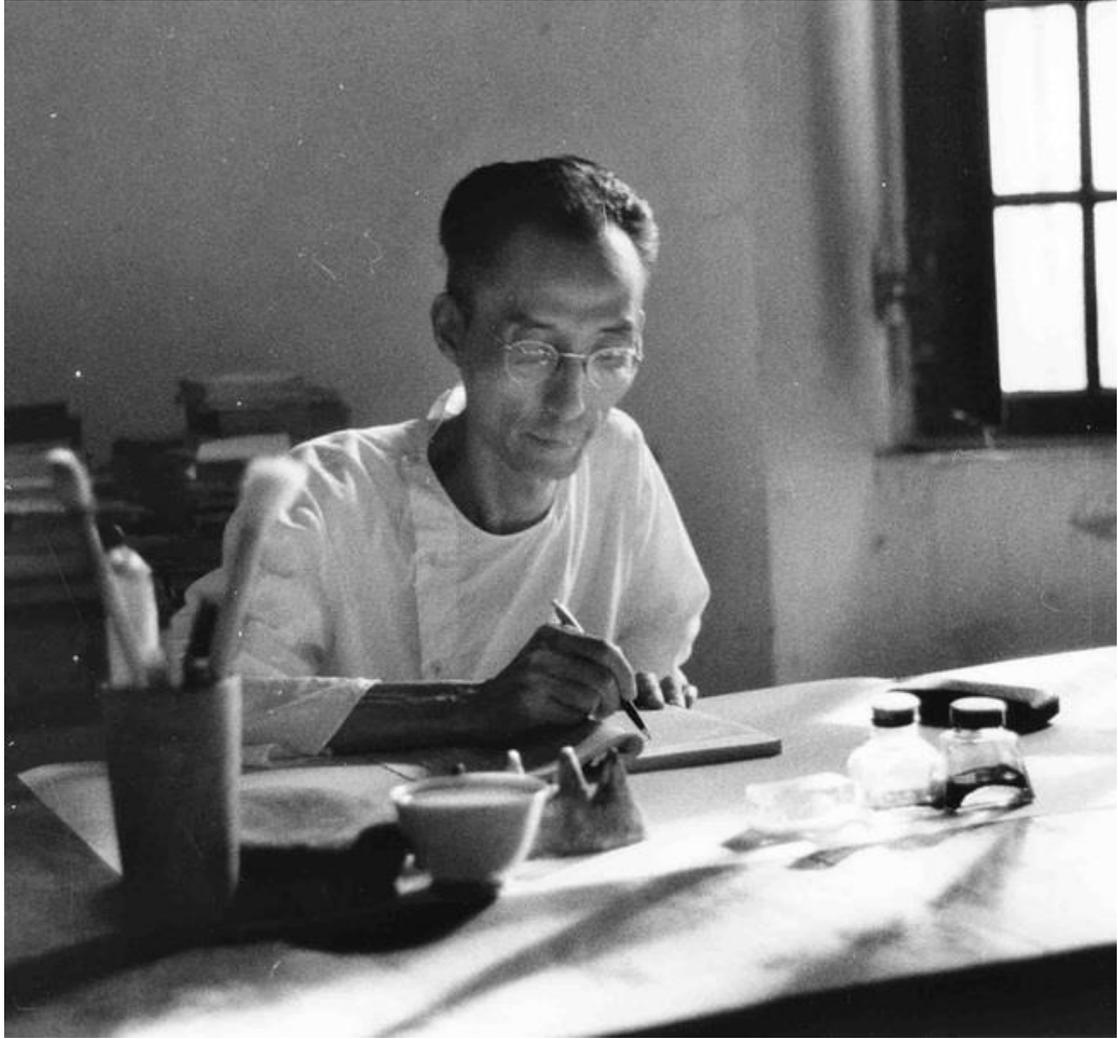


忆念徐梵澄



徐琥在室利·阿罗频多修道院时的工作状态

2017年9月，时任中国驻印度大使罗照辉先生访问了黎明之城和[室利·阿罗频多修道院\(Sri Aurobindo Ashram\)](#)。此次访问后不久，罗照辉大使在新德里举行的中华人民共和国成立68周年庆典上致辞时纪念徐梵澄先生。

“上周，我访问了本地治里。这是一个我梦寐以求想要去的地方。我的老师徐梵澄教授从1945年至1978年在当地的室利·阿罗频多修道院生活了33年。他是中国最著名的学者之一，曾把《奥义书》、《薄伽梵歌》和《沙恭达罗》等作品从梵文翻译成中文。他还向中国译介了室利·阿罗频多。室利·阿罗频多修道院还保存着徐教授在此期间创作的300多幅画作。看着他留下来的这些文化遗产，我们的眼里满含着泪水。他是中印两国之间的一座桥梁……在中印双边交往的历史上，有成千上万像徐教授这样的知名人士，包括玄奘、法显、菩提达摩和泰戈尔。我们决不能忘记他们的贡献和遗产……站在这些巨人的肩膀上，今天我们应该做得更多……我们应该翻旧页，开新篇……”

