

Matrimandir

Matrimandir Journal

No. 2, Auroville, 1999

ॐ आनन्दमाये चैतन्यमाये सत्यमाये परमै
OM anandamayi chaitanyamayi
satyamayi parama
Sri Aurobindo

OM - She, the Delight
She, the Countess
She, the Truth
She, the Supreme

With the second issue of the Matrimandir Journal we continue our exploration of the vast, mysterious, many-layered symbol that is Auroville's centre and is meant to be its **"central force - its force of cohesion"**. The focus here is the Universal Mother.

Some visitors to Matrimandir, and it can even be said, some of those who have chosen to live and work in Auroville, wonder at the necessity of building the Matrimandir. Or if they accept it they object rather to what they perceive as its 'opulence', complexity and grandeur. The Journal will progressively attempt to address these issues from the psychological/symbolic perspective and try to show that each thing has not only its place but has an inner significance as well. This Journal is a concentrated gathering together of some of Sri Aurobindo's most evocative writings which demonstrate the utter indispensability of the Matrimandir to give Auroville its right dimension.

On the necessity of symbols Sri Aurobindo makes an interesting point in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, when he speaks of **"the symbol, the significant rite or expressive figure"** as being **"a physical means by which the human being begins to make outwardly definite the emotion and aspiration of his heart, to confirm it and to dynamise it. For if without a spiritual aspiration worship is**

Aditi – The Divine Mother; the divine conscious force

meaningless and vain, yet the aspiration also without the act and the form is disembodied and, for life, an incompletely effective power. It is unhappily the fate of all forms in human life to become crystallised, purely formal and therefore effete, and although form and cult preserve always their power for the man who can still enter into their meaning, the majority come to use the ceremony as a mechanical rite and the symbol as a lifeless sign and because that kills the soul or religion, cult and form have in the end to be changed or thrown aside altogether. There are those even to whom all cult and form are for this reason suspect and offensive; but few can dispense with the support of outward symbols and even a certain divine element in human nature demands them always for the completeness of its spiritual satisfaction. Always the symbol is legitimate in so far as it is true, sincere, beautiful and delightful, and even one may say that a spiritual consciousness without any aesthetic or emotional content is not entirely or at any rate not integrally spiritual. In the spiritual life the basis of the act is a spiritual consciousness perennial and renovating, moved to express itself always in new forms or able to renew the truth of a form always by the flow of the spirit, and so to express itself and make every action a living symbol of some truth of the soul in the very nature of its creative vision and impulse. It is so that the spiritual seeker must deal with life and transmute its form and glorify it in its essence.”¹

In one of her Conversations, Mother was asked to explain what was this “‘divine element in human nature’ that always demanded symbols for the completeness of its spiritual satisfaction?” Her answer is most relevant for our exploration:

“It is precisely that part of the being which is not satisfied with abstractions and with escaping from life and evading it and leaving it as it is. It is that part of the being which wants to be integral, wants to be integrally transformed or at any rate to participate integrally in the inner adoration.

“In every normal being there is the necessity, the need - an absolute need - to translate into a physical form what it feels and wants internally. I consider those who always want to evade life in order to have self-realisation as abnormal and incomplete. And in fact, they are usually weak natures. But those who have strength and force and a kind of healthy equilibrium in themselves, feel an absolute need to realise materially their spiritual realisation; they are not satisfied with going away into the clouds or into worlds where forms no longer exist. They must have their physical consciousness and even their body participate in their inner experience....

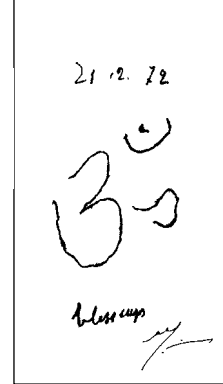
“To want to translate into the forms of one’s physical life the inner aspiration

and adoration is quite legitimate.”²

It is perhaps what She meant when in a conversation with the Auroville architect she remarked that **“Matrimandir is here to teach people that it is not by escaping from the world or ignoring it that they will realise the Divine in life. Matrimandir must be the symbol of this Truth.”**

This then is our aspiration – to want to transpose the Matrimandir symbol out of the realms of abstraction into the forms of our physical life; to seek in its spirit the truth of its form; and to contribute towards making it a living and integral physical reality in the consciousness of all those who seek its inner truth.





