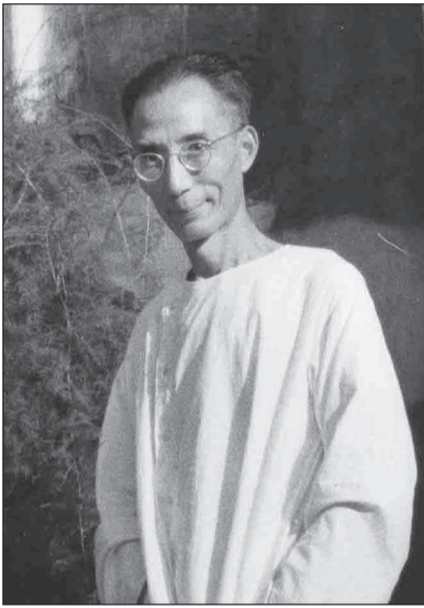


Remembering Hu Hsu

On the occasion of the centenary year and 101st birth anniversary of Hu Hsu, the Chinese disciple of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, a group of young people from Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram organized an exhibition of his paintings, calligraphy, photographs and collected works in the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture.

Hu Hsu (pronounce *Hu Shu*) or Hsu Fan-cheng as he is known today, was born in China a hundred years ago, on October 26, 1909. After a brief stint in Germany where he studied Fine Art and Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg, and where he translated works of the German philosopher Nietzsche into Chinese, he first came to India to live in Santiniketan where he studied Sanskrit and taught the history of Chinese Buddhism. In 1951, he settled down in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram where he painted in the classical Chinese style, practiced calligraphy and translated the major writings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother into Chinese. These books were subsequently printed and published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. He also wrote a few original books *Confucianism* and *Chinese Words*. He dedicated each book "To THE DIVINE MOTHER to WHOM the writer remains in permanent gratitude as it is only with HER boundless Compassion and Grace that this book has come into being."



Hu Hsu

For an exhibition of his paintings in the Ashram, The Mother commented: "Here are the paintings of a scholar who is at once an artist and a yogi..." In a conversation of October 30, 1962, Mother praised Hu Hsu as being a genius who was even coining new Chinese words to better translate Sri Aurobindo. She spoke highly of his translations and mentioned one of his letters in which he wrote "If you want to experience Taoism, come to

live in the Ashram, you will have the REALISATION of Lao-Tseu's philosophy". Mother added: "This man is a sage".

On the day of the foundation ceremony of Auroville, the Auroville Charter was also read out in Chinese, presumably by Hu Hsu, who most probably also translated the Auroville Charter into Chinese. The earth from both the Republic of China (Taiwan) and from the People's Republic of China (Mainland) was poured in the urn by Ashram youth. Hu Hsu also submitted an article to Nan Yang Siang Pau, a newspaper in Singapore, in which he introduced the project of Auroville to the Chinese-speaking world and proposed that the governments of Malaysia and Singapore consider contributing to the building of a pavilion in Auroville's International Zone where the culture and art achievements of the Chinese civilization could be represented.

In 1978, a few years after Mother had left her body, Hu Hsu returned to China. The Cultural Revolution was over. He went to live in Beijing and became a faculty member of the Institute of World Religions, a department of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Here he was known as one of the foremost scholars on Indian spirituality. Often parallels were drawn with the legendary Hsüan-tsang, the Chinese Buddhist monk who traveled to India in the 7th century, lived at Nalanda where he learned and translated the Buddhist sutras, and returned to



'Old Plum'.

China with the sacred knowledge of India. Like him, Hu Hsu too returned to China with new sacred knowledge – the ancient pre-Buddhist spiritual knowledge of the Upanishads and the Gita, as also the contemporary spiritual knowledge contained in Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's writings. Hu Hsu became known as Hsu Fan-cheng – 'the one purified by the realization of the Brahman consciousness'.

Today there is a growing interest in Hu Hsu and, through him, in Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's philosophy and vision. His collected works were published in Mainland China in 2006 under the title *Collected Works of Hsu Fan-cheng*. They have been well-received with universities in China beginning courses in Sri Aurobindo philosophy, and students studying Integral Yoga philosophy as part of their doctoral thesis, even though Hu Hsu wrote in classical Chinese which is not easily accessible.

There is also a small but growing number of Chinese speaking seekers who have visited the Ashram and Auroville, some settling down, others spending a few months and hoping to return one

day. In September, a journalist from Taiwan based in New Delhi visited Auroville and made a documentary on Hu Hsu and on Auroville in Mandarin Chinese, so that people in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore who speak Chinese will also be able to follow it. The documentary is scheduled to be released by the end of this year.

