

CHAPTER—XX

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM AND ITS AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS

The Ashram is the Mother's creation, said Sri Aurobindo. The mother came to reside at Pondicherry in 1920 and the Ashram began to take shape under her loving care. But it can be said that the seed of the Ashram was sown a decade prior to that, in 1910, with Sri Aurobindo's arrival at Pondicherry.

Before we describe the circumstances leading to Sri Aurobindo's coming to Pondicherry, it would be in the fitness of things to give a brief survey of his earlier life.

A brief sketch of Sri Aurobindo's early life :

"No one can write my life because it has not been on the surface for men to see," once Sri Aurobindo told one of his disciples who proposed to write a biography of his. Sri Aurobindo obviously paid much greater importance to his inner life, his struggles and achievements in the planes of consciousness, the story of which cannot be reconstructed following the conventional methods of chronology and documentation.

Sri Aurobindo was born at Calcutta, on August 15, 1872 the third child of Dr. K.D. Ghose and Swarnalata Devi. His mother was the daughter of Raj Narain Bose, known as a *rishi* for his spiritual pursuits. Raj Narain was a visionary and nationalist. People of Bengal heard him with awe and attention, so much so, that his friend Devendranath Tagore, father of the Poet Rabindranath, remarked, "Whatever falls from the lips of Raj Narain Babu creates a great sensation in the country".

It should have been natural for the boy, Aurobindo, to become a keen student of Indian heritage under the influence of such a grandfather. But his father, Dr. K.D. Ghose, who had his higher medical education in the West, was deeply in love with the western way of life. He disliked

almost everything Indian. In order to ensure that his three sons Manmohan (who later became a well-known poet in English), Benoy Bhushan and Aurobindo, grew up only under pure western influence from the beginning, he put them in an Irish nun's school at Darjeeling, the Loretto Convent.

After two years, in 1879, Sri Aurobindo and his brothers were taken to England by their parents. The parents returned, leaving the children in an English family of Manchester, the Drewetts. Mr. Drewett who was an accomplished scholar in Latin taught the language to Sri Aurobindo most efficiently and when the latter joined St. Paul's School in London in 1885, the headmaster took it upon himself to ground him personally in Greek and pushed him up rapidly through the higher classes.

Sri Aurobindo's literary genius had already budded forth while he was at Manchester. His poems were published in the *Fox Family Magazine* when he was barely ten. The genius flourished in London and Cambridge, expressing itself in many a hue, from highly reflective philosophical prose to verses vibrating with an original creative force.

Towards the end of 1889 Sri Aurobindo went to King's College, Cambridge, with a scholarship and studied there for two years. While at St. Paul's Sri Aurobindo had begun to pay greater attention to general reading outside the syllabus, particularly to English and French literatures and to the history of ancient, medieval and modern Europe. He picked up Italian, German and Spanish too. Although he devoted insufficient time to the college courses, he bagged all the prizes in King's College in one year for Greek and Latin verse.

At Cambridge Sri Aurobindo passed high in the First Part of the Tripos (First class). He could have got his B.A. degree at this stage on an application. But he did not bother.

Sri Aurobindo's father, Dr. Ghose, did not prove himself quite alert regarding the pecuniary needs of his three sons living so far away. From the beginning he had been irregular in remitting money for meeting their expenses. In later years he simply stopped sending any money at all. Sri Aurobindo recollected:

"During a whole year a slice or two of sandwich bread and butter and a cup of tea in the morning and in the evening a penny saveloy formed the only food."

As desired by his father, Sri Aurobindo had enrolled himself as a candidate for the I.C.S. All such candidates had tutors to help prepare them for the examination. But Sri Aurobindo had none. Still he secured high marks in all the papers. But when he was called to appear for a riding test, he did not turn up. He was given the chance three times. But he proved elusive.

Thus he got himself disqualified from the service without himself rejecting it, for he felt no call for the I.C.S. But this shocked his teachers and well-wishers. They pleaded with the authorities to admit him into the Civil Service eventhough he did not appear for the riding. But the authorities were in no mood to oblige them. And they had their own reasons for being adamant. While at Cambridge Sri Aurobindo was the Secretary of the 'Indian Majlis', an association of Indian students. In some meetings organised by the Majlis he had delivered fiery speeches denouncing the British rule in India. The authorities had taken note of this. No wonder that they would be happy to keep Sri Aurobindo out of the Civil Service.

During the last days of his stay in London Sri Aurobindo and some other young Indians formed a secret society and named it 'Lotus and the Dagger'. The members resolved to contribute each in his way, to the struggle for India's freedom. The society did not last long. But Sri Aurobindo kept his vow.

Sir Henry Cotton's brother introduced Sri Aurobindo to the Gaekwar of Baroda, Maharaja Sayaji Rao, on the latter's visit to London. The Maharaja offered Sri Aurobindo a position in the Baroda Service. Sri Aurobindo accepted it and left England in February 1893.

The ship in which he was scheduled to travel sank off Lisbon. The news reached his father who did not know that Sri Aurobindo was coming by another ship. He died of shock.

At Baroda, Sri Aurobindo joined the State Secretariat. After some time, at the request of the Principal of the Maharaja's College, he was appointed there as the Professor of English and French. Later he became the Vice-Principal of the College.

Life flowed in triple distinct streams during the thirteen years that Sri Aurobindo spent at Baroda. First, he became an ardent student of India's culture, literature and languages. He mastered them at incredible rapidity. He made free translation into English of some of the classics of India and wrote several plays and poems. Secondly, he wrote and planned for a country-wide revolutionary upsurge. And last but not the least, he began to practise Yoga.

In 1901 he married Mrinalini Devi, daughter of Bhupal Chandra Bose of Calcutta.

Very difficult it is to give an account of the political activities of Sri Aurobindo during this time, for they were carried on in utmost secrecy. He disliked the passive policy followed by the Congress then. He understood that if the Congress was allowed to go the way it was going, it would not go far and would reach no worthy goal. But that must not be. The Congress must stand for great ideals. If the present leaders were not able to give such a turn to the organisation, then they must be replaced by new leaders with bolder visions.

It was shortly after his arrival in India that he wrote a series of articles in a Bombay Paper, the *Indu Prakash*, entitled 'New Lamps for Old'. Disarmingly frank and forceful, his articles shook the very foundation of the peaceful citadel of the then Congress politics. In one of them he wrote :

"I say of the Congress, then, this, that its aims are mistaken, that the spirit in which it proceeds towards their accomplishment is not a spirit of sincerity and wholeheartedness, and that the methods it has chosen are not the right methods, and the leaders in whom it trusts are not the right sort of men to be leaders—in brief we are at present the blind led, if not by the blind, at any rate by the one-eyed".

These articles written anonymously, created a stir. The young were thrilled. The orthodox leaders felt upset.

In no time Sri Aurobindo gathered around him some deeply dedicated followers like his younger brother Barindra Kumar, C.C. Dutt of the I.C.S. and soldier Jatin Banerjee who moved about forming secret societies all over the country. Hundreds of such societies cropped up, most of them appearing on the surface as associations for physical culture.

The spirit in which Sri Aurobindo was out to serve the country would be evident from the following portion of a private letter which he wrote to Mrinalini Devi from Baroda. (This letter, alongwith two more, became famous when the prosecution produced them in the court during the historic Alipore trial.)

"Whereas others regard the country as an inert object, and know it as the plains, the forests, the mountains and rivers, I look upon my country as the mother, I worship her and adore her as the mother. What would a son do when a demon sitting on the breast of his mother is drinking her blood? Would he sit down content to take his meals, and go on enjoying himself in the company of his wife and children, or would he, rather run to the rescue of his mother? I know I have the strength to uplift this fallen race; it is not physical strength, I am not going to fight with the sword or with the gun, but with the power of knowledge."

In 1905 Lord Curzon, the Viceroy, brought about the partition of Bengal. This gave a sudden boost to the anti-British feeling in Bengal. During the last days of his service at Baroda Sri Aurobindo visited Bengal from time to time and observed and sometimes guided the political developments there. But the time had come, it was felt, when he must participate in them openly.

One evening, in a mammoth public meeting at Calcutta, an affluent patriot, Subodh Mallik, announced a donation of one lakh rupees for founding a National College, entirely free from the control of the Government. But he made a condition that Sri Aurobindo must be persuaded to take charge of the institution.

Sri Aurobindo resigned his Baroda job—the monthly salary of Rs. 750 and many comforts and prospects—and joined as the Principal of the Calcutta National College on a salary of Rs. 150 which soon dwindled down to Rs. 50 and then to nil. The college flourished under Sri Aurobindo's direction. The accent was on creating men, courageous and truthful, and not on turning out a fresh batch of clerks for British India. But Sri Aurobindo could not continue to look after this novel educational experiment for long. Immediate and more pressing problems demanded his attention.