"The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Universal Mother according to Sri Aurobindo's teaching." ³

This issue looks at who or what the Universal Mother is according to Sri Aurobindo. In a future journal we shall complete the picture by exploring the uniqueness and specificity of his perspective in relation to both the Indian and other traditional conceptions which have existed through time to describe the Mother symbol.

Before attempting to arrive at some answers, it is necessary to define the scope of our search. Both Sri Aurobindo and Mother demand an integrality of approach. Thus it is important to remember that:

*"If we are to attempt an integral Yoga, it will be as well to start with an idea of the Divine that is itself integral. There should be an aspiration in the heart wide enough for a realisation without any narrow limits. Not only should we avoid a sectarian religious outlook, but also all one-sided philosophical conceptions which try to shut up the ineffable in a restricting mental formula."*⁴

And Mother adds: *"Integrality is an extremely difficult thing for the human consciousness which begins to be conscious only by limiting itself...So if you want to get out of yourself a little and attempt to do a truly integral yoga, you must try to understand that the Divine is not only what you think or feel Him to be, but also what others think and feel Him to be – and in addition something that nobody can think or feel."*⁵

It is also necessary to recognise that our language is not a medium plastic enough to express the ineffable and by formulating we fix and limit the rhythm of something that rests upon perpetual inner reorganisation. The Universal Mother can be said to be that which pervades, originates, drives and upholds each least process or force in the cosmos while yet being above all and bound by nothing. It is useful at this stage to remind ourselves of Mother's comment while first describing her vision of what she later on called the *Matrimandir*:

*"It will be the 'Pavilion of the Mother' – but not this (Mother points to herself) - the Mother, the true Mother, the principle of the Mother. I say 'Mother' because Sri Aurobindo used that word, otherwise I would have put something else. I would have put 'creative principle' or 'principle of realisation' or – I do not know..."*⁶

In fact, another way of describing what 'The Mother' is, is to say she IS the Creative Principle or the Principle of Realisation because, in Sri Aurobindo's words: *"The Mother is the consciousness and force of the Divine - or, it may be said, she is the Divine in its consciousness-force."*⁷

*"... The Mother is the divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence, one and yet so many-sided that to follow her movement is impossible even for the quickest mind and for the freest and most vast intelligence".*⁸

For those who turn to the Integral Yoga it is imperative to note that he also adds ***“Nothing can be done except through the force of the Mother”.... “It is the Divine Force which works to remove the ignorance and change the nature into the divine nature.”***⁹ She is the mediatrix between embodied beings and the One.

*“The Mother of all godheads and all strengths
Who, mediatrix, binds earth to the Supreme.”*¹⁰



Sri Aurobindo speaks of the ***“three ways of being of the Mother of which you can become aware when you enter into touch of oneness with the Conscious Force that upholds us and the universe.”***¹¹ There is first the original supreme Shakti that stands above the worlds and links the creation to the Supreme – her he calls the Transcendent Mother.

*“Above the stretch and blaze of cosmic Sight,
Above the silence of the wordless Thought,
Formless creator of immortal forms,
Nameless, investitured with the name divine.
Transcending Time’s hours, transcending Timelessness
The Mighty Mother sits in lucent calm.”*¹²

Then he continues, ***“Universal, the cosmic Mahashakti, she creates all these beings and contains and enters, supports and conducts all these million processes and forces.”***¹³

*“Bearing the eternity of every spirit
Bearing the burden of universal love,
A wonderful mother of unnumbered souls.”*¹⁴

And finally as the Individual Mother, she embodies the powers of these two vaster ways of her existence and helps to bring them nearer to us.

