

Maintenance

Golconde, today a guest house of the Ashram, was not originally intended for that purpose. The Mother wanted a big building to lodge some of her sincere and serious disciples. But circumstances changed that. Golconde turned into a guest house long before it was completed, during the middle of the Second World War when visitors began to pour in and many people wanted to settle in Pondicherry with their families to be under the protection of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The Mother reluctantly permitted it, and once started it continued until the building was completed after the war.



Then the Mother put Mona in charge, an English lady with a hospitable heart and an excellent organizing capacity. The maintenance and orderliness of Golconde under her personal supervision and hard work has gained a great reputation at home and abroad. –Mrityunjoy

Mona



Udar

Mona and I joined the Ashram in 1937. The Golconde building was in process of being built at the time. So, even before it was finished, Mona and I have been associated with it.

Mother gave charge of Golconde to Mona even then and she, with several ladies to help her, began to prepare the linen for the rooms and other things necessary. I was given the fine work of preparing the furniture. -Udar



Mona with Gauri



Rajsena Nahar



Phutidi

Ila Sen and
her family.
Chitra &
Amita
in front
- 1943





Some years prior to the completion of the building Mona started to get the linen required for Golconde ready. Thus it was in 1943 that we, Sumitra Nahar, Amita my younger sister, and myself along with our mother Ila, and Phuti-di (a cousin of Sahana) were given work with Mona. To help Mona prepare the linen, the Mother rented a small house for this work and She named it "Little House". It was really little, situated on the corner of Manakular Vinayagar Koil Street and Rue St. Gilles. Now this area is incorporated into the Ashram workshop, Atelier.

-Chitra Sen

Sumitra Nahar, left top

*Terrace
Darshan
- Ashram
courtyard*



*Phutidi in
white sari,
5th from
right*

In the long room, which was the workroom, we would see big bundles of unbleached buff coloured thick cotton cloth. These were measured and cut to size by Mona and our mother Ila. We were then taught to carefully pull out threads for about one or two centimetres width from the two sides of the cut cloth pieces. Then we were also taught to do some hemming of the sides, working on the drawn out threads to produce different designs.

Sanjivan - one of the ashram artists - prepared beautiful designs to be embroidered in cross-stitch on these sheets. The colour schemes of these designs were also chosen by him. These were to serve as bed-covers in the dormitory. Everything was hand-stitched. The choice of cloth was I think in keeping with the structure of Golconde where materials used are also wholly kept in a natural state, as far as possible, without any glazing or colouring.

- Chitra Sen

Agnes also designed some bedcovers for Golconde, a few of which are still in use. Sanjivan did the rest.

-Mrityunjoy



Hand-embroidered bed-cover still used in rooms.



*South
elevation*

Even after 60 years
the interior and the
outer surroundings
of the building is as
new as when it was
first completed.

(continued)



The Office



North elevation of centre & west

This has been possible because of the strict maintenance work carried out by the caretakers of the building. The Mother had assigned the maintenance of the Golconde to Mona Pinto. She was an English lady, wife of Udar Pinto. Udar, an aeronautical engineer had a business in Pondicherry.

-Chitra Sen



Working outside the gardeners' room

Umbrella stand at entrance





Service basement



Watering the back lawn



Watering the lawn

Building reflected in the lily pond



Mona kept a small green note book where she organised all the details of the maintenance work for Golconde. Inside she listed all the daily, weekly, monthly and other periodic maintenance tasks needed to keep Golconde in the spotless condition it was famous for.

As an example of consciously and meticulously taking care of material things, of practical organisation, of dedicated karma yoga, this detailed plan of the maintenance routine is a gift to us all aiding and uplifting our vision, aspiration, and mental clarity.

(Example extracts are shown next)

WEDNESDAY.

1W bedlinen to be changed

1E & 1W bed sheets stains to be chequed

Pillowcovers to be washed

Bundles of ~~clean~~ linen to Blanchisserie at 8.15am

1st floor bathroom holes to be cleaned

D.R. (BW546) empty foodsafes
to be cleaned

Miele automatic dryer wall
strainer to be taken out & cleaned

2E clean bedlinen to be kept ready

8 lavatory pans & holes to be thoroughly cleaned

1st floor basement canal to be
cleaned and gammexaned

BE5, 6, 7 & 8 doors to be cleaned

BW2 cupboards to be polished

Sample page of Mona's
handwritten maintenance
book.

[weekly jobs-Wednesday
transcript follows]

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1W bed linen to be changed.

1E & 1W bed sheet stains to be checked.

Pillow covers to be washed.

Bundles of clean linen to Blanchisserie at 8.15 am.

1st floor bathroom holes to be cleaned.

D.R. (BW 5 & 6) empty food safes to be cleaned.

Miele automatic dryer wall strainer to be taken out & cleaned.

2E clean bed linen to be kept ready.

8 lavatory pans & holes to be thoroughly cleaned.

Tea basement canal to be cleaned and gammexened.

BE 5,6,7, & 8 doors to be cleaned.

BW2 cupboards to be polished.

DAILY WORK

To open the office and all closed doors.