徐琥²于1909年10月26日出生在中国湖南省长沙市的一个富裕家庭。得益于他的祖辈徐将军，他们一家人很受尊重。徐氏家族成功地经营着丝绸生意。在徐琥上小学时，年轻的毛泽东是他的历史老师。徐琥住在家里时，从来不必和金钱打交道。后来，当他第一次得到一笔钱时，他向修道院的一位朋友尚塔(Shanta)吐露说，他感到很困窘，不知道该拿这些钱怎么办。

徐琥接受了通透的文学和艺术经典教育，因为徐家人认为这些是必修的基础课。著名作家和文学家鲁迅先生——他被认为是现代中国文学的创始人——成了徐琥的朋友和导师。徐琥在著名的广东

¹ 黎明之城(Auroville): 又名曙光之城, 曙光村, 地球村。请点击[这里](#)阅读和下载黎明之城中英文简介。

² 本文[英文版](#)刊登在《今日黎明之城》(Auroville Today)第342期, 2018年1月出版。徐梵澄(1909—2000), 原名琥, 印度本地治理室利·阿罗频多修道院的人都叫他 Hu Hsu, 后以“梵澄”为笔名, 并以此闻世。

中山大学学习历史，并在鲁迅先生的支持下获得了奖学金，于 1929 年至 1932 年间在德国著名的海德堡大学学习艺术和哲学。他的第一部主要作品是翻译尼采的《苏鲁支语录》。

我们对徐琥在中日战争的困难时期在中国的行踪不太了解。但在 1945 年中日战争刚一结束，他就决定西行，前往印度。他定居在圣迪尼克坦的维斯瓦·巴拉蒂大学进一步学习梵语³，并在泰戈尔和谭云山于 1937 年共同创办的中国文化研究中心讲授中国佛教史。1939 年，谭云山来访室利·阿罗频多修道院，见到了母亲⁴，并参加了室利·阿罗频多的达显⁵。谭云山写道：“……中国曾被一位伟大的印度人的灵性教导所征服；同样，她将来也会被另一位伟大的印度人征服——他就是室利·阿罗频多——为当今世界带来光明、驱逐黑暗的大瑜伽士。”很可能徐琥是在那里第一次听说了室利·阿罗频多。

在本地治里

1951 年，徐琥来到本地治里。在到达后不久，他写了一首诗《圣慈赐一花供之盛开》以抒发他初来这里的一些经历：

居南天竺无何事，我有一花供圣人。

花开花好花能圣，圣自无言花自春。

弹指流光物外新，千秋圣学未为陈。

此花此叶当前意，此是灵山悟道因。

³ 他后来将古印度著名诗人迦梨陀婆(Kalidasa)的一些诗作从梵文翻译成中文。

⁴ 请点击[这里](#)阅读母亲(The Mother)简介。

⁵ 达显(darshan)是梵文，字面意思是注视或看到，因见到神或圣人，被其“注视”而引发心灵的感受和成长。在室利·阿罗频多修道院的“达显日”，许多人前来接受室利·阿罗频多和母亲的“注视”。



徐梵澄画作

母亲看出了徐琥的潜力——他是一位精通多种语言的学者，并且还发愿将室利·阿罗频多和母亲的作品译成中文。最终，他被安排住在奥菲利娅(Orphelia)别墅。这是位于本地治里法国区杜马斯(Dumas)街的一栋大楼，带有殖民时期建筑风格，有一个大花园，就在如今的修道院疗养所旁边。徐琥非常努力，每天工作十四小时，翻译手稿和毛笔画作很快就堆积起来。母亲从日本带回来了一些书法用材，她拿出了一些给徐琥，好让他可以继续绘画。1967年在修道院展览厅展出他的画作时，母亲写了一段非常特别的介绍：“这些画作出自一位学者，同时也是艺术家和瑜伽士之手。我祝福此次展出。”

在1962年10月30日的一次谈话中⁶，母亲称赞他是一位天才。实际上，为了更好地翻译室利·阿罗频多的作品，徐琥创造了新的中文词汇。母亲盛赞徐琥的翻译，并提到他在写给一位朋友的

⁶ 详细内容请阅读《母亲的议事录》(The Mother's Agenda)第3卷第392-393页(英文版1982年第一版)。

信中说，“如果你想要体验‘道’为何物，来修道院住住，你将会体验到老子哲学的实践版。”母亲补充说：“这个人是一位圣人。”