The Universal Mother

The Matrimandir is the symbol of the Universal Mother, she of whom Sri Aurobindo says: ***“The Mahashakti, the universal Mother, works out whatever is transmitted by her transcendent consciousness from the Supreme and enters into the worlds that she has made; her presence fills and supports them with the divine spirit and the divine all-sustaining force and delight without which they could not exist.”***¹⁵

The worlds we habitually live in, that is, the worlds of mind and life and body – the worlds of Ignorance – separated as they are in consciousness from their source, belong to one of the many planes of creation that are sustained by the power of the Universal Mother. What to us is the unimaginable perfection of the Supramental worlds are only the intermediate planes of the Divine Shakti. In these worlds the Mother is revealed as a Power of divine omniscient Will and omnipotent Knowledge, spontaneously perfect in every process. For, as Sri Aurobindo says, there are many planes of creation. There are other worlds of infinite existence, consciousness, force and bliss above the Supramental creation where the Mother stands as the unveiled eternal power. But, in our worlds:

“The Mother as the Mahashakti of this triple world of the Ignorance stands in an intermediate plane between the supramental Light, the Truth life, the Truth creation which has to be brought down here and this mounting and descending hierarchy of planes of consciousness that like a double ladder lapse into the nescience of Matter and climb back again through the flowering of life and soul and mind into the infinity of the Spirit.

“Determining all that shall be in this universe and in the terrestrial evolution by what she sees and feels and pours from her, she stands there above the Gods and all her Powers and Personalities are put out in front of her for the action and she sends down emanations of them into these lower worlds to intervene, to govern, to battle and to conquer, to lead and turn their cycles, to direct the total and the individual lines of their forces.

“These Emanations are the many divine forms and personalities in which men have worshipped her under different names throughout the ages.”¹⁶



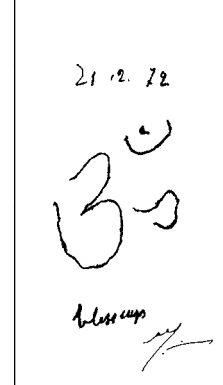
The Four Powers

The sphere we call the Matrimandir has four entrances that lead one into the structure. These entrances exist within the four pillars that quite literally support and uphold the whole sphere. The pillars facing the four geographical directions have been named respectively by Mother:

South: Maheshwari	North: Mahakali
East: Mahalakshmi	West: Mahasaraswati

Of these four powers
Sri Aurobindo says:

“The four Powers of the Mother are four of her outstanding Personalities, portions and embodiments of her divinity through whom she acts on her creatures, orders and harmonises her creations in the worlds and directs the working out of her thousand forces. For the Mother is one but she comes before us with differing aspects; many are her powers and personalities, many her emanations and Vibhutis that do her work in the universe ... The Mother is the consciousness and force of the Supreme and far above all she creates. But something of her ways can be seen and felt through her embodiments and the more seizable because more defined and limited temperament and action of the goddess forms in whom she consents to be manifest to her creatures.” ¹⁷



When asked to clarify what he meant by Powers and Personalities Sri Aurobindo explains that the word Power can be applied to whatever or whoever exercises a conscious power in the cosmic field and has authority over the world-movement.

But in the case of the Four he says they are:

“Shaktis, manifestations of different powers of the Supreme Consciousness and Force, the Divine Mother, by which she rules or acts in the universe. And they are at the same time divine personalities; for each is a being who manifests different qualities and personal consciousness-forms of the Godhead.”¹⁸

“They are not impersonal entities but cosmic Personalities, although they can and do ordinarily veil themselves behind the movement of impersonal forces.”¹⁸

In a marvellous passage in *The Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo describes the Four:

“There is nothing that is impossible to her who is the conscious Power and universal Goddess all-creative from eternity and armed with the Spirit’s omnipotence. All knowledge, all strengths, all triumph and victory, all skill and works are in her hands and they are full of the treasures of the Spirit and of all perfections and Siddhis.

She is Maheshwari, goddess of the supreme knowledge, and brings to us her vision for all kinds and widenesses of truth, her rectitude of the spiritual will, the calm and passion of her supramental largeness, her felicity of illumination:

she is Mahakali, goddess of the supreme strength, and with her are all mights and spiritual force and severest austerity of Tapas and swiftness to the battle and the victory and the laughter, the attahasya, that makes light of defeat and death and the powers of the ignorance:

she is Mahalakshmi, the goddess of the supreme love and delight, and her gifts are the spirit’s grace and the charm and beauty of the Ananda and protection and every divine and human blessing:

she is Mahasaraswati, the goddess of divine skill and of the works of the Spirit, and hers is the Yoga that is skill in works, yogah karmasu kausalam, and the utilities of divine knowledge and the self-application of the spirit to life and the happiness of its harmonies.