Lower front staircase, platform and crazy pavement to be swept.

Lower staircase and platform to be wiped with a damp cloth.

Residents soiled clothes to be collected.

To check number, count and wash the clothes.

Wash, hang and fold clean clothes, sort them out and
return them to the residents rooms.

Sweep East & West basement back & front i.e. ledge tops, garden steps, floors.

Light & Power meters to be read and noted.

Cash box and accounts to be checked.

BW6 stoves to be cleaned & filled.

Roof terrace to be swept & all clotheslines to be thoroughly wiped with a damp cloth.

All six floors to be cleaned by six ayahs.

All bathrooms to be cleaned by one ayah.

All lavatories to be cleaned by one ayah.

Tap work.

Kuja work - see detailed work.

Kitchen work.

Dining Room work & BW2.

Lunch to be brought at 10.45 by 4 servants.

Food to be arranged in BW6.

Dry clothes to be brought down to BW2, folded, sorted out, checked and given back to residents.

Food to be brought from Fenêtres by the Kitchen ayah at 11.15 am.

Back staircase to be cleaned.

Garden manhole tops to be wiped dry.

Hand towels, toilet paper, handwash basin soap to be checked replaced if necessary.

Garden to be cleaned, tended and watered.

Furniture to be polished.

Outside pavement to be swept and washed.

Dusters to be washed.

Basement doors to be thoroughly dusted and polished.

Front & Back doors to be cleaned.

Garden canals to be cleaned.

Soap to be grated and kept ready in bags.

Ayah's food to be arranged and given morning & afternoon.

Last thing in the afternoon all doors, upstairs laundry, Basement, Pump Room etc., to be locked.

Entrance books to be checked.

1E9 Office, Pump room and Boiler room keys to be kept with Tehmi.

Garden lavatory mugs to be cleaned and changed daily.

CLEANING CLOTHS REQUIRED DAILY

ROOMS

6 sets for 6 floors.

Numbers 1 to 6

1-1E	2-2E	3-3E
4-1W	5-2W	6-3W

1 large duster for the furniture

1 medium duster for the doors & shutters

1 small duster for the kuja dish

1 floor swab

1 apron

5 pieces

BATHROOM-NUMBER 7 1,2,& 3-3 sets

Daily

1 large cloth for drying the tiles

2 medium dusters for the doors and shutters.

1 small cloth for the mirrors

1 soaping cloth or a plastic cleaner

1 floor swab

6 pieces

TAP-NUMBER 8

4 large for drying/wiping the vessels

2 small, thick cloths for wiping the kuja

1 small, thick cloth for wiping the clay dish

1 small, thick cloth for wiping the ledges

3 sack pieces for wiping the floor

1 towel for wiping the hands

13 pieces + 5 dusters

1 doors - back and front

4 rooms

KITCHEN-NUMBER 9

6 large cloths for drying the vessels

3 medium cloths for polishing the glasses

1 soaping cloth for small glasses

1 medium cloth for dusting the furniture

1 medium cloth for wiping the ledges

1 fine cloth for straining the tea

1 small cloth for wiping the stains

1 floor swab

1 hand towel

2 aprons

1 gas stove cloth

1 fine cloth for drying the insides of the
bottles & thermos flask

1 piece of sacking for wiping the cement
outside the room i.e. ledge, floor etc.

21 pieces



Working in the tea-kitchen

Working in the service basement





Cleaning bathrooms and wash-basins daily

Folding the washed clothes



Kerosene lamps ready for failure of electricity

Making residents' bed. Note apron for dusters





Residents' laundry room

WEEKLY JOBS

MONDAY

To enter weekly, monthly & periodic jobs.

3rd floor bathroom holes to be cleaned.

BW corridor and tea basement ceilings outside cement louvers etc. to be cleaned.

Cutlery stands and trays to be polished.

BE & BW lights to be dusted.

Kuja mats to be cleaned.

Entrance painting & back doors, BW1,2,3, & 4 doors to be cleaned.

Refrigerator to be turned off at night.

1E clean bed linen to be kept ready.

Linen back at 8.15 am

TUESDAY

1E bed linen to be changed.

Clip bags to be checked

Pillow covers to be washed.

2nd floor bathroom holes to be cleaned.

Stoves, gong & fittings 1 BW to be cleaned.

Cycle room to be cleaned.

Refrigerator to be cleaned.

1W bed linen to be kept ready.

BW 5,6 & 7 floors to be cleaned.

All clean linen to be kept ready to send to the Blanchisserie tomorrow morning.

BE4 stools to be checked & cleaned.

WEDNESDAY

1W bed linen to be changed.

1E & 1W bed sheet stains to be checked.

Pillow covers to be washed.

Bundles of clean linen to Blanchisserie at 8.15 am.

1st floor bathroom holes to be cleaned.

D.R. (BW 5 & 6) empty food safes to be cleaned.

Miele automatic dryer wall strainer to be taken out & cleaned.

2E clean bed linen to be kept ready.

8 lavatory pans & holes to be thoroughly cleaned.

Tea basement canal to be cleaned and gammexened.

BE 5,6,7, & 8 doors to be cleaned.

