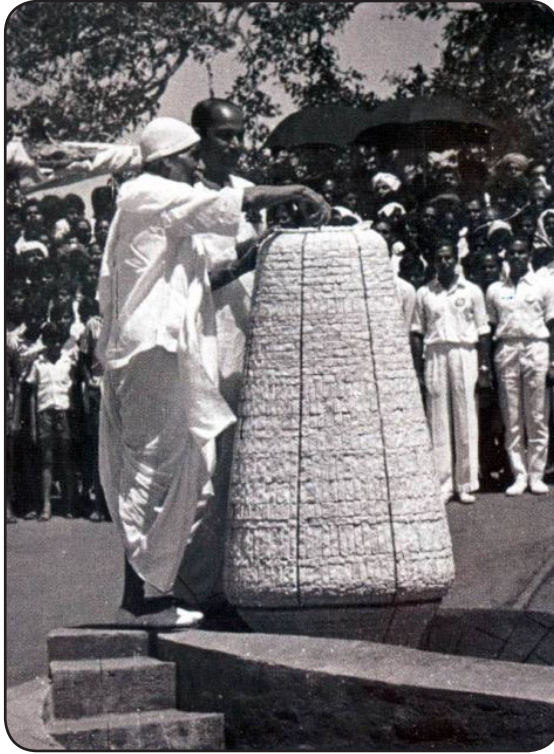


YEAR OF WONDERS



I

It was to be a year of wonders, 1968, and the Mother's New Year message was a radiant exhortation:

"Remain young, never stop striving towards perfection".

In her message for her ninetieth birthday on 21 February, she elaborated her idea of 'youth' and 'age':

"It is not the number of years you have lived that makes you grow old. You become old when you stop progressing...

be done, when you see the future like an attractive sun shining with the innumerable possibilities yet to be achieved, then you are young...young and rich with all the realisations of tomorrow".¹

The Future — the joy of youth and of perpetual buoyancy — and the movement towards Truth and Perfection were always in the Mother's consciousness. We

have seen how in one of her plays, *Towards the Future*, there is a clairvoyant leap into coming possibilities in human relationships; how in another, *The Great Secret*, seven men in a boat, miraculously saved when they are adrift on the sea, resolve to live integrally the new secret revealed to them; and how in a third, *The Ascent to the Truth*, a group of pilgrims go up a mountain till only the Aspirants reach the summit ready to live the New Life. Again, when asked to identify the central aim of the Ashram journal, *Mother India*, she had said: "Why and How to live for the Future, in the Future." The entire Auroville conception itself was a stupendous offering to the Future, and her letters and talks during 1967 often revealed her profound concern for the Future. Of Auroville she said that it would be a place where at last one would be able to think of the future only. Again: "Auroville is the shelter built for all those who want to hasten towards a future of Knowledge, Peace and Unity."²

...In 1968, what was going to be witnessed was the birth of Auroville, the City of Dawn; Auroville where the world's choicest youth could find a safe harbourage; Auroville where humanity could take bold steps to march towards Perfection. Since so much was at stake, awakened humanity should feel young enough to embark upon this massive adventure into the Future. Tamas, inertia, defeatism, lack of faith, failure of nerve would be fatal to the adventure. Hence the Mother's pressing call: *Remain young, never stop striving towards perfection.*

II



The inauguration of Auroville took place in the forenoon of 28 February 1968, a week after the Mother's birthday. Almost every Nation, big or small, and all the States of the Indian Union were represented. The inspiring idea behind the

dedication ceremony was that children from the different Nations and States should bring a handful of earth from their respective region and deposit it in the lotus-shaped urn at the centre of the Auroville site, to mix there and mingle with the others so as to symbolise the unity, solidarity and common destiny of the earth and its inhabitants. The Government of Pondicherry declared a public holiday to enable its citizens to participate in the unique festive ceremony of the birth of the City of Dawn. For several days previously, the Ashram and Pondicherry had become the centre of attraction, and thousands had come to witness the historic occasion. A newly made road led to the amphitheatre in the heart of Auroville where the vast concourse of humanity gathered on the 28th morning in exemplary silence in a mood of prayerful expectancy.

The dedication ceremony itself was memorably distinctive in its grand simplicity and symbolic sufficiency. There were no speeches, there was no visible presiding dignitary. But many were conscious of an invisible Presence that brooded with outspread protective wings over the mass of humanity as if nurturing their hope for the future. At last, at 10.30, the words of the Mother's message of welcome came with resonant vibration, transmitted from her room in the Ashram six miles away:

"Greetings from Auroville to all men of good will.