修道院学校华文部

1954年，南德拉尔·帕特尔(Nandlal Patel)刚刚将其业务从印度本地治里转到香港。在香港，他致力于成立“室利·阿罗频多哲学学会(Sri Aurobindo Philosophical Circle of Hong Kong)”。母亲为其赠言：“让永恒之光在东方的地平线上升起。”

在香港期间，南德拉尔收到负责修道院档案馆的嘉言醍莱(Jayantilal)的一封信。信中告诉他，母亲让他买一台中文印刷机并将其运到本地治里。母亲还补充说，因为徐琥自己不能做印刷工作，因此还需要为他招募一名排字工人。南德拉尔在报纸上刊登了一则广告，寻找一位愿意前往印度的年轻助手。一共有17人应聘，母亲从中选择了一位姓高⁷的年轻人。据南德拉尔·帕特尔回忆，

徐琥刚写信给他“这是神圣者的工作”。小高已经准备好了，没有问普通人会问起的问题……租了一栋房子给徐琥和小高住。在夜里，徐琥会起身检查小高睡得好不好，像对待自己的孩子一样关心他。

就这样，在母亲的祝福下，室利·阿罗频多国际教育中心华文部诞生了。徐琥在28年间独自一人翻译了20本书，包括《神圣人生论》、《瑜伽论》、《社会进化论》、《奥义书》、《教育论》等。此外，他还用英文撰写了阐述儒学真义的《孔学古微》(Confucianism)，以及介绍汉字起源与涵义的《小学菁华》(Chinese Words)等作品。徐先生真不愧是罕见的精通中印文化和灵性知识的大师级人物！他在出版的书中都会写上“...将此书献给作者永远感恩的神圣母亲。这本书因她的无限恩慈才得以面世。”

⁷ 译者注：英文名叫 Kau Tam Sing，查不到中文名。

在修道院：徐琥是一位良师益友

在位于杜马斯街的家里，徐琥经常会欢迎他的朋友们来访。他也会拜访邻居。昂怡(Ange)和彼得·斯泰格尔(Peter Steiger)记得徐琥待人亲切友善，德语讲得很好，似乎比他的英语好得多！有一次，他跟彼得分享了他的呼吸法：吸气，吸入你想要的；呼气，呼出你不想要的！

当时年仅4岁的昂怡非常喜欢徐琥。她现在还动情地回忆起当时的一些细节：邻居家的孩子们跑进他的书房，他会向孩子们展示他的许多画笔和其他绘画材料。徐琥工作起来不知疲倦，但孩子们的“造访”似乎从来没有让他生气过。修道院的几个孩子还在他的指导下学习中国画。

徐琥喜欢下围棋。包括罗伊(Roy)在内的几位同好每周都会聚在他家里下围棋。罗伊现在住在黎明之城，如今的他依然下着围棋。

徐琥还经常步行和骑自行车。每个星期天他都会约上皮埃尔·勒格朗德(Pierre Legrand)或者彼得。他会通过掷棍占卜来决定他们是骑自行车还是步行，以及去往哪个方向。当时的本地治理是步行者和骑行者的天堂。他们会来到黎明之城或者宏益社区(Utility)附近的山谷。有一次长途步行后，他解释了如何恢复能量：“……将意识集中在脚上，或者注视翠绿的稻田。”

西比尔·哈比利(Sybille Habli)在她的著作《旅印30年》(30 Years in India)一书中写道：

“他瘦高个儿，但很结实。我们时常看见他穿着印度白长衫，骑着自行车，戴着绿色的护眼帽……有一年，徐琥邀请我们和他一起过春节。我们来到他家——这是一栋宽敞的殖民风格建筑——看见他坐在一张两米长的桌子前，桌上压着一块黑色的玻璃。我们送给他一篮子水果，并祝福他新春快乐。他许诺给我作画，并当即在我们眼前魔法般地在一张大纸上画了竹子。我屏住呼吸，目光紧随着他的大毛笔移动：一笔画出竹茎；画一条小对角曲线，竹节点有了；再垂直画一笔，竹子在长高；再画上一条细线、点上几点，就出现了4片狭长的尖竹叶。

我们静静地看着他轻盈地、胸有成竹地挥动着画笔，感受着他完美的绘画技艺。

徐琥带我们来到两个书柜面前，这里收藏了许多单本，内容涵盖了整个中国历史。他指着一本书说：‘这本书的正版目前仅存三本。这是其中之一，另外两本在我的祖国。’

最后，徐琥在留声机上播放爱国主题的进行曲，我们三人的心头不由得浮上一阵忧伤。这次见面令人难以忘怀，对我来说，它开启了我们之间一段持久的友谊。

如今，这些有关中国历史的珍本依然珍藏在修道院图书馆的一个书柜里。”