BW2 cupboards to be polished.

THURSDAY

2E bed linen to be changed

1E & 1W bed sheets to be washed.

BW3 & BW4 to be specially cleaned.

BW1, BW3 & BW 4 pipes to be cleaned and gammexened.

Linen from Blanchisserie at 8.15 am.

BW3 cupboards to be cleaned & polished.

Urinal pipes and lavatory pipes to clean.

BE1,2,3 & 4 doors to be cleaned.

BE3 & 4,6 pump room and boiler room to be checked.

All clean linen to be bundled and kept ready to send to the Blanchisserie tomorrow morning.

2W bed linen to be kept ready.

FRIDAY

2W bed linen to be changed.

2E & 2W soiled bed sheets to be checked.

Bundles of clean linen to be sent to the Blanchisserie for ironing by 8.15 am.

Pillow covers to be washed.

Clip bags to be changed & stands polished.

Kerosene oil lamps to be cleaned and filled.

Entrance painting and back door to be carefully cleaned.

Garden lavatories and its store room and back staircase to be cleaned.

Ironing cloth, 5; dining room cloths, 6; wrapping clothes to be washed.

Fridge & food safes to be checked.

3E & 3W bed linen to be kept ready.

SATURDAY

3E & 3W bed linen to be changed.

East basement ceilings to be cleaned.

Guard of VOSS washing machine to be taken off, cleaned & replaced.

Miele Spin Dryer machine to be lubricated.

Clean filter candles to be kept ready.

Meter room to be specially cleaned.

All basement switches to be cleaned.

2nd Saturday - Kerosene tins to BW3.

Entrance & garden lavatory doors to be cleaned.

SUNDAY

Flag to be changed.

3 showers to be changed and cleaned.

Clotheslines to be checked.

Urinal pipe to be taken out & cleaned.

Residents' entrance: cycle books to be checked.

Inlet, outlet valves to be oiled and worked.

Filter to be cleaned.

Every second Sunday kerosene to be brought.



Weeding



MONTHLY JOBS

1st Tea and sugar rations to be brought. Prosperity to be brought, checked and stored away.

Wages to be paid.

To finish early.

Consumptions to be entered.

2nd Voss water storage tank to be emptied and refilled.

Voss drawer to be taken out and cleaned.

Washing machine covers & wooden stands to be cleaned.

3rd Behind the bathroom mirrors to be cleaned & gammexened.

Monthly consumptions to be entered.

Tea, sugar, soap, kerosene oil & electricity consumption of past month to be entered.

- 5th** Back staircase to be specially cleaned & scrubbed.
Clips, clip boxes and stands to be thoroughly cleaned.
- 6th** Lawn to be mowed and grass edges cut.
BW2 cupboards and sewing machine to be polished.
To clean & oil all the chromium fittings.
BW3 cupboards to be polished.
- 8th** Entrance ceiling and walls to be specially cleaned.
- 9th** Tea Basement to be specially cleaned in the morning.
- 10th** Entrance to be scrubbed.
- 11th** After the clothes are down the Drying Terrace to be thoroughly cleaned.

2nd Sunday Kerosene oil to be brought.

2nd Monday 1E top corridor louvers to be cleaned with a ceiling broom.

2nd Tuesday 1W. **2nd** Wednesday 2E.

2nd Thursday 2W. **2nd** Friday 3E.

2nd Saturday 3W.

13th All mirrors to be cleaned with a soft cloth dampened slightly with kerosene oil and then wiped with another soft cloth.

Roof door to be unlocked, cleaned and the lock oiled.

Woodwork to be waxed & polished.

15th All corridor holes to be specially cleaned.

Advances to be taken.

16th 4 mats to be thoroughly brushed.

To give the advances.

Wooden laundry, bathroom & lavatory slats to be dusted.

17th Cycle list & cycle room to be checked.

18th Lavatory & bathroom brass fittings to be cleaned & polished.

19th Straw mats to be gammexened and wiped with a disinfected damp cloth and then sun dried.

February Prosperity chits to be kept ready.

20th Service staircase to be specially cleaned & scrubbed.

Roof, laundry, bathroom & lavatory doors to be specially cleaned.

Prosperity chits to be taken.

21st Flyguards to be washed.

Tea equipment cupboard in BW1 to be cleaned and gammexened.

Prosperity chits to be sent.

3rd Sunday 8 manholes, 1E rooms & corridor ceilings to be cleaned.

Monday 1W. Tuesday 2E. Wednesday 2W. Thursday 3E. Friday 3W.

Saturday bathroom & lavatories ceilings.

23rd Entrance ceiling and walls if the 23rd falls on a Sunday or High Day we do this job at another day.

24th Antwells in BW1, BW2, BW5 & 6 to be cleaned & fresh gammexene kept in them.

25th Plastic baskets in BE4, BE7 to be cleaned.

Prosperity baskets of turn outs to be taken to Prosperity

Basement chairs, jute work to be cleaned and gammexened.

26th Nightbook for next month to be prepared.

27th Roll Call for the next month.

Tap basement to be specially cleaned and scrubbed.

To check wages envelopes etc.

