area currently being planted is very difficult terrain, full of pebbles, a very hard and dry soil. But using this technique it is now full of thousands of trees.

Sadhana Forest is also conducting research together with the University of Lausanne in Switzerland on oxalogenesis, which is a phenomenon in which trees take carbon from the air, and fix it into the ground as calcium carbonate, limestone. Even if you cut the tree and burn it, the carbon would stay in the ground. Aviram explains that is a very important discovery vis-a-vis global warming, Sadhana Forest in Auroville is now mainly planting four species of oxalogenic trees that are part of the Tropical Dry Forest indigenous to this area, as well as a few oxalogenic species that are indigenous to other parts of India, and will follow their growth and the soil composition for the next few years. There is also a master’s student volunteer doing research on oxalogenesis in Haiti, and soon there will be a Ph.D. student doing research on this as well.

Aviram explains that indigenous reforestation is not a profit-making venture, so all the funds for Sadhana Forest come from donations, mainly private. In terms of government money, Sadhana Forest got one grant a few years ago from the German government, through Auroville International Germany, to build the staff quarters and the training center. For the new project in Kenya, they have just received approval of a grant request for $50,000 from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to start the project. The project in Haiti is funded by two donors, one a French foundation and the other a French company that does processing of organic food. For Auroville, Sadhana Forest has depended mainly on private donations, which are routed through the Unity Fund. Aviram explains, “It has been a struggle all along with the money and it is still a big struggle. But we feel supported, and as we know we are doing our best, we hope that the Divine will support us. Until now it has been okay.”

For more information, contact: http://sadhanaforest.org

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**Chronicles**

**Weaving miracles**

by Larry Seidlitz

As explained in an article by Shyam Kumari that appeared previously in *Collaboration* (Winter/Spring 2005/2006), Maggi Lidchi-Grassi had a very special relationship with the Mother. The Mother had explained that when she was studying art in France, she had a close friend named Valentine about the same age as her. As Ms. Kumari put it:

> Their friendship was deep, so deep that when after her marriage Valentine had to leave for Egypt, she was so miserable to part from Mirra that she lost all taste for life. No wonder she left her body—soon afterwards (when only 19 years old)—at childbirth, a day before André was born to Mirra.

> When Maggi first came to the Ashram in 1960 and met the Mother, Maggi’s first words were, “I know you already.” The Mother later explained that Valentine had returned in her next birth as Maggi. It is interesting that while in France the Mother had painted a portrait of her friend Valentine and later presented it to Maggi (a copy is shown in the earlier story), accompanied with the words, “I loved you very much then and I love you even more now. You came back very quickly.”

> There is another very interesting aspect to Maggi’s relation with the Mother which the Mother explained in a letter: I have to tell you that my perceptions concerning you are becoming more and more precise—and that I am convinced that your vital is united to a charming little fairy, charming, smiling attractive, who likes to do pretty little miracles that give a special flavor to human life, quite dull in general. “Your presence is a joy and your collaboration is precious . . . And I too love you.”

> The Mother would perceive this fairy whenever Maggi would come into the room, and she used to call Maggi her “sweet fairy” or “good fairy” on cards and letters addressed to her. For many years, Maggi was a secretary for the Mother, and enjoyed a close and special personal relation with her.

**Udavi**

Maggi was married to the dynamic and capable Nata (Alberto Grassi), whose name was given to him by the Mother and means “He who has given himself to the Divine.” Nata was an engineer and had been in put in charge of all construction in Auroville. Together they founded the Udavi project in the village of Edyan-chavadi, which borders Auroville. Mother had named the project Udavi, which means “help,” because she wanted to help the people of this village who were among the poorest in the whole area. In the first days of Auroville, the Mother had arranged for a borewell to be dug for the village. Afterwards a store and medical dispensary were established. Later, the Udavi school was started for the children,
starting with a kindergarten, and then the addition of a new class each year. The children at the school were provided with three meals a day, a bath, freshly washed and ironed uniforms, and school supplies. The free progress teaching method advocated by the Mother was employed as far as possible. At first these projects were run on funds received from donors, but after some time it was decided to start a business to support these projects.