Philosopher, orator and political leader Bipin Chandra Pal planned to publish a newspaper which would serve as a link among the political workers of the country and which would mobilise the people behind the patriotic causes. Bipin Chandra requested Sri Aurobindo to help him. Sri Aurobindo agreed and the *Bande Mataram*, the herald of Indian revolution, was launched. In no time it proved a great success. The entire burden of this thriving paper soon came to rest on Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo was the first leader to declare complete and absolute independence as the goal of the nationalist movement, through the pages of the *Bande Mataram* and in his public speeches. The difference between the Moderates and the Nationalists—the latter often called the Extremists—became clearly outlined and the Nationalists stood well-arrayed behind Sri Aurobindo. The party took up the word “Swaraj” to express its ideal. Sri Aurobindo put forward a new political programme for the country: Non-cooperation with the British administration, Passive Resistance, Swadeshi, boycott of British goods, National Education, settlement of disputes by popular arbitration, etc. History records that these were the principles on which the Indian freedom movement developed and matured.

The Calcutta Congress of 1906 passed resolutions demanding Swaraj and upholding the ideals of boycott and national education. This came about by the efforts of Sri Aurobindo, supported by Lokamanya Balagangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai among others. Although the Moderates, perhaps temporarily over-whelmed by the popular enthusiasm in favour of these resolutions, supported them, they soon girded up their loins and in the next session of the Congress at Surat (1907) made a determined effort to deter the reiteration of these resolutions. Pandemonium ensued and the Congress broke up. The Nationalists met separately. Sri Aurobindo became the idol of the youth of India.

Before long the Government instituted a case against Sri Aurobindo accusing him of preaching sedition through the *Bande Mataram*. This was the first newspaper in the country to be so charged with. It was a great sensation. Bipin Chandra Pal, who was compelled to appear in the court, refused to give evidence against Sri Aurobindo. For such non-cooperation with the law he was sentenced to imprisonment for six months. It was at this time that Rabindranath Tagore wrote the famous poem on Sri Aurobindo :

Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee!
O friend, my country's friend,
O voice-incarnate, free,
Of India's soul.

The charge against Sri Aurobindo could not be substantiated. It could not be proved that he was the editor. His acquittal was greeted with countrywide jubilation. Sri Aurobindo's popularity became still widespread.

With the growth of the Swadeshi sentiment and activities all over the country, the Government became desperately repressive. The Government was unfortunately not in a mood to listen to Sri Aurobindo who warned them again and again about the consequences of the measures it took to throttle the nationalist upsurge. As expected, groups of revolutionary youths reacted with violence. Their leader, undoubtedly, was Barindra Kumar, Sri Aurobindo's younger brother.

On 2 May 1908, a large police force raided the Muraripukur garden at Calcutta, a property of Sri Aurobindo and his brothers, and arrested a band of young men. Simultaneously they raided Sri Aurobindo's residence and arrested him.

Sri Aurobindo did not know most of the young men who were arrested. It is not possible to say how much he knew about their activities. The Government too was not sure of his association with the arrested youth. But as the records now show, the Government, afraid of the growing influence of Sri Aurobindo on the country's youth, was determined to incarcerate him by any means.

During the sensational trial (the judge was Mr. Beachcroft, Sri Aurobindo's class-mate at Cambridge, a brilliant student, next only to Sri Aurobindo), Sri Aurobindo was quietly approaching a new phase in his life. He stood far above all the hullabaloo.

The case dragged on for a full year. While confined alone in a cell in Alipore Jail, Sri Aurobindo was having waves of spiritual experiences and realisations.

Sri Aurobindo was defended by C.R. Das, later the celebrated Deshbandhu Chittaranjan. Famous are the words he addressed to the Judge and the members of the jury in concluding his statement.

"Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India but across distant seas and lands. Therefore I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the bar of this court, but before the bar of the High Court of History."

On his acquittal Sri Aurobindo was hailed by the people and the Indian press as the 'Mahayogi' and 'the supreme leader of India'—tributes which no other leader is known to have hitherto earned.

By then the *Bande Mataram* had ceased publication and repression had dulled the edge of revolutionary enthusiasm in Bengal. But on the broader Indian scene two cardinal things had already been achieved: Independence was no more an utopia for the people. On the part of the British, their first shock had given way to a better appraisal of the reality. Lord Minto, the Viceroy, had at one point developed serious misgivings about the continuation of British rule in India. The process of yielding ground step by step had set in without their being quite conscious of it.

Sri Aurobindo brought out two weeklies, the *Karmayogin* in English and the *Dharma* in Bengali. They were no more entirely political; they appealed to a deeper spirit in man from which politics could derive its true character.

But even though India was relatively calm, a free Sri Aurobindo was too much for the Government. The Governor of Bengal wrote to Lord Minto, the Viceroy, "I attribute the spread of seditious doctrines to him (Sri Aurobindo) personally in a greater degree than to any other single individual in Bengal, or possibly in India. His attitude is one of a vowed and irreconcilable hostility towards the British Government; he has openly and persistently preached the doctrine of political boycott, with the intention of making Government impossible; and if, in his propaganda, he transgresses the criminal law, the law should unhesitatingly be put into operation against him" *

* For details of the attitude of Minto and Morley to Sri Aurobindo, *India Under Morley and Minto* by Dr. M.N. Das (George Allen and Unwin, London) and *Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Century* by Manoj Das (Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry) can be consulted.

Lord Minto, of course, was too eager to shut up Sri Aurobindo. But Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, was not in his support. While at the Government level the debate on the advisability of arresting Sri Aurobindo was in full swing and Sri Aurobindo knew about it but did not bother—one evening he suddenly received what he termed as an *Adesh*—a guidance from above—to proceed to Chandernagore, a little French pocket not far from Calcutta. He did not pause to reflect or discuss. Within minutes he was on the bank of the Ganges, accompanied by two lieutenants. He had entrusted, through a note, Sister Nivedita with the editing of the *Karmayogin*.

A boat took him to Chandernagore. He stayed there in complete secrecy as the guest of a patriot who looked upon him as his guru. After a few weeks he again heard a command, this time asking him to proceed to Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo acted forthwith.

Not knowing that Sri Aurobindo had left the British India, the Government finally decided to arrest him and issued a warrant. When they found out that Sri Aurobindo had disappeared, they left no stone unturned to trace his whereabouts. Fantastic reports and rumours were entertained by them. One report, for example, detected Sri Aurobindo in Tibet.

Leaving Chandernagore Sri Aurobindo returned to Calcutta in a small boat. Accompanied by a young man, Bijoy Nag, he approached a steamer leaving for Pondicherry. He was told that he cannot avail of a place in the steamer unless he obtained a health certificate from the steamer company's doctor.

It was almost midnight when Sri Aurobindo and Nag knocked on the English doctor's door inside the city.

"My God! You speak English remarkably well!" commented the doctor and issued the certificate to 'Jatindranath Mitra', the name Sri Aurobindo had assumed.

Suresh Chakravorthy, another devoted follower of Sri Aurobindo, had already arrived at Pondicherry a few days earlier, by the land route, to inform Srinivasachari and a few other patriots and admirers of Sri Aurobindo about his coming. Srinivasachari and others planned to accord a public reception to Sri Aurobindo. Suresh, however, succeeded in dissuading them from making such preparations.

Sri Aurobindo's early days at Pondicherry :

It requires some imagination to visualise the face of Pondicherry as it was in the first decade of the century. Only two or three persons possessed cars—and the then Governor of this French Colony was not one of them. He was seen, Suresh Chakravarthi recounts in his autobiography moving about in a rickshaw.

The capital of French India had only one three storied building which belonged to Shankar Chetty. On his arrival on April 4, 1910. Sri Aurobindo was accommodated in the top floor of this house.

Sri Aurobindo's earliest companions at Pondicherry were Suresh Chakravarthi and Bijoy Nag. They were from among his numerous political followers. In October, 1910, Saurin Bose joined them. And then, in November, came Nolini Kanta Gupta, one of the closest Lieutenants of Sri Aurobindo during his Calcutta days, who later became the Secretary of Sri Aurobindo Ashram.*

From Shankar Chetty's house, Sri Aurobindo shifted to a house owned by Sunder Chetty in **rue Suffren** in October 1910 alongwith his companions. They changed to another house, belonging to Raghav Chetty, in **rue St. Louis**, in April, 1911. In April, 1913 they went over to a house in **rue des Missions Etrangères**. They again changed in October 1913, to a house in **rue François Martin**. In September, 1922, they changed to a house in **rue de la Marine**. This is a part of the present block of the main Ashram building. In February, 1928, Sri Aurobindo changed over to an adjacent house which too is embraced by the main Ashram building.

The British-Indian Government resorted to several means to get Sri Aurobindo back within their reach. It was not possible to arrest him from the French territory. A certain rich politician agreed to kidnap Sri Aurobindo and carry him out of the Pondicherry territory to facilitate his arrest by the British-Indian police. But before the man had a chance to carry out the plan, a warrant was issued against him for some other offence and he had to leave Pondicherry himself in order to evade arrest.

* Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta (b. 1889) is acknowledged today as one of the greatest thinkers of modern India. His collected works (published in 5 volumes by the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, financially sponsored by the Government of India) make a remarkable contribution to the interpretation of social and psychological issues, the Yoga apart.

The British agents secretly threw a box containing some forged revolutionary literatures into a well in a house where the famous poet Subramania Bharathi was staying. They planned to search the house, 'discover' the box and get Bharathi as well as Sri Aurobindo arrested, on the strength of what the papers prepared by themselves contained! But Bharathi's servant by chance salvaged the box before the police swooped down upon the house and on Sri Aurobindo's advice Bharathi himself informed the police about the find! However, on persistent demands from the British agents that Sri Aurobindo's house be searched, the Magistrate, M. Nandot, visited Sri Aurobindo's house with a party, but went back, deeply impressed by coming in Sri Aurobindo's contact.

The British sent a spy from Bengal who stayed with one of the inmates of Sri Aurobindo's 'household', but just at the conclusion of his assignment, he suddenly made a clean breast of his mission, weeping before Sri Aurobindo and even offering to surrender the remuneration he had received from his employers.

In 1915, when Lord Carmichael was the Governor of Bengal, the Government asked Sri Aurobindo if he would like to return to British-India. If yes, the Government would readily lift the ban that was still in force against him. Sri Aurobindo conveyed that he had no wish to go. Soon thereafter a top-ranking official of the Government visited Pondicherry and proposed that if Sri Aurobindo would be pleased to return to British-India, the Government would be happy to arrange for him a bungalow at Darjeeling where he could comfortably follow his intellectual and spiritual pursuits.

The Government, we may conjecture, had two motives. On the one hand it wanted to be sure of the nature of his activities. On the other hand, it wanted to boost its waning prestige by patronising the personality that was Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo, however, refused the offer.

As a last bid the British Government negotiated with the French Government, at Paris, for extradition proceedings against Sri Aurobindo. But there were French officers at the helm of affairs at Pondicherry who would not entertain any such move.

Bharathi and Sri Aurobindo : Bharathi was among the earliest contacts of Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo's impact on his literary genius has been discussed by scholars. This revolutionary patriot poet was living in self-exile at Pondicherry. K. Amrita (then known as Aravamudachari), who came in contact with Sri Aurobindo at the age of 14 and after his studies entirely dedicated himself to his service, recalls :

"Not a single evening would pass without Bharathi's calling on Sri Aurobindo. Bharathi delighted in pouring out to Sri Aurobindo all that he had read in the dailies, all about local affairs and happenings in the suburbs. And if, however, Sri Aurobindo made comments on one or two of the points raised, his joy would know no bounds.

"On his way to Sri Aurobindo's house, Bharathi would first call at Srinivasachari's, go with him to the beach, stay there till 7 p.m. and then make for Sri Aurobindo's house. The three together would jocularly discuss a variety of subjects. Bharathi, on his way back, would often halt for a while at Srinivasachari's and then go home. (As soon as they reached home from Sri Aurobindo's the people assembled there would put the identical question: 'What did Sri Aurobindo say today?')."

Among others who came in contact with Sri Aurobindo then were the scholar and revolutionary V.V.S. Iyer and V. Ramaswamy Iyengar, known in the Tamil literary world as 'Va-Ra'.

Sri Aurobindo's birthday was celebrated, for the first time at Pondicherry, in 1912. As A.B. Purani records, "Some local people, Sada, Petrus, David and four others besides the members of the house took part in the celebration. Sri Aurobindo sat on a chair in the outer verandah (in the house in *rue des Missions Etrangères*) and all those who had come passed one by one in front of him. Some sweets were distributed."

Towards the end of the first decade of Sri Aurobindo's stay at Pondicherry, Tilak sent a messenger to him, inviting him to come back to politics and take up the leadership of the Congress. Later, in 1920, Dr. Moonje and K.B. Redgewar, well-known Congress leaders, came to Pondicherry with the proposal that Sri Aurobindo should preside over the Congress Session scheduled to take place at Nagpur. Sri Aurobindo, of course, could not oblige them. Among others, who came to see Sri Aurobindo during this year were the celebrated revolutionaries

Sarala Devi and Barrister P. Mitter and S. Doraiswamy Iyer, later an eminent lawyer at Madras. In 1923 came C.R. Das. In 1925 came Lala Lajpat Rai and Purushottamdas Tandon to seek Sri Aurobindo's light on some political problems.

In 1928 came Rabindranath Tagore. In the following year came Sylvain Lévi, the renowned French savant. Among the visitors of the early phase were Sir Akbar Hyderi, Tamil writer Sudhananda Bharathi, and politician Surendra Mohan Ghosh. They were followed by Kannada poet D.R. Bendre, professors of Philosophy, S.K. Maitra, Indra Sen and many other well-known people. These were only the beginning. A long list can be made of illustrious visitors—Prime Ministers, Presidents, Kings statesmen, philosophers, writers, journalists, etc. who have visited the Ashram since, not to speak of thousands of others among whom there could be many genuine seekers.

The Mother comes to Pondicherry : The Mother, known in her younger days as Mira Alfassa, was born in Paris, in a well-known family, on 21 February 1878. She was a child with a difference. She used to spontaneously meditate while very young and was conscious that she had a special mission on the earth. In her vision she used to see her spiritual guide. Herself an artist of profound genius, she had even made a sketch of the guide. In 1914 when she saw Sri Aurobindo, she instantly realised that it is he whom she used to see in her vision.

The Mother had spent a few years in Algeria, exploring occult truths under the guidance of a couple: Theon, a Polish adept and his French wife.

M. Paul Richard, the Mother's husband, had visited Pondicherry soon after Sri Aurobindo's arrival here and had been so deeply moved by him that he spoke to an audience in Japan soon thereafter.

"The hour is coming of great things, of great events, and also of great men, divine men of Asia. All my life I have sought for them across the world, for all my life I have felt they must exist somewhere in the world, that this world would die if they did not live. For they are its light, its heat, its life. It is in Asia that I found the greatest among them—the leader, the hero of tomorrow. His name is Aurobindo."

In 1914 the Mother, accompanied by M. Richard, came to Pondicherry and met Sri Aurobindo on 29 March. She at once realised that Sri Aurobindo was her spiritual collaborator. It is significant in this context what the Mother said on 1 November 1954, the day the *de facto* merger of Pondicherry took place with the independent India. She said:

"From the first time I came to India—in 1914 I felt that India is my true country, the country of my soul and spirit. I had decided to realise this wish as soon as India would be free..

"But in accordance with Sri Aurobindo's ideal, my purpose is to show that truth lies in union rather than in division. To reject one nationality in order to obtain another is not an ideal solution..

I am French by birth and early education, I am Indian by choice and predilection. In my consciousness there is no antagonism between the two.. my only aim in life is to give a concrete form to Sri Aurobindo's great teaching and in his teaching he reveals that all the nations are essentially one and meant to express the Divine unity upon earth through an organised and harmonious diversity."

The Mother had to return to France due to the exigencies of the 1st World War, in 1915, on 22 February. For the first time her birthday was observed at Pondicherry the day before her departure, on 21 February.

But a great thing had been done before the Mother left—the launching of the *Arya*, a philosophical review. The first issue appeared on Sri Aurobindo's birthday, on the 15 August, 1914. It had a French edition too, entitled *Revue de la Grande Synthèse*. The French edition could not continue for long due to the conditions arising out of the World War. But the role the *Arya* played can hardly be exaggerated. Most of Sri Aurobindo's major works were first serialised in the *Arya*. The publication continued till 1921 and ran into 77 numbers.

The growth of Sri Aurobindo Ashram:

The Mother came back in 1920, reaching Pondicherry on the 24 of April. We can trace the development of the Ashram to this time, although it has grown spontaneously over decades—quite like an organic growth without any pre-conceived plan or scheme.

How did the arrival of the Mother affect those who stayed with Sri Aurobindo? Nolini Kanta Gupta, one of the earliest companions of Sri Aurobindo and the Secretary of the Ashram, says :

“Our mode of living, our life itself took a different turn with the arrival of the Mother.. The Mother came and installed Sri Aurobindo on his high pedestal of Master and Lord of Yoga..... the Mother taught us by her manner and speech, and showed us in actual practice, what was the meaning of disciple and master; she has always practised what she preached. She showed us, by not taking her seat in front of or on the same level as Sri Aurobindo, but by sitting on the ground, what it meant to be respectful to one's Master, what was real courtesy.”

Aspirants, seeking Sri Aurobindo's guidance in their spiritual pursuits, came from all walks of life. To begin with, they came slowly. In 1926, the year Sri Aurobindo gave himself up exclusively to a strenuous phase of his Yoga and the Mother took up the burden of managing the disciples and the establishment; there were only about 25 people with them. Two years later, the number had reached 80, among them Datta (Miss Hodgson, an English lady), Pavitra (P.B.St. Hillaire), an Ex-captain in the French army during the war and an intellectual of high order who later became the Director of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, and Arjava (J.A. Chadwick), a brilliant scholar from Cambridge and a poet.