Last Tuesday – roof gutters to be cleaned.

Last Wednesday – Washing & drying machine to be cleaned.

Last Friday – cycle room to be specially cleaned.

Last Saturday – platform & lower staircase to be s. cleaned

Last day of the month:

Servants absences & presences to be totaled.

Tea & sugar requirement for tomorrow.

Tea and sugar store cupboard in BW1 to be cleaned and gammexened.

Empty, clean tea & sugar tins to be kept ready this morning.

All books, i.e., Workers a/c maintenance and cash to be kept in our wages bag.

Consumptions to be entered.

PERIODIC JOBS

JANUARY.

3E rooms to be specially cleaned
and all woodwork polished.

BE1, 2, 3 & 4 to be specially cleaned.

Voss washing machine strainer in the
boiler room to be cleaned.

All outside doors to be specially ^{attended} to

Behind and the backs of BES
cupboards to be cleaned & gammexaned

Inside switch boxes to be cleaned

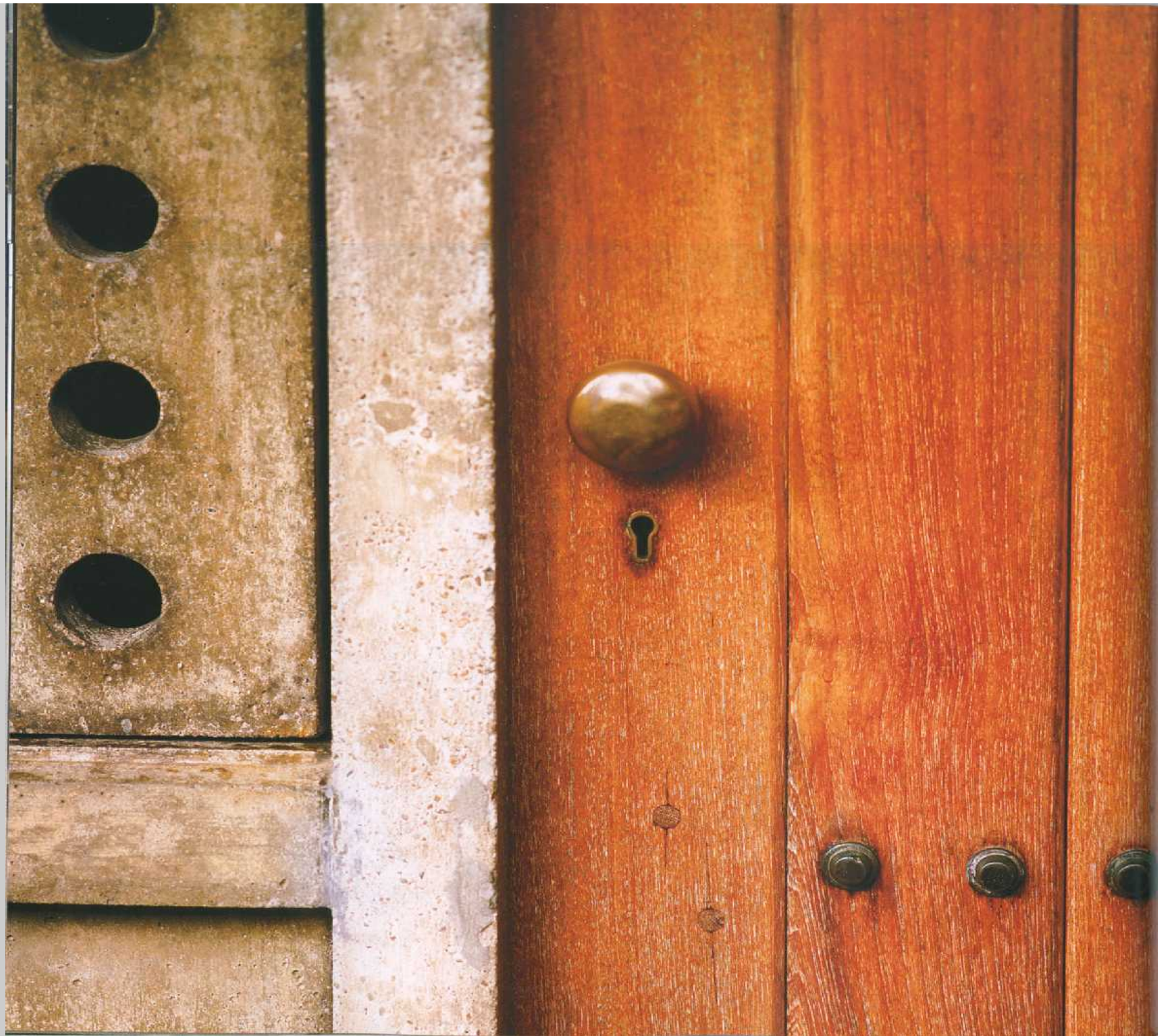
BES cupboards to be cleaned.

Bathrooms and lavatories to be
specially cleaned and all
woodwork polished.