黎明之城

在黎明之城创建仪式当天⁸，以黎明之城的四种语言——法语、泰米尔语、英语、梵语——宣读了[《黎明之城约章》\(Auroville Charter\)](#)，之后宣读的是包括中文和阿拉伯语在内的其他语种版本。徐琥翻译了《黎明之城约章》，一位在马德拉斯⁹开诊所的中国牙医的儿子宣读了中文版。来自中华民国（台湾）和中华人民共和国（大陆）的泥土被装入圣母殿¹⁰花园圆形广场的莲花形瓮中（修道院青年 Kanu Dey 和 Vimala Sandalingam 代表台湾，Bokul Chakravarty 和 Hema Singh 代表中国大陆）。

在新加坡《南洋商报》上刊登的一篇文章中，徐琥向中文读者介绍了黎明之城项目，谈到建造“……一个能代表大中华文明的文化艺术成就的场馆”，并邀请中文学者和艺术家参与共同建设。

⁸ 黎明之城创建于 1968 年 2 月 28 日。

⁹ 现在的“钦奈(Chennai)”。

¹⁰ 圣母殿(Matrimandir)，母亲称其为“宇宙母亲的殿堂”，“心灵的殿堂”，游客俗称其为“大金球”、“黄金球”。

1973年11月17日

罗伊回忆起母亲离世当晚发生的事：“[徐琥]是一个非常特别的人。有一次，他告诉我他能看出一个人是不是将死之人。我说，‘噢，这很有意思！’他说，唉，其实没什么意思，因为当日本入侵中国时，他目光所及的每个地方看到的都是将死之人。

我曾经跟他一起下围棋。在1973年11月17日，围棋下到一半时，他站起来说，‘咱们别下棋了。’我看了看时钟——刚好是晚上7点25分（母亲离世时刻）。他说，‘要是她能活到百岁就好了！’”

返回中国

1978年文化大革命结束后，徐琥决定回到祖国。一位来自香港的年轻人邵先生(Ramana)给他安排了机票并与他同行。他先到德里办理中国护照——因为他是在1949年中华人民共和国成立之前来到印度的。他在室利·阿罗频多修道院德里分院呆了一段时间。在那里，他和塔拉·乔哈尔(Tara Jauhar)谈了很长时间并为她作了两幅画。她回忆道，‘他和我父亲¹¹谈了很久。我记得他们俩都很动情。之后，他离开了我父亲的房间，我帮他行李搬到出租车上，他随后坐车前往机场去乘坐飞往中国的航班。’”

回到中国后，他加入了著名的中国社会科学院下属的世界宗教研究所。他依然保持着修道院时的生活方式——安静地独处，专注于内心的追求。他继续研究、写作和绘画，并向他的学生们和其他学者分享他的丰富知识和经验。不久，他成为了公认的中国研究印度文化和灵性知识的一位大学者。

他的同事们发现徐琥和玄奘之间有着惊人的相似之处：玄奘在公元7世纪西行前往印度，住在那烂陀寺学习和翻译原始佛经，并带着西方（印度）的神圣知识返回中国。徐琥的人生轨迹与此惊人地相似。他的贡献特别重要——因为他翻译了新的神圣知识并将其

¹¹室利·阿罗频多修道院德里分院创建人苏伦德拉·纳特·乔哈尔(Surendra Nath Jauhar)。

带回中国——他译介了蕴藏在《奥义书》和《薄伽梵歌》中的佛陀诞生之前的古印度灵性知识，还有室利·阿罗频多和母亲著作中蕴含的当代灵性知识。回国后，徐琥逐渐以其笔名徐梵澄被人熟知——“梵澄”者，达到“梵天”意识境界而得以净化之人也！

2000年3月6日，徐梵澄与世长辞。

新局面

但他的故事并未结束。虽然徐梵澄先生的翻译作品在20世纪70年代的中国少有人问津，但今天越来越多的人在关注他的作品，并且由此关注室利·阿罗频多和母亲的哲学和远见。2006年，他在北京的学生和同事推出了《徐梵澄文集》，读者们的反响非常积极，一些大学开设了室利·阿罗频多哲学课程，一些学生在研究他的作品，甚至将综合瑜伽作为其博士论文课题进行研究。目前正在探讨在中国开设第一个室利·阿罗频多和母亲作品研究中心。越来越多的中文读者前来参观室利·阿罗频多修道院和黎明之城，其中一些人甚至选择了在这里定居。

我们只是希望并祈祷55年前母亲传递的讯息在我们眼前、在我们这个时代开始显现：

“让永恒之光在东方的地平线上升起。”