Before long came many more seekers of a spiritual life, among them several distinguished poets like K.D. Sethna and Harindranath Chattopadhyay, author and musician like Dilip Kumar Roy, Miss Margaret Woodrow Wilson, daughter of the American President Woodrow Wilson, a savant like Kapali Shashtri, a revolutionary and orator, A. B. Purani, a highly qualified doctor, who under Sri Aurobindo's influence turned a poet and a professor of literature-Nirodbaran, scholars like Rishabhchand, Sisirkumar Mitra and M.P. Pandit and dozens of people from various walks of life. Although social achievements and talents have their own place in the world and also in the Ashram which hums with activities, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo accepted disciples not at all on the bases of education, social status, fame, talent or virtue, but according to the person's aspiration or his or her spiritual destiny judged on the mystic scales of their seer-vision. Those accepted were not ones who were

ascetics or necessarily disillusioned with the world. Since the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo was meant for the transformation of the world, inmates of the Ashram represented various levels and types of the complex world-consciousness. Religion or caste, race or nationality were no bar for being admitted into the Ashram. From the very beginning the Ashram assumed an international character in the true and all-round sense of the term.

In 1942, the number of the Ashramites was 350. By 1952, it had become 800. In 1962, it was more than 1,200. In 1974, excluding the students of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, the number was about 1,800.

Apart from being the spiritual guide of those in the Ashram and innumerable people outside, the Mother was herself an exemplary worker. "Let us work as we pray, for indeed work is the body's best prayer to the Divine," she said. There is no facet of life, no sphere of work, which cannot be covered by a spiritual attitude and which cannot serve as a spring board for a higher life. All the inmates of the Ashram work, but not with the purpose of meeting their personal needs. Work is a part of their *sadhana*.

When people visited her, on their birthdays or otherwise, she gave them flowers. These flowers had received special significance from her. She read their hidden splendour and named them accordingly. For example, the lotus meant the Divine Consciousness; red rose meant Love; the yellow rose—Peace; the pink rose—Surrender; the jasmine—Psychic Purity; the lily—Mahalaxmi's wealth; the golden *champaca*—Supramental Psychological Perfection; the yellow *champaca*—the Mother's Smile; the bougainvillaea—Protection; the tube rose—new creation, etc.

Life in the Ashram is marked by an inner discipline. There are, however, some external rules of discipline to be followed: The *sadhaks* are required not to smoke, not to take alcoholic drinks, not to participate in politics and not to indulge in sex life.

The *sadhana* in the Ashram is based on the *sadhak* aspiring for a higher consciousness, his surrender to the Divine and a constant effort at rejecting all falsehood from his actions and thoughts. A *sadhak* can have his own time for meditation either in his own room or in the courtyard around the *samadhi* of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, or in the Meditation Hall. Collective meditations take place twice every week, on Sundays and Thursdays, in the evening.

The passing away of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother : Sri Aurobindo left his body on December 5, 1950. The body was laid in Samadhi on December 9, 1950. The inscription on the Samadhi, signed by the Mother, reads :

December 9, 1950.

TO THEE WHO HAST BEEN THE MATERIAL ENVELOPE
OF OUR MASTER, TO THEE OUR INFINITE GRATITUDE,
BEFORE THEE WHO HAST DONE SO MUCH FOR US,
WHO HAST WORKED, STRUGGLED, SUFFERED, HOPED,
ENDURED SO MUCH, BEFORE THEE WHO HAST WILLED
ALL, ATTEMPTED ALL, PREPARED, ACHIEVED ALL FOR
US, BEFORE THEE WE BOW DOWN AND IMPLORE
THAT WE MAY NEVER FORGET EVEN FOR A
MOMENT, ALL WE OWE TO THEE.

The Mother left her body on November 17, 1973. Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi had an upper chamber where her body was placed on the 20th November.

The birth centenary of Sri Aurobindo : The world observed Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary in 1972. The celebrations at numerous places all over the world took the forms of symposiums, seminars, publication of souvenirs, essay and oratorical competitions among students, and collective meditations.

The Government of India had instituted a National Centenary Committee with the Prime Minister as the Chairman. Committees had also been formed at the State and District levels. The Government of Bengal handed over the house where Sri Aurobindo is believed to have been born, to Sri Aurobindo Samiti, Calcutta. The Government of Gujarat had handed over the house where Sri Aurobindo lived while at Baroda, to the local Sri Aurobindo Society, a year before the centenary. The Sahitya Akademi organised four zonal seminars, with well-known writers and scholars participating at Madras, Calcutta, Benaras and Bombay. Then, the Akademi organised a national seminar in Delhi, inaugurated by the President of India. Thereafter the national committee convened an international seminar with some of the world's leading thinkers participating.

In 30 magnificent volumes, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust brought out the collected works of Sri Aurobindo. For the brilliance of the production they have won the national award. They are produced at the Ashram's own printing press.

Under the auspices of the Lieutenant-Governor of Pondicherry a series of talks on various aspects of Sri Aurobindo was held at the Raj Nivas. The All India Radio, Pondicherry, presented a number of imaginative features, talks and cultural programmes. The Directorate of Information, Pondicherry brought out a commemorative volume.

The Post and Telegraphs Department issued, to mark the Centenary, a special stamp with Sri Aurobindo's symbol. (Sri Aurobindo's portrait-stamp had been issued earlier, in 1964.) The symbol depicts two triangles one ascending and the other descending. The descending triangle represents Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss). The ascending triangle represents the aspiring answer from matter under the form of life, light and love. The junction of the two—the central square—is the perfect manifestation having at its centre the Avatar of the Supreme—the lotus. The water—inside the square—represents the multiplicity, the creation. (It may also be relevant to mention here the symbol of the Mother: it shows two circles. The four petals in the first circle represents four great aspects of the Divine Mother; the twelve petals in the outer circle represent twelve powers, "the vibrations that are necessary for the complete manifestation".)

The National Committee also financed the construction of a Youth Hostel at Pondicherry, which could serve as a venue of Youth-meetings and accommodate the delegates.

The international character of the Ashram : "Here comes Sri Aurobindo, the completest synthesis that has been realised of the genius of Asia and the genius of Europe.." said Romain Rolland. Brought up and educated in England, Sri Aurobindo, no sooner had he returned to India, than turned a zealous explorer of India's mystic heritage and its foremost interpreter. The Mother came from France. Yet all those in India who had turned to the light of Sri Aurobindo, in no time accepted her as their spiritual mother.

Beginning with the admission into the Ashram of Miss Hodgson (Datta) from England and P.B. Saint-Hilaire (Pavitra) from France, hundreds of people from all over the world have found their home in the Ashram. Sri Aurobindo Ashram is not only the world's biggest Ashram; according to visitors, it is the only place on earth where people of so many nationalities have gathered voluntarily and have lived so harmoniously.

When the leader of the French Cultural Commission, Maurice Schumann and M. Baron, the Governor of French India, met Sri Aurobindo, "Aurobindo's suggestion was that, while Pondicherry and other French areas should certainly merge with India immediately, they should also have the right to retain their cultural (as distinct from political) contact with France."¹

Many of Sri Aurobindo's disciples were associated with several important national and world events. To their appeals for light, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother always responded with their guidance. Most of such messages and letters are available now in his collected works.

In 1949 a Government Press Note said that numerous inquiries are being received by their agencies about Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Since then, while on the one hand the knowledge about Sri Aurobindo and the Ashram have spread considerably, on the other hand, a far greater quest about the same has been evidenced in various parts of the world. Numerous centres to study Sri Aurobindo's works have grown up; universities have arranged special discourses (in India some universities have created or are proposing to create special chairs for teaching Sri Aurobindo's works); T.V., radio and newspapers come out with special features from time to time and seminars and conferences are held on Sri Aurobindo's vision. We can cite only a few instances: During 1971 and 1972 a number of features on the Ashram were shown on the T.V. in the West. On the occasion of the bicentennial celebrations of the Columbia University, U.S.A., discussion on Sri Aurobindo was a highlight. In California, the Institute of Cultural Integration Fellowship devotes itself to a great extent to the exposition of Sri Aurobindo's vision. Some of the major works of Sri Aurobindo had had their American editions. Renowned thinkers like P.A. Sorokin and professors like Dr. Frederic Spiegelberg, E.A. Burt (Cornell University), Raymond F. Piper (Syracuse University), Bernard Philips (Delaware University), are among those who have introduced Sri Aurobindo to America.

Apart from a number of centres in the U.S.A., there have been centres in Canada and Mexico as well. Sri Aurobindo was widely discussed in the International Congress of Philosophy (1954) at Sao Paulo, Brazil. Chile's Nobel Laureate poet, Gabriela Mistral, had said, "Indeed, my debt to India is very great and is due in part to Tagore and in part to Sri Aurobindo."