And in all her powers and forms she carries with her the supreme sense of the masteries of the eternal Ishwari, a rapid and divine capacity for all kinds of action that may be demanded from the instrument, oneness, a participating sympathy, a free identity, and with all energies in all beings and therefore a spontaneous and fruitful harmony with all the divine will in the universe.”¹⁹

Other Powers

This is a little of the content and substance of all that the Matrimandir wants to be. In addition there are other Powers and personalities of the Mother of whom Sri Aurobindo speaks, specifically those whom he considers indispensable for the supramental realisation. One in particular becomes deeply significant when we remember that Mother considered calling the Matrimandir ‘The Pavilion of Love’ but chose not to because she felt that human beings have made a parody of this word and would be unable to understand it in its divine dimension. Of the Mother’s power of Ananda he says: She *“who is her Personality of that mysterious and powerful ecstasy and Ananda which flows from a supreme divine Love, the Ananda that alone can heal the gulf between the highest heights of the supramental spirit and the lowest abysses of Matter, the Ananda that holds the key of a wonderful divinest Life and even now supports from its secrecies the work of all the other Powers of the universe.”²⁰*

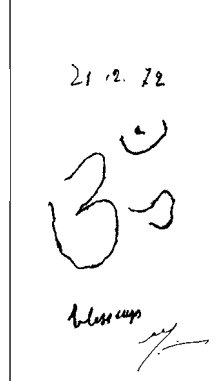
*“She is the Force, the inevitable word
The magnet of our difficult ascent,
The Sun from which we kindle all our suns
The light that leans from the unrealized Vasts
The joy that beacons from the impossible,
The Might of all that never yet came down.”²¹*

Of her Mother speaks once in her Conversations and describes how she did indeed come down - she manifested - but found the earthly nature not ready for her. For, as Sri Aurobindo says:

“... But human nature bounded, egoistic and obscure is inapt to receive these great Presences or to support their mighty action. Only when the Four have founded their harmony and freedom of movement in the transformed mind and life and body, can these other rarer Powers manifest in the earth movement and the supramental action become possible. For when her Personalities are all gathered in her and manifested and their separate working has been turned into a harmonious unity and they rise in her to their

supramental godheads, then is the Mother revealed as the supramental Mahashakti and brings pouring down her luminous transcendences from their ineffable ether. Then can human nature change into dynamic divine nature because all the elemental lines of the supramental Truth-consciousness and Truth-force are strung together and the harp of life is fitted for the rhythms of the Eternal.”²²

*“She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire
The luminous heart of the unknown is she,
A power of silence in the depths of God...”*²³



The Supramental Change

The aim of the Integral Yoga is to divinise life by bringing down the Supramental world - the world of Truth - into the triple world of mind and life and body. Sri Aurobindo says that:

“The supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth-consciousness; for its upward ascent is not ended and mind is not its last summit. But that the change may arrive, take form and endure, there is needed the call from below with a will to recognise and not deny the Light when it comes, and there is needed the sanction of the Supreme from above. The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and power of the Divine Mother. The Mother’s power and not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal’s Ananda.”²⁴

In one of her messages about Auroville Mother has said that ***‘Auroville wants to be the cradle of the Superman’***²⁵

Also in the six points she noted down and which form part of ***“To be a true Aurovilian”***, and wherein she traces step by progressive step the psychological growth towards which those who choose to live in Auroville should aspire, the last two points refer to this very subject again:

“5. The whole earth must prepare itself for the advent of the new species, and Auroville wants to work consciously to hasten this advent.

6. Little by little it will be revealed to us what this new species must be, and meanwhile the best course is to consecrate oneself entirely to the Divine.”²⁶

And if we note Sri Aurobindo’s insistence that in his yoga it is the Mother’s power and not any human endeavour and tapasya that can alone create the necessary conditions to achieve this change, the Matrimandir, the ***“symbol of Auroville’s aspiration for the Divine”*** assumes a crucial significance.

It is as if the Matrimandir - the soul of Auroville - is there to remind us that in coming to Auroville we have chosen to consecrate our lives to this aim, the very first

necessity of which is the inner discovery. Any cavilling or non-recognition of this fact prevents the collectivity from growing towards its deeper self.