本文英文作者：

埃里克·艾维尔(Eric Avril)和达明远(Devdip Ganguli)

编者注:

您可以登陆黎明之城电台网站(www.aurovillerradio.org)在线听读或下载徐梵澄先生诞辰 100 周年之际在黎明之城举行徐梵澄先生书画展期间的访谈([In Memory of Hu Hsu](#))。

您可以登陆 Auro E-books 网站(www.auro-ebooks.com)的[中文书籍网页](#)免费下载徐梵澄先生部分作品的电子书阅读。当代编译的有关室利·阿罗频多、母亲和黎明之城的部分中文书籍也将陆续在此出版。

室利·阿罗频多修道院网站: www.sriaurobindoashram.org

*您可以登录室利·阿罗频多修道院在线图书馆(<http://library.sriaurobindoashram.org>)

下载室利·阿罗频多和母亲的作品全集(英文版 PDF)。

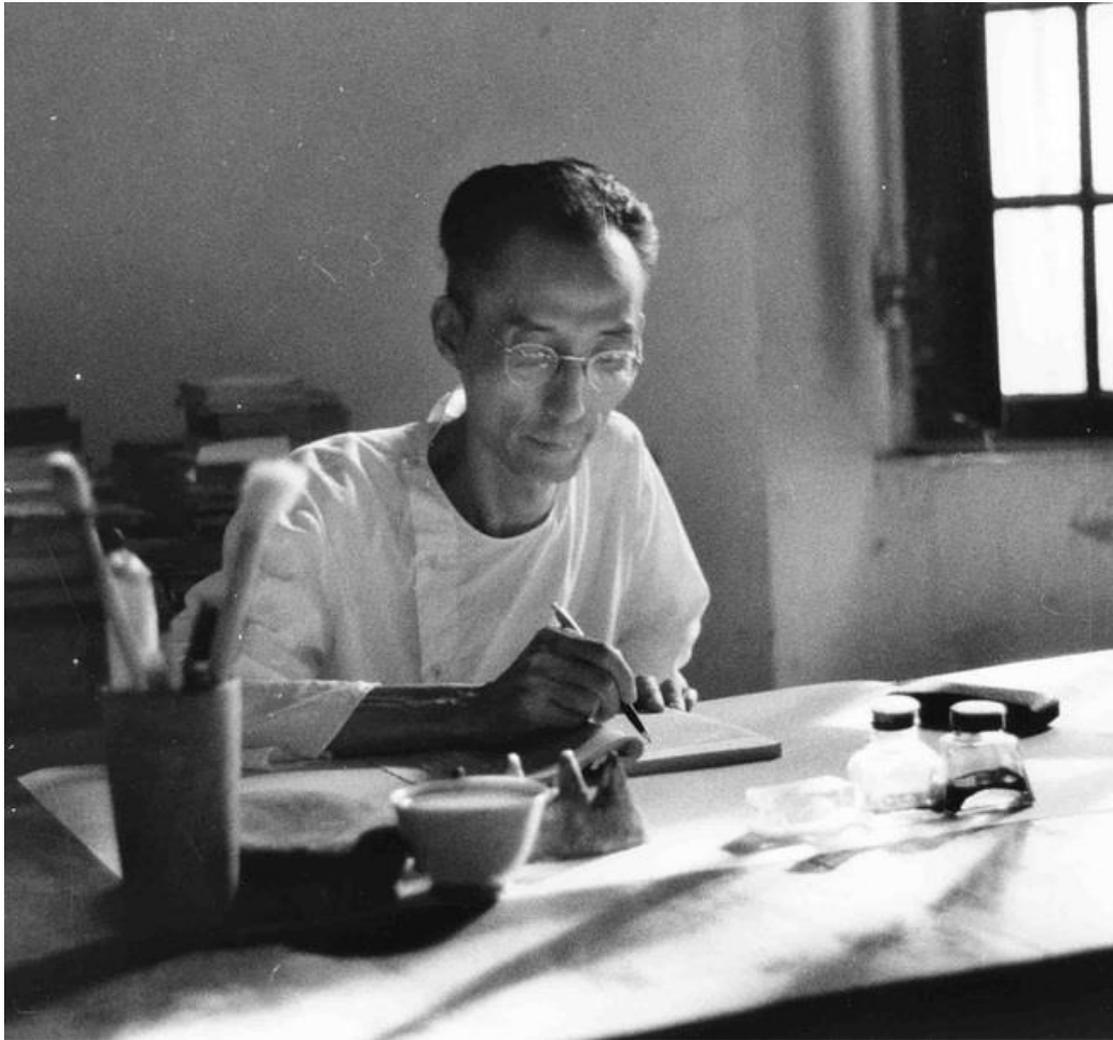
*您可以在黎明之城图书馆阅读室利·阿罗频多和母亲的作品全集; 或者在室利·阿罗频多修道院 SABDA 书店购买室利·阿罗频多和母亲的作品全集和主题专集。有英语、法语等多种语言。