"Sri Aurobindo is the greatest contemporary philosopher and great in the company of the greatest mystics of all time," said Rev. H.F.F. Hill of England and his statement reflects the admiration a number of British intellectuals and mystics have currently developed for Sri Aurobindo. One of the pioneers in this in England had been Sir Francis Younghusband. Among other thinkers, professors and authors popularising the works of Sri Aurobindo in England and the adjacent part of the world are Morewenna Donnelly (from Ireland), G.H. Langley and Dorothy. M. Richardson. There are several others, like critic Prof. Wilson Wright, Prof. H.D. Lewis and Herbert Read who have paid tributes to Sri Aurobindo's genius. There are two regular Sri Aurobindo centres, one in London and the other at Cambridge.

Sri Aurobindo Centre in Paris is an active organisation. Considerable interest is shown in Sri Aurobindo by intellectuals as well as youth all over France. When in 1955 the University of Sorbonne observed the fifth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's passing away under the presidentship of Jean Filliozat, Professor of Indology at the College of France and Director of the French Institute of Pondicherry, several well-known scholars participated in it. Several research scholars have received their doctorates on Sri Aurobindo from this university.

Regular centres run in Germany, Switzerland, New Zealand and Holland, among other countries in Europe.

Sri Aurobindo Centres and branches of Sri Aurobindo Society are operating in the following places of Asia and Africa: Nairobi (Kenya). N'dola (Zambia), Kobe and Osaka (Japan), Colombo (Ceylon), Singapore, Malaysia, Port Louis (Mauritius), Dacca (Bangladesh), Kathmandu (Nepal) and Timpu (Bhutan).

In concluding this section it need be emphasised that the Ashram is international because what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother represent is the future of entire humanity. Such a future, naturally, will be above many a pettiness which beset our time. Sri Aurobindo says, "Our aim is not.. to found a religion or a school of philosophy or a school of Yoga, but to create a ground and a way which will bring down a greater Truth beyond the mind but not inaccessible to the human soul and

consciousness. All can pass who are drawn to the Truth, whether they are from India or elsewhere, from the East or from the West. All may find great difficulties in their personal or common human nature; but it is not their physical origin or their racial temperament that can be an insuperable obstacle to their deliverance."

Important days in the Ashram : Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—after 1950 the Mother alone—gave Darshan to the inmates of the Ashram as well as to the numerous visitors who came to Pondicherry from all over India and many parts of the world. The following four days are known as the Darshan days :

21 *February* : The Birthday of the Mother. Collective meditation is held in the morning, around the Samadhi, and ashramites and visitors can pass through Sri Aurobindo's room. In the evening the members of the Department of Physical Education have their march past in the playground, giving salute to the Mother.

24 *April* : On this day in 1920, the Mother came to Pondicherry for staying on permanently. The programme is as above.

15 *August* : Sri Aurobindo's Birthday. Programme as above.

24 *November* : This day marks a milestone in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, for, on this day, in 1926, he achieved victory over what is known in his Yogic vocabulary as the Overmind. This victory prepares the advent of the Supermind, the goal of his Yoga. The programme is as above.

Of great significance too is the 29 February. On this day, in 1956, a descent took place in the earth consciousness, as a result of which, the Mother said on April 24 of the same year, "The Manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality". The Mother further said, "It is at work here, and a day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it." This day 29 February is known as the Golden Day.

Other important days in the Ashram are New Year's Day which the Mother used to welcome with herself playing the organ and giving a message; 4 April, the day Sri Aurobindo arrived at Pondicherry (1910); 5 December, the day Sri Aurobindo left his body (1950); 9 December, the day of his Mahasamadhi; 17 November, the day the Mother left her body (1973) and 20 November, the day of her Mahasamadhi.

The Ashram also observes the Christmas. The Mother used to give Blessings on the occasions of Saraswathi Puja, Vijaya Dasami and Deepavali too.

The first of every month is known in the Ashram as the 'Prosperity Day'. The ashramites, on this day, get their requirements for the whole month.

In order to celebrate the anniversary of the Ashram School, the Department of Physical Education gives a gala demonstration of mass drill, gymnastics and other exercises, Eastern and Western, on the 2 December of every year. On the 3rd, the students generally stage a dramatic performance.

Sri Aurobindo Ashram is at the same time a centre for the practice of yoga, a seat of learning and knowledge, a home for students and teachers, an institution for research in those yogic and educational methods whereby the highest spiritual values can be reconciled with the utmost dynamism of life and action. Its aims are :

(1) to create and establish an atmosphere surcharged with the highest values of Knowledge, Harmony, Power and Realisation particularly on the basis of the ideal and teaching of Sri Aurobindo;

(2) to be a centre preparing for the evolutionary transmutation of man by a radical yogic change of consciousness;

(3) to provide to each student and candidate the necessary stimulus to discover through a process of psychological exploration his inmost self ;

(4) to evolve and realise a system of integral education, with special emphasis on the growth of consciousness which is the master-key for unity in the world and ultimately for the evolution of the entire race;

(5) to emphasise the unity of all knowledge and to break the artificial barriers between Humanities, Science, Technology and Fine Arts ;

(6) to develop a sense of international collaboration and oneness of mankind ;

(7) to discover and prepare for the role that India has to play in the formation of the new international harmony.

The Ashram Departments : The Ashram has a variety of departments and services. The Ashram Dining Hall serves the inmates and visitors simple vegetarian food—breakfast, lunch and dinner. The House Maintenance Service takes care of the hundreds of buildings, either owned or hired by the Ashram. There is a Building Construction Service too. Then there are Sanitary Service, Furniture Service—with carpentry and workshop; Tailoring Service, Foot-wear Service, Embroidery section, Watch and Radio repair Service, Bakery, Fuel Service, Photo framing and Book-binding, Handloom Sections, Cottage Industries producing hosiery, textiles, coir and cane handicrafts and toys etc., the Prosperity Service which provides the Ashramites with their needs, Transport Service, Postal Service, Granary, Bureau Central which receives the visitors and arranges for their stay, Reception Service which helps visitors to show around the Ashram, Liaison Service, dealing with labour and inter-departmental affairs, Garden and Flower Service which maintains a number of Ashram gardens and supplies flowers for the Samadhi and for the Ashram houses and for people who wish to offer flowers at the Samadhi, the Students Dining Section (known as the Corner House), two workshops including automobiles and machinery repairs and a number of other facilities, smithy and foundry, paddy fields, gardens and orchards which supply a considerable part of the Ashram's requirements of rice, fruits and vegetables, Dairy, Handmade Paper Department—one of the finest handmade paper manufacturers in the country, two printing presses with facility for printing in several of world's and India's major languages, Photographic Section which conducts an international exhibition of photographs in August every year, Electric Service, Laundry, Art Gallery, Perfumery, Dental and Physiotherapy Clinics, Allopathic, Homoeopathic, Ayurvedic and Nature-Cure Clinics, Eye Clinic and a Surgical Clinic, Centres of sale of books, pictures, etc.

Besides, there are departments of cultural activity affiliated to the Centre of Education.

The Ashram Trust runs several shops too, like the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Central Sales Organisation, Sri Aurobindo Book Distribution Agency, Honesty Society, etc.

The Ashram Library has a large collection of select books, including many rare ones. The Library receives a number of prestigious journals in various languages.

The Ashram and Sri Aurobindo Society maintain about 20 guest houses. The situation of most of them are beautiful, some on the sea front. The charges have a wide range for the guests to choose.

The city of Pondicherry and the Ashram complex which is spread all over the city have developed an intimate interdependence through the decades. The Ashram's contribution to the city, in the cultural and economic fields can hardly be exaggerated. The Ashram employs, through its various departments and institutions, about 2,700 workers, with well-planned facilities for them. A couple of Ashram institutions run schools for the children of their workers. Local farmers are taught modern methods of agriculture by Ashram farms. Ashram is the biggest tenant of Pondicherry, hiring nearly 300 houses.

The Ashram Publications : The publications of the Ashram, which began in 1914 with the monthly *Arya*, are acknowledged today to have made a cardinal contribution to the making of modern Indian culture, thought, education and vision, and in projecting the light of India on the world scene. The works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother apart, various publication units of the Ashram have brought out hundreds of titles by scholars and *sadhaks*, on mysticism, literature, and philosophy as well as creative works like poetry and stories, in different languages, Indian and international.

Among the regular periodicals published from the Ashram are *The Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, a quarterly, with the text running in English and French side by side. *The Bulletin's* significant content is the personal spiritual experiences of the Mother as narrated by herself, and her answers to questions. Each issue of the *Bulletin* contains a number of photographs depicting the latest activities of the Ashram.

Another quarterly, in English, is the *Advent*, devoted to the exposition of the vision and the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, with contributions from authorities.

The *Mother India*, a monthly review of culture in English, presents a variety of carefully selected items from highly intellectual essays to creative literature - stories and poetry.

