lives, we came to learn from Mamata-di that her son was an officer in the Indian Air force, and her grandson Napta was, if I recall right, in

the Flower Room (Delafon) at that time. During soup break in the courtyard of the main School building, when others were busy exchanging stamps (a craze then), we saw Mamata-di coaxing a reluctant Napta to drink 'Horlicks'. In fact, Napta became the unseen presence in the class; the envy of all. Not a day passed when Mamata-di

did not make a reference to him. Clearly, Napta was the favorite of the grandmother. We learned to admire him as well. Napta seemed to have come from difficult family circumstances. That may have been a reason as to why the grandmother was so caring. Time teaches us many truths of life in later years.

Among my classmates, I remember Sharda, Abhi, Tarun, Sajal, Tathagata, Devdutt (Mohanty), Ajit (Mehta), Bala, Ronit quite well. Our classroom was at the bottom of the staircase that led from the eastern side to what is known now

as the 'Hall of Harmony'. Once inside the class, if one were to turn back, one could catch a glimpse of the road that led from the Ashram Post Office towards the Physical Education Department. At times, a mischievous student would make a face at Mamata-di from the road-side and appear in the class the next moment in a nonchalant manner, leaving Mamata-di in a state of consternation.

Mamata-di had her own set of rules and protocols that were part of the subculture of our class; all learned to respect and honour these unwritten rules without fail. She made sure that all did. First of all, there was the large-size attendance register. She would punctiliously read out the names with her powerful voice as she marked the presence and absence of students. The roll call was a minor ritual in the class that we looked forward to.

One day, before starting the roll call, she opened the register and frowned at the comments scribbled there: It read: 'Tathagata absent, you fool!'

'Am I a fool, children?' she asked, outraged.



Mamata-di. Photo dated 23.4.1954. Pic credit: SAAA

‘No, Mamata-di’, someone helpfully said, ‘Tathagata absent, you fool’ means, ‘Tathagata is a fool!’

‘Don’t be too clever’, said Mamata-di, ‘The comment is clearly directed at me. Now, who can do some detective work?’ Mamata-di’s crime fiction reading came to her rescue. She said: ‘Ojit, (name pronounced the Bengali way) can you do some detective work and find out who has written this?’

‘Yes, Mamata-di’, said Ajit with alacrity. No one had any choice when Mamata-di passed the order. All had to follow or else face the threat of demotion.

We read the English Today series in Mamata-di’s class. Newly introduced from England, these textbooks had freshness in them and were a delight! Every lesson featured an abridged literary extract from an English classic like *The Wind in the Willows*, the 1908 children’s novel, and was followed by question/answers. While students competed with each other in providing correct answers (and some blatantly copied from the note books of others!), Mamata-di, unmoved, would read her favourite crime novels, mostly Agatha Christie, if I recall right. She made sure that we never saw the titles or the covers of the novels. As we approached her table, she would quickly turn the book upside down. Once, I was quick to spot a female victim on the cover. When the story would reach the climax, she would tell the students who were eager for correction: “Check your answers with the help of Shochi’s Note Book”. She would pronounce my name the Bengali way!

My classmate Sharda reminds me that while I was [ghost] writing her essay on ‘Cloud-formation’ along with mine, she added illustrations to my stories, and I took the credit. Talk about ‘group work’! It was all innocent fun.

Every teacher had his/her way of encouraging students. In Mamata-di’s case, it was the bait of double promotion which she offered to bright students (i.e. those who could give the correct answers). Conversely, those who did not do well, would face the ignominy of being consigned

by her to the same class the next year. Our fate hovered dangerously between success and failure. The challenge, however, goaded us to exceed ourselves constantly.

Mamata-di excelled herself in the grammar classes. We learnt the basics of English grammar, parts of speech, idioms, phrases and proverbs. We improved our pronunciation. She was a strict teacher of the English language. At the same time, few could surpass her in storytelling and literature classes. She spoke English with an impeccable accent with correct idioms and phrases.

She was economical with the use of paper, and followed the Mother’s injunction in this regard. She used, Sharda recalls, the reverse of the cash receipts collected from Ashram’s ‘Honesty Society’ Store for writing questions. In the process, we came to know of her shopping lists and purchase habits.