*徐梵澄先生翻译了室利·阿罗频多和母亲的主要著作, 并用英文介绍中文和中国文化, 请阅读孙波先生编写的《徐梵澄文集》。

The Incarnate Word: <https://incarnateword.in>

*您可以查阅室利·阿罗频多和母亲的作品内容。

Remembering Hu Hsu¹²



Hu Hsu at work in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram

In September 2017, the Chinese Ambassador to India Mr. Luo Zhaohui visited Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Addressing a gathering at the 68th anniversary celebrations of the People's Republic of China at New Delhi soon after his visits, Ambassador Zhaohui remembered Hu Hsu.

¹² It was published in *Auroville Today* in January 2018 (Issue No: 342). You can read the article online by clicking on the hyperlink.

“Last week, I visited Pondicherry. It is one of my dreaming places. One of my teachers, Professor Xu Fancheng lived in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram from 1945 to 1978. He was one of the most famous Chinese scholars, translating the Upanisad, Bhagawad Gita, and Shakuntala from Sanskrit to Chinese. He also introduced Sri Aurobindo to China. More than 300 paintings of Professor Xu were kept in Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Looking at his legacies, our eyes were full of tears. He was one of the bridges between our two countries ... In the history of bilateral engagement, there have been thousands of prominent persons like Professor Xu, including Xuanzang, Faxian, Bodhidharma and Tagore. We should never forget their contribution and legacies ... Standing on their shoulders, we should do more today....We should turn the old page and start a new chapter...”

Hu Hsu (pronounced Hu Shu) was born on 26th October, 1909, into a wealthy family in Changsha in the southern province of Hunan. His family was respected thanks to one of his ancestors, General Hsu. The Hsu family was successfully engaged in the business of silk. At elementary school, a young Mao Tse-tung was his history teacher. While he lived in the family house, Hu Hsu never had to handle money. Later, when he was given some money for the first time, he confided to Shanta, a friend in the Ashram, that he felt embarrassed and didn't know how to deal with it.

A thorough classical education in literature and the arts was considered a necessary basis in his family. Lu Hsun, the noted writer and literary reformist, considered to be the founder of modern Chinese literature, became his friend and mentor. Hu Hsu studied History in the noted Sun Yat-sen University in Guangdong and, thanks to Lu Hsun's support, obtained a scholarship to study Fine Art and Philosophy in the prestigious University of

Heidelberg in Germany from 1929 to 1932. His first major work was a translation of Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

During the troubled days of the Sino-Japanese war, we do not know much about his whereabouts in China, but in 1945, just after the war ended, he decided to head towards the West, that is, towards India. He settled in Visva Bharati in Santiniketan to further his study of Sanskrit (he would go on to translate some works of the great classical poet Kalidasa from Sanskrit into Chinese), and teach the History of Chinese Buddhism at 'Cheena Bhavan', the Chinese study centre co-founded in 1937 by Rabindranath Tagore and Tan Yun-shan (who also visited the Ashram, met The Mother, and had the darshan of Sri Aurobindo in 1939). Tan Yun-shan once wrote, "...As in the past China was spiritually conquered by a great Indian, so in the future too she would be conquered by another great Indian, Sri Aurobindo, the Maha-Yogi who is the bringer of that light which will chase away the darkness that envelops the world to-day." It is probably here that Hu Hsu first heard of Sri Aurobindo.

In Pondicherry

In 1951, Hu Hsu came to Pondicherry. Shortly after his arrival he wrote a poem which sheds some light on his first experiences (translated):

*The Mother bestowed a flower for its blossom
Other than offering a flower to the Mother, living in South India nothing
else matters.*

*Flower blossom, flower beautiful, flower can be divine, the divine itself
silent, and the flower itself spring.*

*Time flies, experience beyond the material is new, timeless divine
knowledge is ever fresh.*

*This flower, this leaf, the essence of the present moment, this is the way to
realization.*



Painting by Hu Hsu

The Mother saw his potential – not only was he a scholar and master of many languages, but he also had the desire to translate Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's books into Chinese. Eventually he was given the Villa Orphelia to stay in, a large colonial mansion with a large garden in the French town, on Rue Dumas, right next to the Ashram Nursing Home today. He was working tremendously hard, fourteen hours a day. Manuscripts were quickly piling up, as well as brush paintings. Mother had brought back from Japan some calligraphy material and She gave some to Hu Hsu so he could continue to paint. When, in 1967, he exhibited his paintings in the Exhibition Hall of the Ashram, The Mother

wrote a very special introduction: “Here are the paintings of a scholar who is at once an artist and a yogi, exhibited with my blessings.”