The *All India Magazine* is an English monthly publication of Sri Aurobindo Society, which gives topic - wise selections from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, apart from reports of the activities of the Society. Besides English, this has a few editions in other languages.

The *World Union* is a quarterly magazine in English published by the international organisation which bears the same name. Articles published are on the problems and ideals of human unity, as well as about new developments of sociological and psychological significance.

Sri Aurobindo's Action is a pictorial English monthly published by the organisation bearing the same name, giving extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, mostly related to current problems, and features by others. It focusses on Auroville too. This has a few editions in some other languages.

Gazette Aurovillienne is a French bi-monthly, high-lighting the developments in Auroville.

Sri Aurobindo Society publishes an annual anthology, with some extracts from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and articles by others.

Among other publications are the *Arul* (Tamil), *Bartika* (Bengali), *Dipti* (Kannada), *Dakshina* (Gujarati), *Arka* (Telugu), *Sanjeevan* (Marathi), *Navajyoti* (Oriya), *Purodha* (published separately in Hindi and Bengali for the young), *Agnishikha* (Hindi), and *Naba Prakash* (Oriya).

The circulation of magazines like the *Bulletin*, the *Advent*, the *Mother India*, and the *World Union* are not limited to India. They command a good number of subscribers abroad.

It is to be noted that apart from the publications from the Ashram, a number of anthologies, souvenirs and even regular magazines are brought out by Sri Aurobindo Centres in India and abroad.

The vision and message of Sri Aurobindo:

Sri Aurobindo, like the Indian sages of yore, sees the Supreme Reality behind the surface appearance of the creation. The ignorance which veils that Reality can be rent as under by Yoga.

The Spirit is involved in matter. This Spirit reveals itself more and more through the process of Evolution. "Life is the first step of this release of consciousness; mind is the second; but the evolution does not finish with mind, it awaits a release into something greater, a consciousness which is spiritual and supramental. The next step of the evolution must be towards the development of Supermind and Spirit as the dominant power in the conscious being. For only then will the involved Divinity in things release itself entirely and it becomes possible for life to manifest perfection."

The process of Evolution was mechanical, unconscious, till man evolved. But now, in order that a sublime race can evolve out of him, man should consciously aspire for it.

Although Sri Aurobindo was rarely seen by the people, he took care to put down his experiences, guidance and vision in writing. His works are the prized possession of the seekers of all countries. His *Savitri* is the longest epic in English language and according to many the greatest epic ever written. It is the spiritual history of man and it also reveals man's destiny. In *'The Life Divine'* Sri Aurobindo discusses the mystery of man's life, his struggles, his suffering and joys—and the ultimate end of all this. In *'The Synthesis of Yoga'* is given an exposition of the various ways taken by seekers and the truths found by them through the ages and their ultimate synthesis. Then, there is *'The Ideal of Human Unity'* in which he lays down the principles through which the world can achieve a lasting and dynamic integration. *'The Human Cycle'* presents in an epitome the psychology of individual and social developments. In *'The Foundations of Indian Culture'* is given an enlightening analysis and interpretation of the art, literature and all the forms of culture of India. This is only to name a few.

Sri Aurobindo's vision is considered by modern thinkers as of greatest importance in the context of the contemporary developments in the world.

In the life of Time never had a century been more significant, more eventful as the last one hundred years. Man has fought the greatest of wars ever known. Man has defeated darker forces; man has also been defeated by darker forces.

Man has taken mighty strides in scientific progress. But instead of feeling mighty, he sees himself as the silly little man. He goes to great heights; the little mind accompanies him. He comes back; the little mind has come back too.

Man does not live by asserting himself on his gigantic inventions, but often by escaping from them.

But this is not all the man of the century is. He is also the being who weeps, bleeds in his heart, for his blunders. He is still the being who hates his own hypocrisy; who understands that hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue and since there is so much hypocrisy there is bound to be a castleful of virtues.

He is still the being who dreams and sings and feels that somewhere there is bound to be the grand reality from where these dreams and songs arise.

Sri Aurobindo has drawn attention to that reality. But he has also warned: "At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny.." But Sri Aurobindo has also given the key to the right choice.

Where intellect stops with this significant groping there comes the vision of the Seer. Man is a transitional being, not final. He must transcend himself and emerge into a new being. This is the demand of the law of evolution—imperative and absolute. If he does not respond to the demand, it is doubtful if he would survive the conditions he has created for himself.

On the occasion of India's independence, Sri Aurobindo gave the following message, at the request of All India Radio. It is reproduced here, as it is significant from many angles, giving a glimpse of the ideal he stood for and his vision of India's future:

August 15, 1947 is the birthday of free India. It marks for her the end of an old era, the beginning of a new age. But we can also make it by our life and acts as a free nation an important date in a new age opening for the whole world, for the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity.

August 15 is my own birthday and it is naturally gratifying to me that it should have assumed this vast significance. I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work with which I began life, the beginning of its full fruition. Indeed, on this day I can watch almost all the world movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though then they looked like impracticable dreams, arriving at fruition or on their way to achievement. In all these movements free India may well play a large part and take a leading position.

The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India. India today is free but she has not achieved unity. At one moment it almost seemed as if in the very act of liberation she would fall back into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. But fortunately it now seems probable that this danger will be averted and a large and powerful though not yet a complete union will be established. Also the wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly has made it probable that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindus and Muslims seems now to have hardened into a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped that this settled fact will not be accepted as settled for ever or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. India's internal development and prosperity may be impeded, her position among the nations weakened, her destiny impaired or even frustrated. This must not be; the partition must go. Let us hope that that may come about naturally, by an increasing recognition of the necessity not only of peace and concord but of common action, by the practice of common action and the creation of means for that purpose. In this way unity may finally come about under whatever form—the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, in whatever way, the division must go, unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future.

Another dream was for the resurgence and liberation of the people of Asia and her return to her great role in the progress of human civilisation. Asia has arisen; large parts are now quite free or are at this moment

being liberated; its other still subject or partly subject parts are moving through whatever struggles towards freedom. Only a little has to be done and that will be done today or tomorrow. There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which already indicate the measure of her possibilities and the place she can take in the council of the nations.

The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way; there is an imperfect imitation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and it must inevitably increase and conquer. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of nature, an inevitable movement. Its necessity for the nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure. The unification is therefore to the interests of all, and only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can pervert it; but these cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. But an outward basis is not enough; there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear, perhaps such developments as dual or multi-lateral citizenship, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy and would no longer find these things incompatible with self-preservation and the integrality of its outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

"Another dream, the spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problem which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society. This is still a personal hope and an idea, an ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be here.

Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation; whether or how far this hope will be justified depends upon the new and free India."

Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education :

Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is an integral part of the Ashram. It began as a small school, in 1943 with about 20 students. But its growth has been rapid. An educational convention was held on 24 April 1951, with many distinguished educationists attending it, which resolved to establish an International University Centre as a fitting memorial to Sri Aurobindo. The Mother said in her inaugural address:

"Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the University Centre which for years he considered as one of the best means of preparing the future humanity to receive the Supramental light that will transform the elite of today into a new race manifesting upon earth the new light and force and life."

Soon after the convention, on 6 January 1952, the Mother inaugurated the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre. A prayer which the students were given on this occasion, stresses what education at this centre has as its goal.

“Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born, against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them.”

The objects of the Centre of Education are—

(i) to evolve and realise a system of integral education, and to make it a dynamic ideal for society;

(ii) organise an environment and an atmosphere affording inspiration and facilities for the exercise and development of the essential five aspects of personality, the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual;

(iii) to emphasise the unity of all knowledge and to attempt to bring Humanities and Science close together into a real sense of unity for the benefit of both;

(iv) to develop the sense of the oneness of mankind and international collaboration; and

(v) to discover and prepare for the role that India has to play in the formation of the new international harmony.

Here is a bird's eye view of the growth of the Centre of Education as well as the Department of Physical Education:

1944: A playground is obtained for the school.

1946: A dispensary, with a full-time medical officer, opened to take care of the health of the children.

1948: Laboratory for Physics and Chemistry opened.

1951: A sports ground with 400 metre cinder track made available.

1954: A laboratory for Science of Life (Biology), with a small museum, opened.

1954: The Sri Aurobindo Library opened in a spacious building.

1957: A swimming pool with Olympic style diving board opened.

1958 : Special Dancing and Music Halls constructed.

1964 : A studio for painting opened.

1965 : A picture gallery for regular display of works of art opened.

1966 : A laboratory for Engineering Technology opened.

1968 : School for Perfect Eyesight opened.

In 1959, in order to keep the Centre free from the restrictive definition the term 'university' traditionally carries, the institution's name was changed to Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

There are more than 20 residential homes where the children stay. No tuition fee is charged, but an amount of Rs. 100 and in certain cases, Rs. 150 are taken per month towards the student's boarding and lodging expenses.