One day, Mamata-di read out a story from our English text-book. It was a translation of Rabin-dranath Tagore’s touching tale, ‘The Homecoming’. Phatik Chakarvorti, the adolescent protagonist of the story, a naughty village lad of fourteen, fond of pranks, ponds and trees, constantly at war with his brother Makhani, lives with his widowed mother in the village. He comes to the city with his uncle Bishamber for education. Maltreated by his aunt, he meanders outside, gets drenched in the rain, has high fever and dies in delirium with his mother by his side.

Tagore captures the feeling of pain and nostalgia of a teenager poignantly.

It is, however, at the ending that Tagore excels in depicting the essential tragedy of the human condition: the sense of love and loss suffered by the mother and the child:

“Two constables brought out Phatik in their arms and placed him before Bishamber. He was wet through from head to foot, muddy all over, his face and eyes flushed red with fever, and his limbs all trembling. Bishamber carried him in his arms, and took him into the inner apartments. When his wife saw him, she exclaimed; “What a heap of trouble this boy has given us. Hadn’t you better send him home?” Phatik heard her words, and sobbed out loud: “Uncle, I was just going home; but they

dragged me back again.” The fever rose very high, and all that night the boy was delirious. Bishamber brought in a doctor. Phatik opened his eyes flushed with fever, and looked up to the ceiling, and said vacantly: “Uncle, have the holidays come yet? May I go home?”... “Mother,” he cried, “don’t beat me like that! Mother! I am telling the truth!” The next day Phatik became conscious for a short time. He turned his eyes about the room as if expecting someone to come... Phatik began to cry out; “By the mark!... three fathoms. By the mark... four fathoms. By the mark....” He had heard the sailor on the river-steamer calling out the mark on the plumb-line. Now he was himself plumbing an unfathomable sea. Later in the day Phatik’s mother burst into the room like a whirlwind and began to toss from side to side and moan and cry in a loud voice. Bishamber tried to calm her agitation, but she flung herself on the bed and cried: ‘Phatik, my darling, my darling.’ Phatik stopped his restless movements for a moment. His hands ceased beating up and down. He said: ‘Eh?’ The mother cried again: ‘Phatik, my darling, my darling.’ Phatik very slowly turned his head and, without seeing anybody, said: ‘Mother, the holidays have come.’”

We were completely lost in her reading when suddenly Mamata-di stopped. We looked up from our books. Mamata-di was sniffing, her eyes filled with tears. We all froze, rendered speechless.

‘You children,’ she said, turning to us. ‘What do you know of the feeling of a mother for her child?’ She wiped her tears with her saree. There was pin-drop silence. We saw firsthand the powerful effect of literature on our lives. There could not have been a better account of the immortal story of mother-son relationship than the one Tagore depicted in ‘The Homecoming’.

In later years, with other children, Mamata-di staged plays. When my brother Brahmanand joined her class, she encouraged the class to put up a performance of the adaption of Kenneth Graham’s *The Wind in the Willows*, a children’s novel, illustrated by Ernest H Shepherd (1931) and Arthur Rackham (1940). The novel ‘focuses on four anthropomorphized animals in a pastoral version of Edwardian England’. The children loved playing animal characters like Mole,

Rat, Mr Toad, Mr Badger, Otter, Potty, Pan and Squirrels. It was staged in the School courtyard and was a resounding success. Many years later in 1978, Sunayana and Maurice staged another play following Mamata-di’s request.

Time passed. As the end of the academic year approached, we realized that we would soon miss the wonderful classes of Mamata-di. She fed us home-made ‘Malpua’ in the last class as promised.

Aside from being an excellent teacher, she was frank, upright and honourable. We learned good values and manners from her. We learned to express ourselves in idiomatic language. The grounding we received in grammar in her classes will remain with us for the rest of our lives.

Postscript: After my Higher Course in 1975, I began to work at the ‘Corner House’. One day, Mamata-di met me close to the Playground, and asked: ‘Shochi, what were you doing at 7.30 p.m. last evening at the corner of the Ashram Building?’

“Mamata-di, I was at the ‘Corner House’ serving food”, I replied quite puzzled.