In a conversation dated October 30, 1962¹³, she praised him as being a genius who was in fact coining new Chinese words to better translate Sri Aurobindo. She spoke highly of his translations and referred to one of his letters in which Hu Hsu wrote to a friend, “If you want to experience Taoism, come to live in the Ashram, you will have the REALISATION of Lao-Tseu’s philosophy.” The Mother added: “This man is a sage.”

Chinese Section at the Ashram School

In 1954, Nandlal Patel had just shifted his business from Pondicherry to Hong Kong. There he worked to start the Sri Aurobindo Philosophical Circle of Hong Kong, for which the Mother gave the message: “Let the eternal Light dawn on the eastern horizon.”

While in Hong Kong, Nandlal received a letter from Jayantilal (in-charge of the Ashram Archives) telling him that Mother wanted him to buy a Chinese printing press and have it shipped to Pondicherry. The Mother added that a compositor should also be recruited as Hu Hsu could not do the printing work himself. So an ad was sent to a newspaper looking for a young assistant willing to go to India. 17 applicants replied, and Mother chose a young man from the list named Kau Tam Sing to come and help Hu Hsu. Nandlal Patel recalls:

¹³ Recorded and published in *The Mother's Agenda*, Volume 3, Page 392-393 (1982 first English edition).

Hu Hsu had just written to him, "This is the Divine's work", and Kau Tam Sing was ready, not asking the questions any ordinary person would have asked...A house was rented where Hu Hsu and Kau Tam Sing would stay. Hu Hsu used to get up to check that Kau Tam Sing was sleeping well, he cared for his wellbeing as if he were his son."

And so the Chinese Section of the Sri Aurobindo Centre of Education was born, with the blessings of the Mother. Hu Hsu single-handedly translated twenty books in twenty-eight years, including *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Human Cycle*, the *Upanishads*, *On Education*, among many others. He also wrote a few original pieces on the true meaning of Confucianism, and on the origins and deeper meaning of Chinese characters, thus showing a rare mastery of Indian as well as Chinese culture and spirituality. All the books he printed stated that they were "...dedicated 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".

In the Ashram: a friend and a teacher

In his house on Rue Dumas, Hu Hsu would often welcome his friends. He would also visit his neighbours, Ange and Peter Steiger. They remember Hu Hsu's affability and kindness and the fact that he spoke very good German, much better than his English it seems, which was rather hard to understand! He once shared with Peter a breathing technique he was using: inhale and welcome what you want, and exhale and reject what you don't want!

Ange, 4 years old at the time, loved him dearly and still remembers fondly how he would greet his neighbours' children

when they ran into his study room, showing them his many brushes and other painting material. This man who worked tirelessly never seemed to be annoyed by their visits. A few children of the Ashram would also learn the art of Chinese painting under his guidance.

Hu Hsu loved to play the Chinese game of Go (called 'wei chi' in Chinese) and aspiring players like Vijay, Roy Chvat, Gary Miller, Steve Phillips, Ingo and Gerhardt Stettner used to meet in his house every week. Roy still carries on the legacy of Go in Auroville.

Hu Hsu was also a regular walker and cyclist, and every Sunday with Pierre Legrand or Peter, he used to throw divination sticks to determine whether they would go cycling or walking, and for deciding on the direction in which they should proceed. Pondicherry then was a walkers' and cyclists' paradise! They would visit Auroville, or the canyons near Utility. Once after a long walk, he explained how to restore one's energy levels: "...concentrate the consciousness in the feet, or gaze at the emerald green of a paddy field."

Sybille Hablik in her book *30 Years in India* writes about him:

"He was tall and slender but strongly built. We often saw him, dressed in Indian white pajamas and riding a bicycle, wearing a green eye-shade....Hu Hsu invited us to join him on Chinese New Year's day. We found him in his roomy colonial house sitting at a two-metre long table with a black glass top. We offered him a flat covered basket of fruits and wished him a Happy New Year. He had promised to paint something for me, so before our very eyes bamboos were magicked onto a big sheet of paper. I held my breath as I followed the movements of his huge brush: one stroke – the stem; a small diagonal curve – the growth node; another

vertical stroke – the bamboo is growing; a thin line and a few points: there are four narrow pointed leaves.

With silent attention we followed the light, sure movements of the ink-brush – we were experiencing perfect skill.

Hu Hsu led us to two cupboards that contained the whole of Chinese history in the form of many individual books. ‘This,’ he said, ‘is an official edition of which only three copies exist. This is one of them, the other two are in my homeland’.