There are about 700 students in the Centre and about 180 full and part-time teachers. All the teachers are Ashramites and are expected to do their work in the spirit of *sadhana*.

There are no vacations in the Centre in the ordinary sense of the term. The classes, however, remain suspended for 5 weeks during November and December when there is a special concentration on physical and aesthetic activities.

Each student learns at least four languages: his mother-tongue, Sanskrit, English and French. It is observed that a student generally picks up a couple of extra languages, spontaneously. There is provision for teaching almost all the Indian languages and several foreign languages including German, Italian and Spanish. The Centre does not give any diploma or degree.

According to the educational philosophy of the Centre the child is a soul with a body, life-energy and mind to be harmoniously and integrally developed. The education system is therefore so organised as to secure :

- (i) the fullest possible development of the physique;
- (ii) a fruitful channelisation of the life-energy in pursuits that contribute to growth of the personality ;
- (iii) a full training of the mental faculties in the fields of various Humanities and Sciences; and
- (iv) the requisite help, through a powerful spiritual atmosphere, to the soul to come forward and gradually begin to govern the rest of the being.

The Centre of Education experiments with what is known as the Free Progress System . No mechanical syllabus is imposed on all the children or even on a group of them. Each one is viewed as a special case, full of potentialities and problems peculiar to himself or herself. So the system is so organised—

- (i) as to give to each one the possibility to discover his own lines of development in accordance with his inner truth of being;
- (ii) to give the possibility of progressing at one's own pace, and
- (iii) thus, ultimately, to enable him to take the charge of his own development.

As the authorities on the system put it :

Education is a process of a harmonious and progressive awakening; education is a process of self-revelation of knowledge which is within, and, as Aurobindo has said, "The first principle of teaching is that nothing can be taught". Education is a process of the discovery of one's true place and function in the totality of existence and of the progressive lifting of one's station to the highest possible reach of consciousness and action.

This is the truth of education underlying the Free Progress System. It is free because it is not prefabricated; it is free because it is not imposed on any individual; it is free because it encourages each one to break the limitations of the past and to open to an exploration of new future possibilities: it is free because it is guided, not from without, but by oneself, by one's inner soul. In the words of the Mother: "Free progress is progress guided by soul and not enslaved by habits, conventions and preconceived ideas."

As the name of the Institution itself suggests, the Centre is international in character. An attempt is made to represent here the culture of the different regions of the world in such a way as to be accessible to all, not merely intellectually, but also vitally in habits, customs, in art under all forms, and physically too through dress, games, sports, industries, food and even reconstruction of natural scenery. The ideal is that every nation with its distinctive culture should have a contribution of its own to make so that it would find a practical and concrete interest in the cultural synthesis.

The international character of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education of the Ashram is easily discernible. As Pavitra, the Director of the Centre said: The Centre of Education is international in practice and not only in name. This is in accordance with Sri Aurobindo's conception that unity manifests in diversity without losing its unifying oneness. The students as well as the teachers are from all parts of India and from many countries abroad, without any distinction of sex, race, creed or caste. Most of the Indian languages are taught, as also several foreign languages. The cultures of different nations are made accessible not merely intellectually in ideas, principles and languages, but also vitally in habits and customs, in art under all forms—painting, sculpture, music, dance, architecture and decoration—and physically in dress, games and sports. Shows, exhibitions and films are used extensively for this purpose.

The Department of Physical Education :

The Department of Physical Education plays a cardinal role in the life of the Ashram. The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo visualises the transformation of the total being and the integral education attempted at the Centre of Education lays down the distinct principles of training for the various parts of the students' being: Physical, Vital, Mental, Psychic and Spiritual.

According to Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, the Director of the Department, an ideal physical education has two aspects: Health Education and Physical Training.

The purpose of Health Education will be: (i) to give information and education to the people about health and hygiene, (ii) to look after the sanitation and cleanliness of the place, (iii) to prevent and fight diseases and

infections (iv) to arrange periodical health education of the people and attend those who need special attention, (v) to look after the purity of food and drink produced and sold in the country.

Under the second aspect, Physical Training, come (a) corrective measures for the defective and deficient children, (b) well-planned programme for normal children, (c) competitions in different branches of physical education and (d) demonstrations of physical performances of the different branches of physical education.

Like the Centre of Education, the Department of Physical Education also had a spontaneous but rapid growth. It started in the year 1954. The annual programme of the physical demonstration which takes place on the 2 of December, began in the same year with a handful of boys. The Ashram playground had been available the same year. The tennis ground on the sea-shore was available in 1948. From 1955, the 2nd December programme began to take place in the sports ground.

The Department of Physical Education, which experiments with both Eastern and Western methods of physical culture, has international contacts and from time to time expert gymnasts, renowned players and swimming coaches visit the Ashram and stay here for a certain period, imparting training to the Ashram youths. In 1956, for example, a famous Soviet team of gymnasts had visited the Ashram and there had been exchange of demonstrations.

The international character of the Ashram has become more prominent with the growth of Auroville at its outskirts.

The Bulletin of Physical Education (now known as *The Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*) began publication in 1949 with a message from Sri Aurobindo which forms the basis of the physical culture in the Ashram. The Department had its gymnasium in 1952. The swimming pool was opened in 1957. An annexe to the sports ground was available in 1962.

The Library of Physical Education is rich with important books and periodicals on the subject. For group activities as well as for individual practice new items are introduced or evolved every year, through regular study of Eastern and Western methods in the field of exercises.

The members of the Department, whose range of age extends from 6 to 70, or may be more, are divided into various groups, and aquatics, athletics, gymnastics and games are conducted under well-trained captains.

The spiritual significance of the physical education is best expressed in these words of the Mother: "As we rise to this degree of perfection which is our goal we shall perceive that the truth we seek is made of four major aspects: Love, Knowledge, Power and Beauty. These four attributes of the truth will spontaneously express themselves in our being. The psyche will be the vehicle of true and pure love, the mind that of infallible knowledge, the vital will manifest an invincible power and strength and the body will be the expression of a perfect beauty and perfect harmony.

Sri Aurobindo Society :

Sri Aurobindo Society was founded in 1960 and was registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860 with its administrative headquarters at Pondicherry. The membership is open to all, irrespective of nationality, religion and social status, etc.

The objects of the Society are—

(i) to make known to the members and people in general the aims and ideals of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, their system of Integral Yoga and to work for its fulfilment in all possible ways and for the attainment of a spiritualised society as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo;

(ii) to train selected students and teachers from all over the world in the integral system of education i.e. spiritual, psychic, mental, vital and physical ;

(iii) to help in cash or in kind by way of donations, gifts, subsidies, and also in other ways in the all-round development of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, and to help similar centres of education;

(iv) to establish study groups, libraries, ashrams, and other institutions, centres, branches, and societies for study and practice of Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and to help the existing ones;

(v) to establish centres of physical culture, sports and volunteer organisations for inculcating and promoting the spirit of discipline, co-operation and service to others and to undertake activities for promotion of health and bodily perfection; and

(vi) to establish, take over, schools, colleges and other educational institutions and to run them on the lines and ideals of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

World Conferences : In August 1964, the first World Conference of Sri Aurobindo Society was held at Pondicherry, with 400 delegates from all parts of India and from U.S.A., Japan, East Africa, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Vietnam and Ceylon.

The Mother's message to the Conference was :

"The future of the Earth depends on a Change of Consciousness. The only hope for the future is in a change of man's consciousness and the change is bound to come.

But it is left to me to decide if they will collaborate for this change or it will have to be enforced upon them by the power of crushing circumstances."

The Conference included a two-day seminar, and a two-day plenary session, besides a day free for committee meetings.

Since then the Society has had several conferences, each one a milestone in cultivating a deeper awareness of a spiritual fraternity. The Society has undertaken several projects: publications to popularise the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, holding seminars on important issues, opening up branches all over the world and holding youth camps in order to cultivate a sound character and understanding of the basic problems of life among the youths.

The Society has its members in 64 countries, with 332 centres in India and 32 in other countries, till the middle of 1974. Several centres have their own buildings and they run institutions like schools and meditation centres and organise meetings and exhibitions.

The Society has done commendable work in bringing out the major works of Sri Aurobindo in various Indian languages. It has also prepared an exhibition-set of large photographs on the Ashram which can be borrowed by educational or cultural organisations. The Government of India displayed this set through the embassies abroad as a part of the Sri Aurobindo-Centenary Programme, in 1972.

The film unit of the Society, 'Aurofilms', has made three colour documentaries on the life of Sri Aurobindo, the Ashram, and the Centre of Education.

The Society maintains a number of guest houses and children's houses at Pondicherry.

The Society has launched a major project, Auroservice, which aims at creating a new economic structure with a spiritual foundation. Its work has already started in three States. It intends to undertake area surveys to find out the human, industrial, agricultural and educational potentialities and plan and assist their development, to provide with consultancy and financial, technical and marketing help to upcoming concerns, and establish a work research and information centre for facilitating such works.