When we speak of the Mother we speak of something that is beyond the grasp of the human mind. Mother suggests this when She remarks that the more one becomes aware of the complexities of the universe which is in a perpetual state of inner reorganisation, the less one can judge; all one can do is observe. Sri Aurobindo warns us:

“But be on your guard and do not try to understand and judge the Divine Mother by your earthly mind that loves to subject even the things that are beyond it to its own norms and standards, its narrow reasonings and erring impressions, its bottomless aggressive ignorance and its petty self confident knowledge. The human mind shut in the prison of its half-lit obscurity cannot follow the many-sided freedom of the steps of the Divine Shakti. The rapidity and complexity of her vision and action outrun its stumbling comprehension; the measures of her movement are not its measures.”²⁷

“If you follow your mind, it will not recognise the Mother even when she is manifest before you. Follow your soul and not your mind, your soul that answers to the Truth, not your mind that leaps at appearances; trust the Divine Power and she will free the godlike elements in you and shape all into an expression of Divine Nature.”²⁸

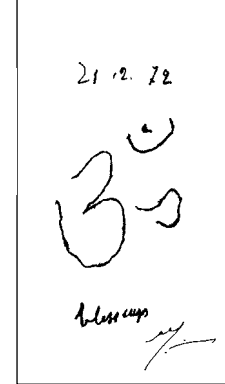
With these quotations we have skimmed the surface of all the many-sided complexities that are embodied in the Mahashakti, the Universal Mother. The Matrimandir, in wanting to be a symbol which invokes her in all her aspects and powers, becomes quite unique in the world. And if by a process of inner alchemy this vision can be brought alive in our consciousness so that we approach it with a ***“spiritual consciousness perennial and renovating”***, it will become the most powerful vibratory space to assist in conscious change.



The Individual MahaShakti

The Mother, the AdyaShakti, has as we said earlier, three ways of being: Transcendent, Universal and Individual. We have explored the middle term. It is equally essential to look at what Sri Aurobindo says of the third way of being - the Individual, She, who is the godhead hid in the heart of man - for this is most relevant to the aspiring seeker who can find Her in his heart if he is sincere enough in his surrender.

*"She was the godhead hid in the heart of man,
She was the climbing of his soul to God."* ²⁹



"The Mother not only governs all from above but she descends into this lesser triple universe. Impersonally, all things here, even the movements of the Ignorance, are herself in veiled power and her creations in diminished substance, her Nature-body and Nature-force, and they exist because, moved by the mysterious fiat of the Supreme to work out something that was there in the possibilities of the Infinite, she has consented to the great sacrifice and has put on like a mask the soul and forms of the Ignorance. But personally too she has stooped to descend here into the Darkness that she may lead it to the Light, into the Falsehood and Error that she may convert it to the Truth, into this Death that she may turn it to godlike Life, into this world-pain and its obstinate sorrow and suffering that she may end it in the transforming ecstasy of her sublime Ananda. In her deep and great love for her children she has consented to put on herself the cloak of obscurity, condescended to bear the attacks and torturing influences of the powers of the Darkness and the Falsehood, borne to pass through the portals of the birth that is a death, taken upon herself the pangs and sorrows and sufferings of the creation, since it seemed that thus alone could it be lifted to the Light and Joy and Truth and eternal Life. This is the great sacrifice called sometimes the sacrifice of the Purusha, but much more deeply the holocaust of Prakriti, the sacrifice of the Divine Mother." ³⁰

*"Our life is a holocaust of the Supreme.
The great World-Mother by her sacrifice
Has made her soul the body of our state;
Accepting sorrow and unconsciousness
Divinity's lapse from its own splendours wove
The many-patterned ground of all we are."* ³¹

"There is no method in this Yoga except to concentrate, preferably in the heart, and call the presence and power of the Mother to take up the being and by the workings of her force transform the consciousness;..." ³²

"Open rather your soul to her and be content to feel her with the psychic nature and see her with the psychic vision that alone make a straight response to the Truth. Then the Mother herself will enlighten by their psychic elements your mind and heart and life and physical consciousness and reveal to them too her ways and her nature." ³³