Kitchen cupboards to be
cleaned and gammexaned - inside
Topmost ^{corridor} ~~lower~~ to be cleaned properly
White walls to be carefully cleaned



*Hoisting Mother's Flag every Darshan day
and Sunday*



Detail of brass hardware



*Arranging residents' luggage
in the luggage room*



In the Kuja room



*Back gate of
Golconde*

PERIODIC JOBS

JANUARY

3E rooms to be specially cleaned and all woodwork polished.

BE1,2,3,& 4 to be specially cleaned.

Voss washing machine strainer in the boiler room to be cleaned.

All outside doors to be specially attended to.

Behind and the backs of BE5 cupboards to be cleaned and gammexened.

inside switchboxes to be cleaned.

BE5 cupboards to be cleaned.

Bathrooms and lavatories to be specially cleaned and all woodwork polished.

Kitchen cupboards to be cleaned and gammexened – inside.

Topmost corridor louvers to be cleaned properly.

White walls to be carefully cleaned.

Bibliotheque's panes and glass door panes to be specially cleaned.

Kuja stock to be checked and new ones ordered.

BE6 – luggage, labels etc. to be checked.

Basement furniture to be repaired and polished.

3 Pongal days: those wanting leave during these days must tell us in good time before.

FEBRUARY

3E mattresses and covers to be checked.

Covers to be washed if necessary.

BE5,6,7 & 8 to be specially cleaned.

Miele spin dryer belt to be greased.

Iron entrance mat to be changed

18th Tips to be kept ready and given.

18th To prepare all the rooms.

20th Victory flowers to the flower room in the afternoon in a bucketful of water.

Canvas shoes to be cleaned.

Extra dish from Auomé for tomorrow to be found out.

New flag to be kept ready

21st New flag to be hoisted.

Tips to be given.

Imagination tree to be fed with neem & mustard seed cake.

MARCH

2E rooms to be specially cleaned & all woodwork polished.

BW5,6,7 and boiler room to be specially cleaned.

Water storage tanks and reservoirs to be cleaned.

European style lavatory flush tanks to be cleaned.

All garden doors to be specially cleaned.

To see which books need to be printed and to place the order with Ashram Press.

BE7 cupboards to be cleaned.

All antwells to be thoroughly cleaned and fresh gammexene powder to be kept.

6th 4 bathroom mats marked, 3 to be washed.

APRIL

2E mattresses and covers to be checked.

Covers to be washed if necessary.

Miele spin dryer belt to be greased.

BW1,2,3, & 4 to be specially cleaned.

Ironing table and all basement furniture to be polished.

16th 4 bathroom mats marked 4 to be washed.

20th Tips to be kept ready.

All rooms to be prepared for expected guests.

The week before Darshan day bedspreads & mosquito nets to be changed
in permanent residents and long staying visitors rooms.

23rd Afternoon Victory flowers to be sent to the flower room.

To find out whether there will be an extra dish tomorrow lunchtime, from Auromé.

Morning all white shoes to be cleaned.

New flag to be kept ready

24th New flag to be hoisted.

Tips to be given.

MAY

1E rooms to be specially cleaned and all woodwork polished.

Bed linen stock to be taken and new linen acquired, if needed.

To enquire whether the boiler needs attention.

Notice to be kept for permanent residents' luggage to be cleaned & gammexened.

Servants affairs to be brought up-to-date.

Foodsafes to be polished.

BE7 cupboards to be cleaned.

Wooden ones to be gammexened.

Behind 1E8 cupboards to be cleaned and gammexened.

Flag terrace, clothes terrace tanks, staircase and upstairs laundry to be specially cleaned.

3W to be specially cleaned and furniture & doors polished.

JUNE

1E mattresses and covers to be checked.

Covers to be washed if necessary.

All stools to be specially cleaned & polished, except the top surfaces, which for safety should not be polished but washed.

Bathrooms and lavatories to be specially cleaned.

Luggage - BE6 - labels and luggage to be checked.

Miele spin dryer belt to be greased.

Lavatories conduit pipes to be cleaned.

1E8 cupboards to be cleaned inside, gammexened & arranged.

Terrace tanks to be cleaned.

Basement outside cement ledges and corridors to be specially cleaned.



Drying clothes on covered terrace



Working in the service basement



Roof drain of broken china



Trimming creepers

Polishing the furniture



Service staircase



Noël 1963

JULY

1W rooms to be specially cleaned and all woodwork polished.

Outside doors (bathrooms, lavatories, garden) main gate, boiler room to be specially cleaned

BE1,2,3 & 4 rooms to be specially cleaned.

Topmost corridor louvers to be specially cleaned.

White walls to be carefully cleaned with their special broom.

Bibliotheque's panes and sliding glass door panes to be cleaned.

Basement furniture to be repaired and polished.

AUGUST

1W mattresses and covers to be checked.

Covers to be washed if necessary.

Miele spin dryer belt to be greased.

Iron entrance mat to be changed.

All ironwork – manholes, flagport, back staircase balustrade, hinges
etc. to be black enameled.

11th Tips to be prepared.

12th Rooms to be kept ready for expected guests.

14th Afternoon Victory flowers to be sent to the flower room.

15th Flag to be changed.

Tips to the servants.