World Union :

In his message for the 15th of August 1947, Sri Aurobindo had said that one of his dreams was "a world-union forming the outer basis of fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind."

Inspired by this, some keen students of Sri Aurobindo's works formed an organisation, with the headquarters at Pondicherry, named New World Union, to popularise Sri Aurobindo's vision of human unity. This was in November, 1958.

In the first meeting of the organisation's executive committee in April, 1960, at Pondicherry, the name was changed to World Union. The same year it was registered as a Society under the Societies Registration Act of India.

The aim of the organisation are :

1. to foster in all men the consciousness of the oneness of all life and the essential unity of all mankind;

2. to endeavour, by personal example, through social communication, and by means of other activities, to awaken and strengthen the sense of oneness and unity, in the faith that it will become increasingly the basic consciousness for the whole of human life;

3. to foster respect for all life and the practice of understanding, tolerance, active goodwill towards all, from one's family circle to society, the nation, the world;

4. to organise centres of life and work in India and in all countries throughout the world for the progressive realisation of these objects.

Since then the World Union has sent speakers to various parts of the world and has held several seminars. The subject for the 1960 Seminar held at Tapogiri, Nainital, was "The Ideal of Human Unity". The same theme was also discussed in a seminar at Pondicherry in 1961. In 1962 a seminar on "The Creative Collaboration of Science and Spirituality" was held at Sadaquat Ashram, Patna, sponsored jointly by World Union and Sarva Seva Sangh.

A seminar on 'Education for World Union' was held at Patna in 1968; another one on 'Co-ordination between Modern Science and Spirituality' took place at Jog Falls, Karnataka State in 1969. Another seminar on 'The Orientation of Human Activities to promote World Union' was held in 1971 at Bangalore.

The World Union International Centre at Pondicherry has held two World Conferences, the first in August 1964 and the second in August 1967. The Conference in 1964 began on the 16th of August and continued until the 21st. The subjects before the Conference were (i) Conscious Evolution and the Destiny of Man, (ii) A Review of the World Forces, Spiritual and others, leading to World Unity, (iii) Creative Collaboration between science and spirituality, (iv) Collaboration with other Non-Government organisations of the World during the United Nations Year of Co-operation, 1965.

The Second World Conference was held at Pondicherry from 12th to 16th of August 1967, primarily on the theme of 'Education for One World'.

The World Union sponsored a Parliament of Youth at Pondicherry in December, 1970. The subject before the Parliament was, 'The Evolution of the United Nations into a World Government'.

The World Union Conference of 1973 was held on the 15th of December. The World Union holds periodically, essay competitions on an international basis in order to stimulate and promote right thinking on World Union's ideals of Peace, Harmony and Unity. Cash awards are presented. *World Union* is the quarterly journal of the organisation and it has an international circulation. It organises exhibitions on themes such as 'Discovering Oneness'.

Auroville :

"There should be somewhere upon earth a place that no nation could claim as its sole property, a place where all human beings of goodwill, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the supreme Truth, a place of peace, concord, harmony, where all the fighting instinct of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weakness and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the care for progress would get precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the seeking for material pleasures and enjoyment."

This was the Mother's dream many decades ago. It was when her experiment in developing a harmonious community in the Ashram was a success and when she felt that the world, deplorably imbalanced by a tremendous material achievement on the one hand and an utter lack of right consciousness on the other hand, badly needed a daring example of a sensible alternative, she gave the idea of founding a new city, to Sri Aurobindo Society. In the world conference of the Society, in 1964, the idea of Auroville crystallised. Preparations began almost immediately, On 28 February 1968, a boy and a girl representing each country of the world put handfuls of earth of their country into a concrete urn, shaped like a lotus-bud, and that marked the foundation ceremony of Auroville. This solemn function was witnessed by an international gathering made up of Consular representatives, World Press and the youths who had come to participate in it, apart from several thousand people of the locality.

The charter of Auroville read :

1. Auroville belongs to nobody in particular.

Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.

2. Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress and a youth that never ages.

3. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.

4. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity.

The city under making spreads along the borders of Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu, on the Bay of Bengal. Planned to house 50,000 residents, Auroville is concentric in shape with a diameter of 3 kilometres. The centre of the city is six kilometres from the sea. A green belt encircles the area.

The township is being planned in four zones: Residential, Cultural, Industrial and International, corresponding to four fundamental activities of man.

The four zones converge upon a central point where the Matrimandir is located. This is the heart of the town to be marked by a huge golden sphere. The Matrimandir is a place for meditation, but meditation not according to any denomination, but according to each individual's inner urge for communion with Truth.

The Matrimandir, which is under construction, will be encircled by twelve carefully laid out gardens.

The large structure approaching completion, Bharat Nivas, will house a permanent cultural exhibition from each Indian state. In addition, the pavilion will have an auditorium, an institute for teaching Indian languages, a library, a restaurant, and accommodation for staff and students. Several countries had to set up their pavilions.

The UNESCO has passed three resolutions supporting Auroville, unanimously, in 1966, 1968 and the latest being at its Paris session held during October-November, 1970, wherein it requested the Director-General "to take such steps as may be feasible within the budgetary provisions, to promote the development of Auroville as an important international cultural programme."

This international city is coming up amidst a cluster of age-old hamlets. But true to its ideal of spiritual fraternity, Auroville is absorbing them as an integral part of its existence.

At the moment (July 1974) there are about 300 voluntary workers living on the Auroville site, representing India, France, U.S.A., U.K., Germany, Holland, Italy, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Sweden, Belgium, Africa, Mexico, Tunisia, New Zealand and Malaysia. There are others who are staying at Pondicherry though working for Auroville.

The Aurovillians live in communities in temporary houses according to their work and inclinations. One of the communities, named 'Aspiration' is about to enlarge into an advanced colony accommodating 2,000 inmates. This will form a model for the city of Auroville. The inmates of Aspiration live in simple, beautifully designed hexagonal cottages. All the civic services necessary for the community living have been set up, including a health centre.

The school in Auroville is a bold experiment of adventures of ideas. East and West meet here spontaneously; the local children read and play with those of the Westerners, in complete ignorance of the so-called racial differences.

A beginning in Auroville's industries has already been made with a printing press, a polyester unit engaged in preparing decorative objects and panels and roofings for buildings, and a handmade paper mill.

Research is underway to improve the quality of the soil by using organic fertiliser and even organic pesticides. Chemical fertiliser and pesticides are avoided.

A scarcity of water was a major problem. Aurovillians dug deep borewells which now help irrigate lands hitherto barren. Young scientists are working on the possible use of sea-water for purposes of irrigation.

Afforestation has been undertaken and thousands of sapplings have been planted to prevent soil-erosion and provide a green belt around the city. Flowers from a variety climatic regions flourish in an experimental botanical garden.

When the Auroville was launched, there was no guarantee of financial support whatever. But the organisers had an undaunted faith in the goodwill of humanity and they knew that help would be forthcoming sooner or later. A Rajasthani devotee of Sri Aurobindo sent a contribution of 12 thousand rupees on hearing about the project. With that the first plot of land was bought. With the foundation laid contributions flowed in. Even hundreds of poor people sent one-rupee money orders as tokens of their support. The Lions Clubs and the Rotary Clubs of India have expressed their solidarity by raising some funds through publication of souvenirs and sale of literature. Contributions have also come from some trusts and welfare organisations, like the 'Miserio' of Germany. Various State Governments and the Government of India have extended considerable financial support.

But individual contributions, either in cash or in kind or in form of participation, have been by far the biggest creative factor in the building of Auroville. That is most significant. As the Chief Architect, Mr. Roger Anger (one of the foremost modern architects of France) put it, "We are building man, not just a city Auroville is not required to be a continuation of all that has been done till now. Auroville wants to be a new creation, expressing a new consciousness in a new way and by new methods." He said further, "We are already amid interesting experiments at the socio economic level. Auroville is not to introduce the worn-out labour-employer system. All are collaborators and all will be provided for by Auroville according to the availability of resources and according to the peculiarity of the needs. The residential houses we are going to build are being financed by individuals, but such individuals who have agreed that the houses will belong to the community."

Sri Aurobindo's Action :

Sri Aurobindo's Action was formed in 1970 with the purpose of carrying Sri Aurobindo's message regarding India's peculiarities and problems to the people. It is registered as a society at Pondicherry.

Since its birth the Action Society has tried to spread the message vigorously in various parts of India, through publication of booklets and lecture tours.

It has been able to organise several youth camps at Pondicherry. Youths from almost all States of India have participated and have discussed India's problems as well as the youth problem.

The units formed by the Action had been significantly active during the celebrations of Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary in 1972.

The journal of the Action, entitled *Sri Aurobindo's Action*, is published since October, 1970, in English. It has a few editions in Indian languages too.

The organisation has been able to create an appreciation among the youth, of the fact that the real change in the country can come about only through a change of consciousness, by the people turning inward instead of acting from the surface of their mind or impulses and ambitions.

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