*"A divine Puissance then takes Nature's place
And pushes the movements of our body and mind;
Possessor of our passionate hopes and dreams,
The beloved despot of our thoughts and acts,
She streams into us with her unbound force,
Into mortal limbs the Immortal's rapture and power." ³⁴*

The Matrimandir

If we succeed in opening our souls to her then indeed can she take Nature's place and transfigure the movements of our body and mind. The Matrimandir has been created in matter as a symbol and therefore an aid to this process. When we look at the way the Peace Area is laid out we perceive a giant three dimensional Mandala - each thing with its psychological significance and the physical assistance it can give the seeker. To enter the Peace zone, one must first pass through the Park with its **"tall aspiring trees"**. Then one traverses the water body and the gardens, the significance of which will be explored in the future. Finally one arrives at the structure itself. Here one descends a little and may circle past the 12 meditation rooms, each representing a very essential quality for the aspiring being. By the time one enters the inner space, the silence has pervaded one's ascending being. Arriving at the Inner Chamber one steps within and one is indeed in the condition described in **Savitri** by Sri Aurobindo:

*"As if on concentration's marble feet,
Calling the mighty Mother of the worlds
To make this earthly tenement her house." ³⁵*

21.12.72

65

blessings
/

We conclude this issue of the Journal with one of Mother's **'Prayers and Meditations'** along with her explanation of it..

"O Consciousness, immobile and serene, Thou watchest at the confines of the world like a sphinx of eternity. And yet to some Thou confidest Thy secret. These can become Thy sovereign will which chooses without preference, executes without desire."

"This immobile Consciousness is the 'Mother of Dreams', - (Mother clarified later who the **Mother of Dreams** was; it is also the title of a poem of Sri Aurobindo: **"You may say that it is the creative consciousness, the Origin of the Universe, the Universal Mother, the Creative Power") - the sphinx of eternity who keeps vigil on the confines of the world like an enigma to be solved. This enigma is the problem of our life, the very raison d'être of the universe. The problem of our life is to realise the Divine or rather to become once again aware of the Divine who is the Universe, the origin, cause and goal of life.**

Those who find the secret of the sphinx of eternity become that active and creative Power."³⁶

Our prayer is that we who seek may indeed find the secret of the sphinx of eternity and thus become that active and creative Power.



The first issue of the journal touched a responsive chord and we are very encouraged both by the many letters of support as well as the financial contributions. As a result, the publication of this issue was assured. In the next journal we shall continue to look at the concept of the Universal Mother, with particular attention to her many Powers and Personalities and the many ways she has been worshipped throughout human history.

REFERENCES

1. SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 153.
2. MBCL, Vol. 8, p. 247.
3. MBCL, Vol. 13, p. 229.
4. SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 76.
5. MBCL, Vol. 8, p.1.
6. Mother's Agenda, Vol. 6, p. 140.
7. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 65.
8. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 19.
9. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 139.
10. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*.Book III p. 313.
11. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 20.
12. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*.Book X p. 661.
13. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 20.
14. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*.Book XI p. 695.
15. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 21.
16. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 23.
17. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 19-20.
18. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 62 & p. 64.
19. SABCL, Vol. 21, p. 752-53.
20. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 36.
21. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* Book III p. 314.
22. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 36.
23. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* Book III p. 314.
24. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 40-41.
25. Mother's Agenda Vol. 10, p. 313.
26. MBCL, Vol. 13, p. 214.
27. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 38.
28. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 40.
29. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* Book VII p.557.
30. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 24-25.
31. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* Book II p.99.
32. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 127.
33. SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 38-39.
34. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* Book VII p.530.
35. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* Book VII p.528.
36. MBCL, Vol. 4, p. 1.

Printed at All India Press - Pondicherry

It is through individual donations that the Matrimandir, along with its gardens, has been and is being built. A lot of work remains to be done and financial support is needed. If you wish to collaborate in this effort, and to receive this journal or more information on various aspects of the work, please write to MATRIMANDIR, AUROVILLE 605 101, Tamil Nadu, India.

Contributions to Matrimandir are exempt under sec. 80-G or 35(1)(ii) of the Indian Income Tax Act. Cheques, drafts or money orders may be made payable to "Matrimandir" and sent to the address given below.

MATRIMANDIR - AUROVILLE - 605101 - TAMIL NADU - INDIA