SEPTEMBER

2W rooms to be specially cleaned and all woodwork polished.

All garden doors to be specially cleaned.

BW1,2,3 & 4 rooms to be specially cleaned.

BW2 & BW3 cupboards to be cleaned and arranged.

Office cupboards – ditto.

Christmas work to start.

Plastic gift & cake bags.

Rubber rings; crepe paper – stock to be taken
and new stock acquired if necessary.

OCTOBER

2W mattresses and covers to be checked.

Covers to be washed if necessary.

BW5,6,7 and Boiler Room to be specially cleaned.

Switch boxes to be cleaned inside.

Miele spin dryer belt to be greased.

Flag terrace, clothes terrace, tanks, staircase and upstairs laundry to be specially cleaned.

NOVEMBER

All Basement furniture and food safes to be cleaned, polished.

6th All rooms to be kept ready, blankets in the visitors' rooms.
BE7 Cupboards to be checked wooden ones to be gammexened.
Behind and the underneath of 1E8 cupboards to be cleaned.

20th To prepare the tips.
Flowers to the Flower Room.

24th New flag to be hoisted.
Tips to be given
To arrange for next year's new work diary.

DECEMBER

3W mattresses and covers to be checked.

Covers to be washed if necessary.

All stools to be thoroughly cleaned and polished. Top surfaces are not to be polished but washed.

Bathrooms and lavatories to be specially cleaned.

Luggage - BE6 - labels and luggage to be checked.

Miele spin dryer belt to be greased.

18th List from P.E.D.

20th Electric dept. chit for decorations.

Rattraps to be kept ready.

Chit to Ravindra for 20 traps.

Chit for 200-300 pots - Mantu.

Chit to Art house for the Theatre key.

Chit to Art house for the Theatre key.

Chit to the Electric Service for arranging the tree decorations.

Chit to Atelier to transport the tree.

Showboards to be checked and prepared.

21st To arrange for transport to & from the
Theatre – work times & for Christmas day.

Stars to be glittered. Golconde tree & decorations.

22nd Mother's chair and stool to be specially cleaned and polished.

23rd Mother's chair and stool covers to be ironed and fitted.

Tree site to be cleaned and DTTd.

Stools & decorations to the Theatre.

BE6 to be thoroughly cleaned & DTTd.

Balloons sticks & threads to Rajkumar.

Tree not to be watered after today 23rd .

Christmas notice to the Ashram.



Meeting a guest



Kuja room



Changing bed clothes



Under the 'Realisation' tree



Stone lamp

PROSPERITY

Carbolic soap; Chit books; Cloth for bags & mattress covers.

Dettol.

Exercise books.

French chalk.

Gammexene powder; Green cotton Bedcovers.

Marking ink; Matches; Mats.

Pencils – red & blue, lead; Phenyle.

Sack pieces; Scrubbing brushes – Jagadish.

Toilet rolls – Bazaar.

Vim.

Washing soap; Writing pads.

Useful Information

Platform below the service staircase = Zero.

Level of the crazy pavement around the large tank = -8.

Entrance = -43.

Golden Rule 1:1:618.

Golconde's Voltage 220 V. 1PH 440V 3PH

Golconde's Mural: 7'35 ms x 2'95 ms (approx 24 ft x 10 ft)

Golconde's area (approx):

Length 262.5 ft with East 100 ft West 95 ft.