A melancholy shadow fell on the three of us at last, as Hu Hsu played patriotic Chinese marches to us on his gramophone. It was a memorable meeting and for me, it was the beginning of a lasting friendship.

Today, the rare books on Chinese history are still precious kept in a cupboard in the Ashram Library.”

Auroville

On the day of the foundation ceremony¹⁴, the Auroville Charter was read out in the four languages of Auroville (French, Tamil, English and Sanskrit), and then in Chinese and Arabic. Hu Hsu translated the Charter, and the son of a Chinese dentist based in Madras read the Chinese text. The earth from both the Republic of China (Taiwan) and from the People’s Republic of China (Mainland) were poured into the urn by Ashram youth (Kanu Dey and Vimala Sandalingam for Taiwan, and Bokul Chakravarty and Hema Singh for Mainland China).

In an article in Nan Yang Siang Pau, a newspaper in Singapore, Hu Hsu introduced the project of Auroville to the Chinese-speaking

¹⁴ Auroville was inaugurated on 28 February, 1968.

world and spoke about building “...a Pavilion which can represent the culture and arts achievements of the great Chinese civilisation”, and invited Chinese scholars and artists to participate.

17th November, 1973

Roy recalls an incident on the fateful night The Mother left her body: “[Hu Hsu] was a very special kind of person. He once told me he could look at somebody and tell if he was going to die or not. I said, ‘Oh it’s interesting!’ He said that well, it wasn’t interesting, because when the Japanese had invaded China, everywhere he looked he saw people about to die. [...]

I used to play Go with him. On November 17th, in the middle of the game, he stands up and says, ‘Let’s stop playing.’ I looked at the clock: it was 7.25p.m. He says, ‘It would be good if She could live up to a hundred’.”

Return to China

In 1978, after the end of the Cultural Revolution, Hu Hsu decided to go back to his homeland. A young man from Hong Kong, Desmond Hsu (Ramana) arranged his ticket and travelled with him. In Delhi, he stopped to get his Chinese passport for he had come to India before the People’s Republic of China had been founded in 1949. He stopped for a while at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch. There Hu Hsu spoke at length with Tara Jauhar and did two paintings for her. She remembers, “He spent a long hour in conversation with my father and both of them, I remember, were very emotional. He left my father’s room and I helped him with his luggage to the taxi as he left for the airport and China.”

Back in China, he joined the Institute of World Religions, a department in the well-known Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. Living much the same way as he had lived in the Ashram – quietly by himself – he remained engrossed in his inner quest. He continued his study, writing, and painting work, and shared his vast knowledge and experiences with fellow scholars and students. Soon he became known as one of the foremost Chinese scholars on Indian culture and spirituality. His colleagues saw a remarkable similarity between him and the legendary Hsüan-tsang, the Chinese Buddhist monk who travelled to India in the 7th century, lived at Nalanda, learnt and translated the original Buddhist sutras, and returned to China with the sacred knowledge of the West (India). The parallel with Hu Hsu's own life is striking. His contribution is seen as particularly significant since he translated and 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 and the Mother's writings. After his return, Hu Hsu came to be known as Hsu Fan-cheng (also written as Xu Fancheng) – the one purified by the realisation of the Brahman consciousness.

On 6th March, 2000, Hu Hsu left his body.

New Horizons

But his story is not over. While Hu Hsu's translations could not be sold in China of the 1970s, there is a growing interest in his writings today, and through him, in Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's philosophy and vision. His students and colleagues in Beijing brought out his Collected Works in 2006, and the response to them has been very positive with Universities in China starting to read Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, and a few students studying

his works, and even the Integral Yoga, as part of their doctoral theses. Discussions are also underway to open the first Centre for the study of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's writings in China. A small but growing number of Chinese-speaking seekers also visit the Ashram and Auroville inspired by the works of Hu Hsu, a few of them even choosing to settle down.

One can only hope and pray that the Mother's message given 55 years ago is indeed starting to take shape before our eyes, in our own times:

*"Let the eternal Light dawn
on the eastern horizon."*

Eric Avril and Devdip Ganguli

Notes from the editor:

You can visit Auroville Radio website (www.aurovilleradio.org) to listen to and/or download audio of *In Memory of Hu Hsu*, an interview during Hu Hsu's Centenary Painting Exhibition in Auroville.

You can download for free Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's collected works (PDFs in English) at the online library of Sri Aurobindo Ashram (<http://library.sriaurobindoashram.org>).

You can also visit Auro E-books website (www.auro-ebooks.com) to read works of Sri Aurobindo, The Mother and other writers. You can visit the [Chinese webpage](#) to download for free some of Hu Hsu's books. Chinese translations and compilations on Sri Aurobindo, The Mother and Auroville will also be published here.