‘Thank God,’ she said, heaving a sigh of relief. ‘For a while I thought I saw someone like you.’

‘Why do you ask, Mamata-di?’

‘I thought I saw someone like you talking to a girl.’

That was the last time I met Mamata-di. I left the Ashram for higher studies in 1977 and lost touch with her.

I wish I had more occasions to meet with Mamata-di after I graduated. It would have been so nice to catch up with her life and education, to know about her upbringing, her schooling and the circumstances that brought her to the Ashram. I would have been so happy to have her blessings as I went through life.

And yes, what about Napta? Did he continue in the Ashram school, or did he leave? Where is he now? I have no answer.

As for Mamata-di, well, she kept her word: I got the double promotion she had promised! ❧

REMEMBERING MY TEACHERS

Ajit Panda '76

SAICE has completed seventy-five years. Of these seventy-five years I have spent eleven years of my life in SAICE. What a privilege! I entered SAICE in the year 1963. In the kindergarten we enacted a play on *The Jungle Book*. I do not remember what part I took in it. What I remember is that Sanjukta Lall played the part of 'Mowgli'. In 'Delafon' Sarala-ben (we called her Sarala-benji) used to teach us how to draw. She was indeed stern.

Then I entered the School. I remember Nirata-di and Priti-di who took our English classes. Even today I have the notebook with 'English Poetry' written on it in Nirata-di's artistic handwriting. In fact, as I ponder today, I realise that my inclination towards English poetry and literature was inculcated by her. We also did comprehension work. Her classes were very inspiring. Gauri-di taught us English in a higher class.

Mritunjay-da took our French class (I do not remember which standard). Shanti-da also taught us French. French grammar particularly interested me because it was complicated but methodical.

I learnt Art with Sanjiban-da. Mahesh and Abhijit Mitra used to also come to Sanjiban-da. I also learnt singing from Shobha-di. Along with literature I developed an inclination towards the Arts.

Indian history was another subject of interest. Sisir-da was one of my teachers. So was Hriday-da. The latter particularly encouraged the reading of the works of Sri Aurobindo in order to understand India and the world better, historically and politically. I learnt to love India and I slowly understood its spiritual destiny and the place it occupies in the World Order.

Both Hriday-da and Vedprakash-ji were responsible for my interest in International Relations. I say Vedprakash-ji because he took our class on Economics, naturally in the Dining

Room. While discussing economic systems he spoke of the current world economic scenario. During that period (1970s), in order to understand the international picture thoroughly, I subscribed to the English newspaper *The Hindu*. I tried to study national events and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's approach from the angle of what the Mother has said about her and India. Then, when Mrs Gandhi visited the Ashram, I also had the opportunity to stand in the Guard of Honour for her in the courtyard of the Ashram.

I have already mentioned that I was interested in French Grammar because it was complicated. The same was true with Mathematics. Manoj-da (Manoj Dasgupta) used to take our mathematics class in front of Sisir-da's room. What interested me was the complicated play of the fractions and the different possibilities and permutations.

It was the same for Sanskrit grammar. Rameshwari-ji, Sumedha-ben's mother, took our Sanskrit classes. Just like French grammar, Sanskrit grammar and the shlokas were very interesting. Later on, Jagannath-ji took our Sanskrit classes. Sanskrit is the *devabhasha* (the language of the gods) and Jagannath-ji seemed to be a



Hriday-da

devarshi. This was one of the reasons why I was interested in the Sanskrit language.

As I was a student of English Literature, I also studied under Tehmi-ben (who was in charge of the Bulletin Office), Nirod-da and Manoj Das. Tehmi-ben was the incarnation of English Poetry and Spirituality. This I felt when we were studying *Future Poetry* and reading *Savitri*. It was not actually studying but sharing the experiences and the spiritual knowledge of Tehmi-ben. We used to have our class in Nirod-da's room and when I came out of her class I felt like coming out of a cave of spirituality. In her class I learnt to delve into the spiritual recesses in English Poetry.

All these subjects and my wonderful teachers helped in my overall rounded development in SAICE.