With Mother’s blessings, Nata started an incense making unit. Rolling the incense would provide the villagers with work, machines and electricity which were scarce or unavailable would not be needed, and with the help of friends in various countries, the incense could be exported. The profits from this successful business scheme were used to support the Udavi project and Auroville. Later Auroshikha Agarbathis became one of the biggest exporters of incense in India. Today the Udavi project and Auroshikha Agarbathis are under the auspices of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

**Quiet Healing Center**

The Mother used to take walks along a strip of land along the beach near Auroville, and feeling the special energy there, had named it “Quiet.” She told the owner of the plot, Gautam, a devotee, that she wanted that land to be reserved for a healing center. Separately, the Mother had told Maggi that she had seen in her vision a wonderful project in Auroville for which Maggi would be responsible for realizing, but did not reveal the details. It was only later that Maggi became involved in alternative healing.

Nata had been suffering from a long illness. In 1985, he had gone for a check-up to a hospital in Europe and was given a diuretic IV which landed him in the Intensive Care Unit, where he was treated coldly. Afterwards, returning to the Ashram, he was treated lovingly by Dr. Datta. Then, a few weeks before his passing that same year, he said to Maggi who was feeding him, “There ought to be a hospital of love like this.” Maggi was inspired and kept repeating, “Yes, there will be such a place, we will build it.” Knowing he had only a short time remaining, he patted her hand reminding her of his condition. The next day when he got up he made a few rough drawings of what would become the Quiet Healing Center, but that was as much as he could do.

By this time, Maggi had already become interested in homeopathy which had proven to be helpful for Nata. She was invited to a conference on spirituality in the US where she gave a paper on “the spiritual implications of homeopathy.” While there, she did further research on alternative therapies and visited various centers of healing. She followed this with further studies with Professor Masi in Italy and George Vithoulkas in Greece and other European countries. In January 1987, she arranged for the first alternative healing multi-disciplinary congress in Pondicherry and Auroville. It was on this occasion that the building of a new complementary healing center was announced.

Shortly after this, Gautam approached Maggi and said he had heard she was looking for a site on the seashore for “the hospital of love.” He offered to sell his plot, which he explained that the Mother had asked him to designate for this purpose, for the small sum that Maggi had raised for the healing center. In the beginning of 1997, exactly 10 years after it had been announced, the Quiet Healing was inaugurated.

Situated on seven acres of beautiful beachfront property, the Quiet Healing Center offers a wide range of natural treatments, courses, workshops, and accommodations. It is based on the understanding that we are spiritual beings seeking to express ourselves through our mental, emotional, and physical instruments. Its therapies “address the client on a deeper energetic level within a safe space of care, love and touch.” Here one can find treatments and courses in various types of massage, aquatic bodywork, shiatsu, acupuncture, physiotherapy, chiropractic therapy, homeopathy, bio-resonance therapy, sound healing, and other natural therapies. The accommodations provide for a restful, rejuvenating retreat from the stresses of life, with or without participations in the therapies, and the Quiet kitchen provides three natural, delicious vegetarian buffet style meals each day which are suited to both Western and Indian tastes. Further details are available at: http://quiethealingcenter.info.

**The author**

Maggi is also a prolific author who has written journal articles, short stories, poems, fables, children’s stories, two plays, and several novels. A collection of her short stories was published under the title *Jitendra the Protector* (1986). Her novels include *Earthman* (1967) and *The First Wife* (1981), which received favorable reviews. Her later novels *The Battle of Kurukshetra* (1987) and *The Legs of the Tortoise* (1990), are volumes 1 and 2 of Maggi’s novel on the Mahabharata which was later published by Random House in one volume as *Great Golden Sacrifice of the Mahabharata* (2011). These books tell the story of the great battle of the Mahabharata, largely through the perspective of Arjuna, and help make accessible the story of the great epic to modern Western readers. Her novel *Great Sir and the Heaven Lady* (1993) tells the story of John Kelly, an American infantryman who had visions of and was guided through the second world war by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Her book *The Light that Shone into the Dark Abyss* (1994) tells more broadly about the role of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in World War II. Maggi's fascination for both the wars of Kurukshetra and World War II are revealed vividly in an essay published recently in *Mother India* (June 2013), the Ashram’s primary literary journal. In the article, “Striking Parallels,” she lays out a number of interesting parallels between the two great battles, of their protagonists and antagonists, and how they both represented decisive turning points in the spiritual evolution of the human race.