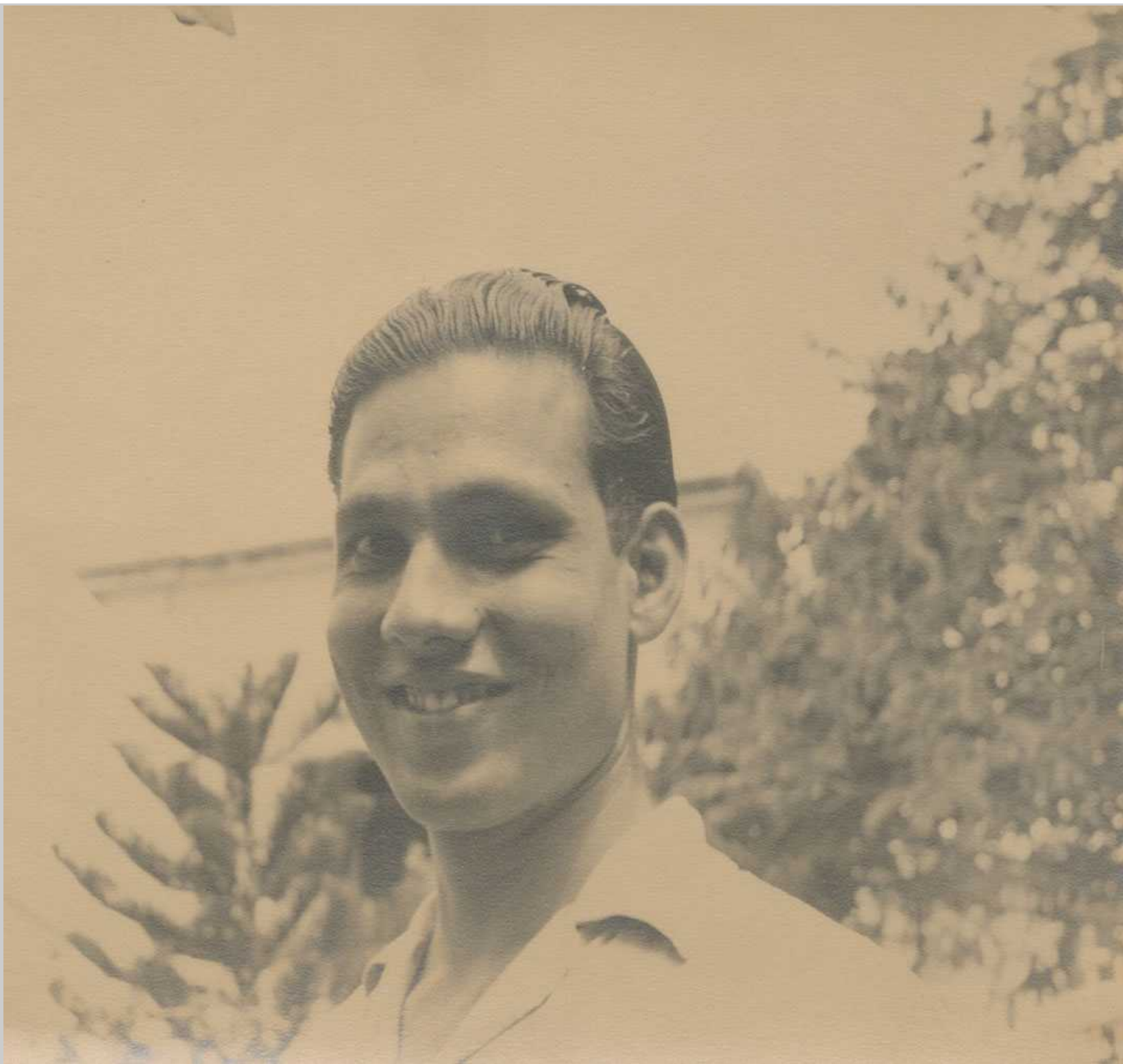
Detergent from Aroumé.

Ashes from Ayahs.

Sand from the seashore. It has to be winnowed & washed in Dettol solution.

Kerosene oil & methylated spirits from Aroumé.

Electric Computer number: 11595 04-17-01-6083; N13 277/1 04-17-01-6084.