Pratijna-di (Pratijna Das) was my Oriya teacher. More than a teacher she was responsible for our upbringing in the Ashram. I came to her at the tender age of eight and for eight years we (my cousin Ashok Panda and I) did not go out of Pondicherry. Why? Because the Mother has said that the atmosphere of the outside world is not favourable for the children. This was the type of approach that was provided by Pratijna-di. Before getting ready for school we used to go to Pujalal-ji to learn Sanskrit shlokas. In the evening too, after Group we used to wait in his room to be taken later to our boarding. In the evening we played chess and carrom board in Pujalal-ji's room.

Pratijna-di and Manoj Das were in charge of our boarding 'Home of Progress'. In the morning we used to wait in the Ashram for Pranab-da to come down from the Mother's room. He came down and gave us each a rose from the Mother's room. In the evening too we waited for him. He came, went to the Mother's room and waved his hand from the terrace. We also waved our hands from near the Drinking Water place. These were the ways, among others, of Pratijna-di in order to develop our personality and consciousness. We remained with her for eight long years. We cannot forget those days. Even after our boarding was disbanded we remained in contact with her for the rest of our stay in the Ashram as students.



Kireet-bhai (left) and Sisir-da with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during her visit to the Ashram

Till recently whenever we (my wife and I) visited the Ashram we always visited Pratijna-di and Manoj Das.

The year 1976 was approaching. I would then complete my studies in 'Knowledge'. Then what? What was I to do after my studies in SAICE? To go out or not to go out, that was the question. To remain in the Ashram as a sadhak or to go out and face the world at large? This question had been bothering me for one or two years before the completion of my studies. During those days we were having classes with Kireet-bhai (Kireet Joshi, the Registrar of our School). In those classes we read *The Life Divine*. Before attending the classes I had heard that *The Life Divine* and *Savitri* were very difficult to understand. Kireet-bhai had a wonderful clarity of mind. He used to explain to us the *The Life Divine* so lucidly that I did not feel any difficulty in understanding it. It was during this time that the question, as I have already mentioned, of remaining in the Ashram as a sadhak or of going out was troubling me. I shared the question in my mind with Kireet-bhai. He called me to the Ashram Library. There we were seated on cane chairs in the pebbled garden of the library. He laid before me the problem and explained the pros and cons of both the options. But he said that it was for me to decide my future. I decided and till today I thank Kireet-bhai within myself and realise with gratitude that it was by the blessings of the Mother that I did not take the wrong decision. ❧

YOUNG GIRLS' HOME

Sunayana Panda '79

This was a boarding that had been created in the early 1970s when boardings were reorganized and boys and girls were housed separately. It was called “Young Girls’ Home” and was located on the ground-floor of Basabjit Deshmukh’s house. We were all teenagers and Bela-di was our didi. She was a teacher in the School, not to be confused with the lady who taught us embroidery. We were about fifteen girls, mostly in C group, so it must not have been an easy job to look after that boarding.

There were about twelve small rooms around a long and narrow courtyard. The unique feature of this boarding was that we had either a room to ourselves or two girls shared one room. This was not the case in any other boarding. We could lock up our rooms when we went out if we didn’t want anybody to enter it when we were away. For that time this was something exceptional. To have a room to oneself at the age of 15 or 16 where one could shut everyone out was a luxury. The place where we could all sit and chat was a verandah at one end of the long courtyard.

In the re-organisation of boardings that was done in 1972, the girls were brought closer to the School. So when we were in Young Girls’ Home we could walk to the School, the Corner House, the Playground or the Ashram in just 5 minutes. In those days everyone walked to school so this was a very convenient arrangement.

It was a house where something or the other was always happening. Girls were coming or going, the maids were cleaning the rooms or film music was floating out of someone’s room. Basabjit’s mother, Kalyani-di, sang very well and also played the piano. Sometimes her voice and her music could be heard too from the first floor. On Sundays everyone would wash their hair and as almost everyone had long flowing hair the water in the overhead tank would be empty within



an hour and the water pump had to be switched on so that the tank could be filled up again. This annoyed Kalyani-di no end.

Everything would be quiet during the holidays because barring one or two girls everyone else would go out of Pondicherry to see their parents. That’s when those of us who had stayed back

would spend some quality time with Bela-di.