We must also mention Maggi’s contributions to the Italian journal *Domani*, first as founder and always with her articles. *Domani* is the only magazine of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram dedicated to a specific nation and exists only in the Italian language.
**Domani** was started by Nata and Maggi in 1966 on cycle styled free sheets at request of the Mother, as no books in Italian existed at that time. In 1968 the Mother gave a message for the Italians: *Sopravvivere e Rinnovarsi* which was written in Italian by the Mother. The message is reproduced on the first page of each issue of *Domani* and it means “Survive and Renew.” It is clear that the Mother attached much importance to the magazine and to the Italian people for the Integral Yoga. In 1972, Sri Aurobindo’s birth centenary year, *Domani* was printed as a magazine for the first time. In 1977, it received a prize in India for its beautiful, high quality graphics. Most Italians who are connected to the Integral Yoga came to know about it through *Domani*. Many translations of Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s writings have been published in the magazine and each year the last issue is accompanied by a booklet of about 45 pages targeted on a particular theme based on translations of Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s writings.

### Harmony and Samata

In recent years, a project close to Maggi’s heart has been the widespread distribution of the homeopathic potentions of Harmony and Samata, which are based on the relics of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, respectively, for the purpose of effecting positive change in the collective consciousness. The idea for this project was inspired in part by homeopathic colleagues Peter Cappell and Harry Van Der Zee. In the journal *Homeopathic Links* (2008), Chappell had suggested the idea of finding a homeopathic remedy for humanity’s negativities—such as greed, insensitivity, repressed anger, and hard-hearted over-intellectuality—and that if given to a critical number of people, it might effect a change in the racial consciousness. At the same time as reading Chappell’s article, Maggi also stumbled upon an earlier article by Van der Zee (*Homeopathic Links*, 2004), who wrote that the success of one of Chappell’s remedies in treating AIDS suggested that “it is possible to include understanding and intention in a homeopathic remedy.” Putting these ideas together, it occurred to her that where better to find that understanding and intention to relieve humanity’s negativities than in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? She wondered “whether the subtle/spiritual/supramental energy that had been fixed in the cells of their bodies might not be releasable by the homeopathic process of potentization; and to wonder further what the effect might be on someone taking a potentization derived from such startling material.” (*Homeopathic Links*, summer 2010)

Maggi was in possession of some of the Mother’s hairs, which the Mother had given her with the words, “All of me is potentially in this” Maggi “hoped that something of Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s energies were working through the remedies."

The results were so consistently positive (and sometimes profound) that it appeared inescapable that something of Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s energies were working through the remedies.

...something of the Mother’s unutterable sweetness, compassion and love, as well as her indomitable courage and yogic force would transpire in a potentization.” So from these hairs, the remedy Harmony was prepared. Subsequently, some parings of Sri Aurobindo’s nails which had been lovingly preserved by his attendant were given for potentization to make the remedy which came to be called Samata (Sanskrit for equanimity), which was thought might actuate his Himalayan stillness and calm.

Over a period of several years, Maggi tested the remedies with several hundred people, primarily in Pondicherry and its surroundings, who took either one or the other or both the remedies. Maggi has collected the testimonies from many of them of their effects and published her findings in the *Homeopathic Links* journal (summer 2010). She admits that this was not done in a scientific way, for example, by using a control group, but said that the results were so consistently positive (and sometimes profound) that it appeared inescapable that something of Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s energies were working through the remedies. Most of these people were in good health, and reported changes mainly in their state of consciousness, but some people had various health problems such as hypertension, cancer pain, migraine headaches, and chronic depression.