Are invited to Auroville all those who thirst for progress and aspire to a higher and truer life."³

Then as the Mother read the French version of the Auroville charter, two children of the Ashram, one carrying the Mother's flag, the other some earth from the Samadhi (the Mother had herself given them this sacred soil in a bowl) along with the charter in a stainless steel container, placed them at the bottom of the tall urn shaped like a lotus-bud. Following them, other children in groups of two, one holding the flag of the respective Nation or State blazoning its name, walked up to the urn carrying bowlfuls of the consecrated earth of their homelands, and deposited them likewise in the urn. As the children were advancing to the urn, the charter was read out in sixteen other languages: Tamil first, then Sanskrit, then English, followed by thirteen languages of the world in their alphabetical order: Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish and Tibetan. It was really the same song of human aspiration though coming in different notes, and the reiteration in the languages of the world was but the ringing peal of the coming global symphony. Here is the English text of the charter, a simple statement of the aims and hopes of Tomorrow's World:

- Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville one must be the willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.

- Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.
- 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.
- Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity.⁴

Throughout the ceremony, which took about seventy-five minutes, the words of the charter rumbled in the rhythms of one language or another along the unseen corridors of the collective consciousness of the silently participating congregation comprising tens of thousands of aspiring humanity. In all, 124 Nations of the world and 23 States of the Indian Union — comprising the big and the small, the far and the near, the affluent and the underdeveloped — took part in the dedication ceremony, and the all-important common denominator was the universal human concern and aspiration for the future. After the accredited children from these Nations and States had fulfilled their appointed roles, some of the soil of Auroville also was added to the mingled earth, and Nolini Kanta Gupta went up last and sealed the urn, thereby bringing the ceremony of inauguration to an auspicious close.

That hour of dedication was also one of the Hours of God, and the ceremony was a solemn splendour of affirmation, a great gesture of beckoning that showed the way to the approaching Dawn and the future Noons of Fulfilment. In that year of the crossroads of human history, the Mother's supreme act of faith in launching Auroville into the uncertain Future was in some measure also a means of shaping that future towards the ultimate realisation of the noblest of human aspirations: the reign of "God, Light, Freedom, Immortality", and the "flowering of a new race, the race of the Sons of God". Indeed, the birth of Auroville was like the coming of a beam of shining light to an otherwise bleak and murky world.

It was a splendid beginning, indeed, under the happiest auspices. The children of the world, the soil of the earth in which all lands became one, the Mother's benedictions — the conjunction of these betokened the birth of Auroville, the Dawn City. If Marx once gave the strident call "Proletariat of all Nations, unite!", the Aurovilian call may be phrased: "Children of all Nations, unite! You have nothing to lose except fear insecurity, inequality-and waste; and you have everything to gain!" Children the world over are endowed with the qualities of innocence, generosity, humour, plasticity, curiosity, adventurousness and mysticism — a Franciscan mysticism that burns away the dross of self-defeating egoism or *ahankāra* and soul-destroying hatred or *dveśa*. Didn't Christ say that one must be verily like a child to enter the Kingdom of Heaven? Certainly, one must be like a child to acquire and deserve the rights of citizenship in Auroville, the city that could one day house a planetary society governed and sustained by the True or Divine Consciousness.

III

The day after the dedication of Auroville was the third leap-year anniversary of the Supramental Manifestation — the Golden Day, the Day of the Lord. “Truth alone,” ran the Mother’s message, “can give to the world the power of receiving and manifesting the Divine’s Love”.⁵ There was the distribution of symbols in the evening, and for the rest the programme was similar to that on the 90th birthday eight days earlier: meditation before Sri Aurobindo’s Samadhi in the morning and Darshan from the Terrace in the evening. The entire period from 21 to 29 February was thus an extended festival for the Ashram, and the two Darshans were attended by over 5000 sadhaks, disciples and admirers. On 25 February, the New Age Association held a seminar on a subject given by the Mother: “What we expect from the Mother.” For a start the Mother herself was asked a series of questions, and pat came the answers:

“What is the right thing that we should expect from You?”

Everything.

What have You been expecting from us and from humanity in general for the accomplishment of Your Work upon earth?

Nothing.

From Your long experience of over sixty years, have You found that Your expectation from us and from humanity has been sufficiently fulfilled?

As I am expecting nothing I cannot answer this question.

Does the success of Your Work for us and for humanity depend in any way upon the fulfilment of Your expectation from us and from humanity?

Happily not”.

The real point of the questions and answers is that essentially the Mother symbolised Grace, and Grace could — and often did — act irrespective of our work, our aspiration, or even our cry for help. Grace is Grace, but Faith is important too; “faith is miracle, creator of miracles,” said the Mother. And one’s love for the Mother — for the Divine — should be pure of all selfish claims and desires for Grace to act without any interference or distortion.

References

1. *Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 12, p. 123
2. *ibid.*, Vol. 13, p. 198
3. *ibid.*, p. 45
4. *ibid.*, p. 199
5. *ibid.*, pp. 199-200
6. *ibid.*, Vol.13, p.210 (cf.202)