Everyone knows that one cannot really share all the stories of one's boarding life so let me tell you a few things that marked those two years for me. One of the unforgettable things which happened that year was the way a friend who came from Devprayag in the Garhwal Hills, had to go back to her parents' house in the middle of the year. Her parents felt that the education in the Ashram was not going to prepare her for the life of a good housewife that she would ultimately have to live. It jolted us into realising how lucky we were that we could get on with our studies while other girls of our age-group elsewhere were being taught to be good housewives. At that time we were sad to be separated from our friend but fortunately, thanks to social media, we are all back to being together again after four decades.

The one friend who completely disappeared from our midst and never contacted anyone was Renu Gupta. She was a very good student and was a part of Amita-di's drama class. On the days when she had her class with Amita-di in the evening I used to go with her and sit somewhere, a little away, so that I could see what they were doing without being seen. I waited until they had finished and then we walked back home together. Perhaps that is how my interest in theatre grew and became stronger.

The boarding continued only for a few years more and then was closed down and the premises were used as a residence for Ashram ladies. It was around this time that fewer children began to be taken into the School, so very slowly the total number of students started declining. This meant that there was no need to have so many boardings and one by one many were closed down. ❧

IN THE MOTHER'S ROOM

Ramakant Navelkar

I had visited the Mother's room in the past, but only on the occasion of my birthdays. I had never had a chance to go there to witness how She guided people in their work-related and other matters. This opportunity came my way in a rather casual manner!

It must have been towards the end of 1967 or the beginning of 1968. That late morning, I happened to be standing in the smaller courtyard of the Ashram-complex leading to the Meditation Hall. I saw the architect of Auroville, Roger Anger walking towards the Meditation Hall. He was holding in both hands a wooden model. That model was of Auroville's Plan with the golden globe of the Matrimandir in the centre. Roger was carrying it to show it to the Mother. He saw me standing nearby. He requested me to help him carry the model to the Mother's room

on the second floor. Thus we both carried it upstairs.

I was not a stranger to Roger. He had met me in the Ashram's Drawing Office on a few occasions, when he came there to meet Vishwanath-da (Vishwanath Lahiri) who was the Engineer-in-charge of the Drawing Office.

We entered the Mother's room. Roger signalled to me to remain near. And I saw Roger explaining to Her, on the model one by one, all the salient features of his plan. As they were conversing in French, which I knew very little, I could only remember the Mother saying, "Très bien"¹ several times. Before we departed, the Mother called Roger as well as myself and gave us the flowers She has named as 'Auroville'.


We came down the staircase. My wish was fulfilled. ❧

1. "Très bien" means "very good" or "very well" in English



QUIZ TIME!

Know the answers to the following questions? They will be printed in our next issue.

- 
1. Where was the Auroville information office in Pondicherry in 1968?
 2. Who was the first child to be born in Auroville who survived (the actual first baby to be born in Auroville died in infancy)?
 3. When was the foundation stone of the Matrimandir laid?
 4. Who represented Pakistan during the Auroville foundation ceremony in February 1968?
 5. What kind of a flower is the Auroville flower?

ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS OF THE NOV 2017 ISSUE

1. *In which year was the Computer centre started in SAICE?*
1970
2. *Who taught classical ballet to the students of SAICE in the 1960s and 70s?*
Monique.
3. *What activities were organised to keep the students engaged during the school holidays before 1973?*
Competitions were organised in indoor games (board games) as well as in embroidery, painting, poetry writing etc. After 1973 students started going out during the holidays so these activities were stopped.
4. *Who played the role of Aslaug in the 1st December performance of Sri Aurobindo's play Eric?*
Leslie Tomb
5. *What is the Mother's significance for the Begonia flower?*
Balance.

The upcoming Sourcing Our Oneness camp will be held at Van Niwas, Nainital from 3rd to 12th November, 2019. It will include a two day stay at Madhuban. Those interested may contact The Golden Chain Fraternity office.

S A M Ã



F.A.R.M.S

“For Beauty is the worship that Nature offers to the supreme Master of the Universe ; Beauty is the Divine language in form”

-The Mother



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GROUP PHOTO OF THE FORMER STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE 2ND DECEMBER PROGRAMME, 2018.