The growing interest of the Chinese-speaking world can also be seen in Auroville, which now has three residents of Taiwan. Some of Hu Hsu's translations, printed in Pondicherry with The Mother's blessings and lying unused for many years for want of Chinese readers, are now selling in the Visitors Centre of Auroville. "Recent news from China about plans to form a centre to study and further translate Sri Aurobindo into Chinese gives us the feeling," write the organizers of the Auroville exhibition, "that Mother's message given 55 years ago to the then newly-created Sri Aurobindo Philosophical Circle of Hong Kong is now starting to be realized: *Let the eternal Light dawn on the eastern horizon.*"

Based on information provided by Amanda, Eric and Devdip

PEACE TABLES

Fundraising for the fourth Peace Table begins

The late George Nakashima had a dream that "sacred peace tables" made of wood fashioned from two 300-year-old Eastern black walnut trees be placed in each of the seven continents as symbols of man's quest for peace.

George Katsutoshi Nakashima (May 24, 1905 – June 15, 1990) was a Japanese-American woodworker, architect, and furniture-maker, one of the leading innovators of 20th century furniture design and a father of the American craft movement. His work won him many awards and honours.

In 1984, he had the opportunity to purchase a pair of the largest and finest walnut logs he had ever seen. He decided to use the immense planks to their fullest potential. He dreamt that if Altars for Peace were made from them and placed in each con-

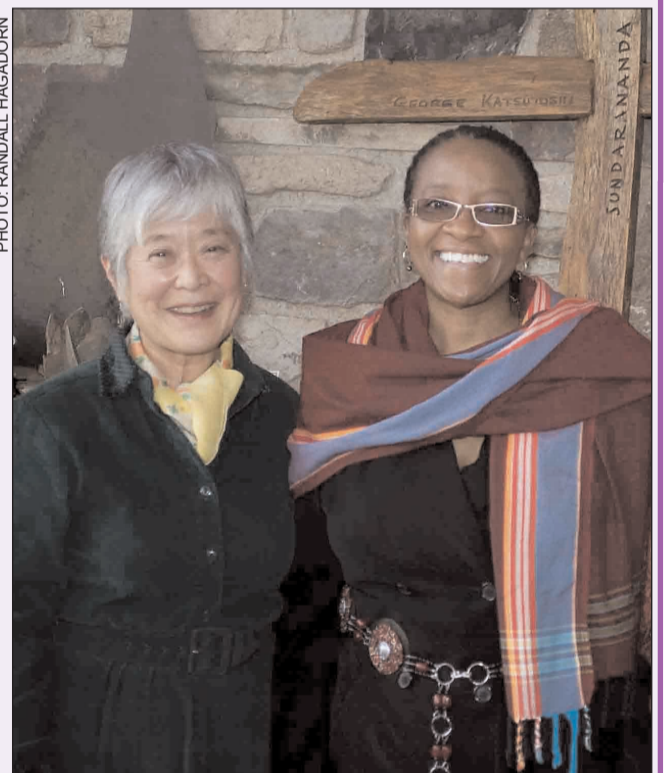
continent of the world as centres for meditation, prayer and activities for peace, the world would be a better place.

Three of these tables have now been installed. The Peace Table for North America was consecrated as an altar in the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York City in 1986. The second table, built to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations in 1995, was made from the same monumental black walnut tree as the first and blessed at the same Cathedral. After serving as a unifying presence at The Hague Appeal for Peace in May of 1999, it came to reside as the Peace Table for Europe in the newly-renovated Russian Academy of Art in Moscow in 2001.

The Peace Table for Asia was placed in Auroville on 29 February 1996. Auroville held a special meaning for Nakashima as he was a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. He served them as the on-site architect of the Golconde building in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. This Peace Table is presently housed in the Unity Pavilion in the International Zone. Its ultimate destination is the Hall of Peace, a large Hall connected to the Unity Pavilion, designed by architects Piero and Gloria, which is now under construction.

The Nakashima Foundation for Peace has now started fund-raising for designing, building and shipping the Peace Table for Africa to the still unconstructed Desmond Tutu Peace Centre in Cape Town, South Africa, where it will be placed in the Peace Room. On October 16, Mira Nakashima-Yarnall, daughter of Georges

PHOTO: RANDALL HAGADORN



Mira Nakashima-Yarnall and Dr Naomi Tutu launching the Peace Table for Africa project

Nakashima, and Dr. Naomi Tutu, daughter of South African anti-apartheid activist Archbishop Desmond Tutu, met at Nakashima's home near New Hope, Pennsylvania to launch the project.

Carel

Contributions for the Peace Table for Africa can be made at www.nakashimafoundation.org. For more information regarding the completion of the Hall of Peace in Auroville, please contact unity@auroville.org



The Peace Table for Asia in Auroville at its temporary location

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