She explained that in some ways the results of the two remedies were similar, for example, in helping people “not to get upset by circumstances that would normally be very disturbing, but each had its individual character.” She indicates that the keywords that kept coming up in the reported effects of “Harmony” were “calm, compassion, connectedness, and consciousness in dreams,” and that there were reports of experiencing strong states of love and kindness. For Samata, the term “stillness” was most frequently reported, along with such descriptions as “calm,” “serenity,” and “compassion.” While there are few detailed reports that have been published on the effects of Samata, a number of impressive findings on the beneficial health effects of Harmony have been described.

One of the “provers” for the Harmony remedy had had chronic pain and many health problems over a period of several years that led her to go to many doctors and alternative treatment providers, none of whom provided lasting relief. Her experience with “Harmony” was different, however. She said that her pain went away and did not come back. Further, she says it has changed her completely, and her partner verified that “she is now a transformed person full of joy.” She characterized this inner change by saying that “somewhere within myself there is no space for fear or dramas."
All that is over. All that I have to do and live from now onwards will be from another perspective."

Many others also found profound pain relief. One man who had been experiencing severe cancer pains found instant relief: “For the first time in years, my symptoms seemed to disappear almost completely and it was almost unbelievable... I feel a lot better physically than I have in recent years. At the psychological level Harmony has done wonders for me. I feel a sense of general well-being and a definite difference in the level of my spiritual consciousness.” Maggi added that this man continued to take Harmony daily for many months until his pain disappeared completely, and in fact, he became free of his cancer. Maggi stressed, however, that she was not claiming that Harmony was a cure for cancer.

Another man who was in the terminal stages of cancer found an alleviation of his pain, symptoms and agitation, and he succumbed to his cancer after several weeks without the need for morphine. Another woman with cancer pains said that “Miraculously, the pain went away as if Mother took it into her own hand.” Another woman suffering from Parkinson’s Disease found relief such that her sleep improved dramatically: “It is difficult for me to sleep and since taking Harmony I can sleep beautifully, four hours in one go, and this is like a miracle for me.” Another person, who had been having migraine headaches for the past five years, reported that she immediately got a migraine when she first took the remedy, but it subsided after about an hour and she “has not had a migraine since.”

Information on Harmony and Samata how to procure them can be obtained by emailing: harmonysamata@gmail.com

**The Stillness Retreat Center**

The “Stillness Project” is a planned “residential retreat center based on the power of stillness, on the power of symbol, and on the inspirational power of art.” Maggi and her companion Surekshita were drawn out of their home near the Ashram by the noise pollution, and obtained a six acre plot of land near Auroville in a very quiet area where they built a house and established a splendid garden. A friend had visited and suggested that what was needed is a retreat center with Mother’s atmosphere. Maggi agreed. She sometimes went to other meditation retreats centers, but she always had felt that the Mother’s atmosphere was missing. And while there is already the incomparable Matrimandir in Auroville, she explains that you can’t go there for 10 days or two weeks to stay and sleep and eat in that silent atmosphere. She feels such a place is needed “because we all talk too much and plan too much without stepping back into our ‘stillness,’ that area where all the creativity takes birth.”

The stillness project will consist of a main building and several ancillary buildings. The main building will have a central space for collective meditation, and 12 rooms for individual meditations. Each of the 12 rooms will be an art installation for evoking one of the Universal Mother’s 12 powers of the advent of the new cycle of evolution. Also, these individual meditation rooms will have glass walls and ceilings which will create an expansive atmosphere in which each one will be in connection with others and the building as a whole, but will still allow silence and solitude. The ancillary buildings will include a reception, dining room, kitchen, laundry-ironing-wardrobe, staff room, watchman’s room, and a water tank.

A foundation has been established for collecting funds for the project—the Growing Towards Foundation—and there is a beautiful website with numerous artistic drawings and plans, as well as textual information about the proposed project (http://www.stillness-for-growingtowards.net). The foundation applied to the government of India for permission to receive funds for the project, and is awaiting a positive response.

Maggi is now in her 80s, but she is still weaving miracles with her writing and her various other projects designed to bring down the higher spiritual consciousness into the material world and her fellow human beings. While her consciousness is uplifted towards the Divine, her feet remain planted firmly on the ground, and her fingers tirelessly working to implant that higher consciousness here. We are sincerely appreciative of her remarkable accomplishments and life-long efforts.