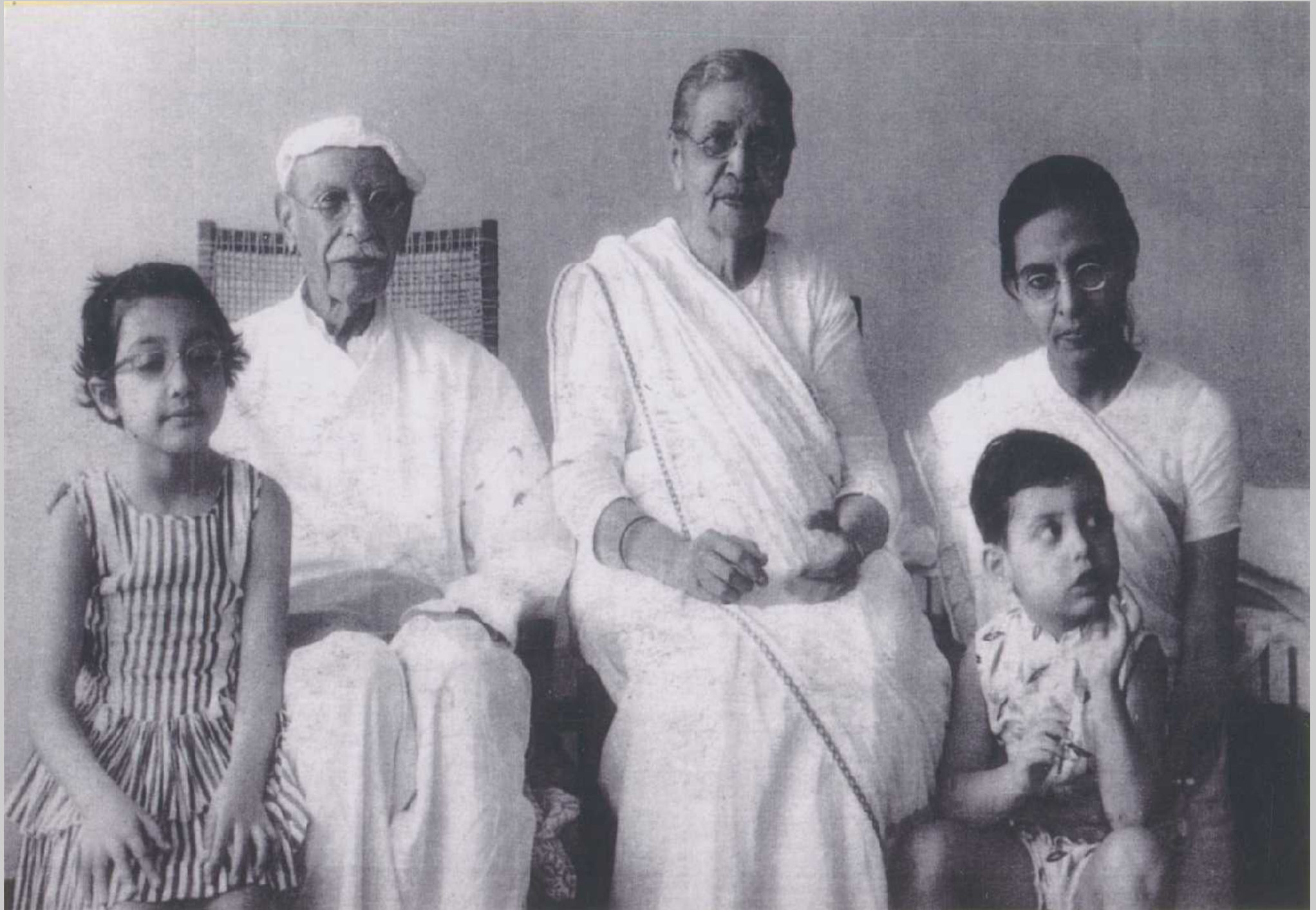


*Noren
Singh
Nahar*



*Chandubhai and
Noren Singh
outside Golconde*

Tehmi with parents (and niece & nephew)



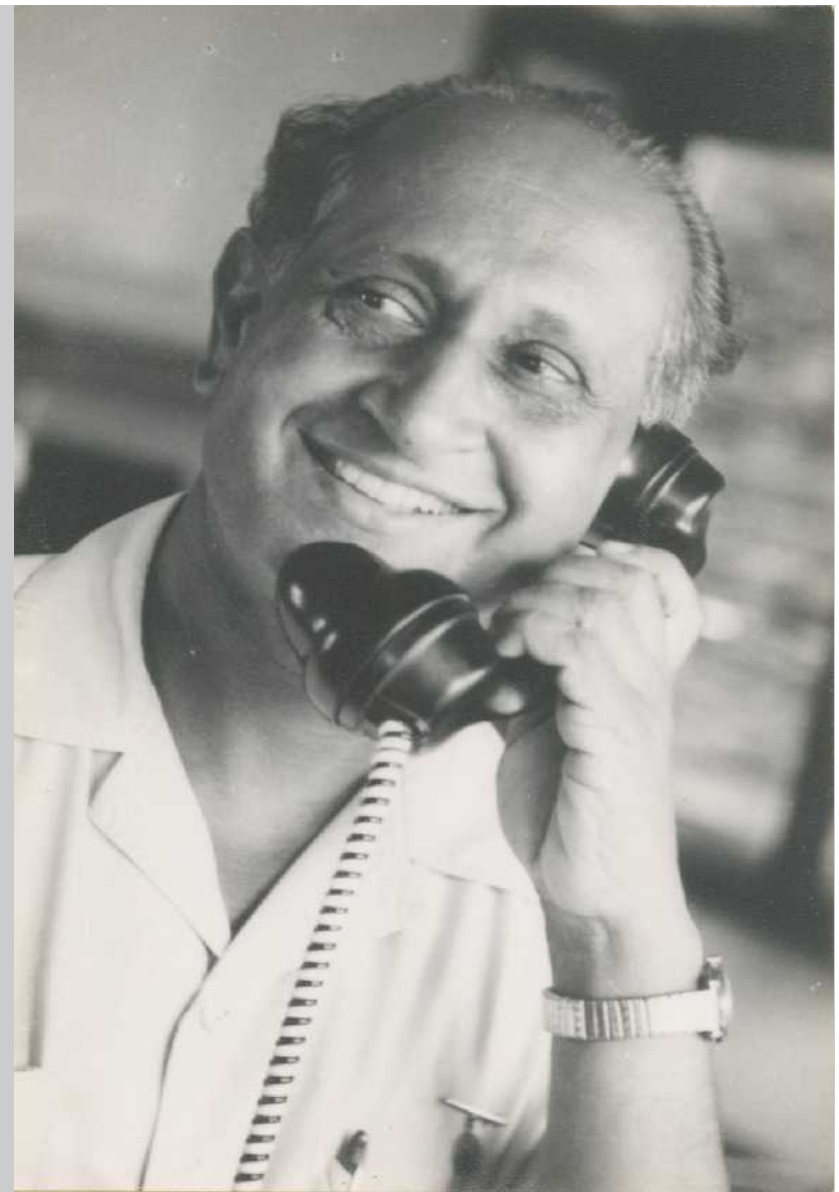
Due to pressure of visitors during World War II, this building, which was to be a dormitory to house special sadhaks for their sadhana, was obliged to be opened to visitors, even before it was fully completed. Thus it has now come to be known as a guest house. Visitors started coming in 1944. At that time a full-time watchman used to reside in the building. By 1945 the Mother started allotting rooms to some inmates such as Noren Singh, Chandubhai, Tehmiben and her parents etc. Thus there were some permanent residents in the building as well as a few visitors who stayed for a while.

-Chitra Sen



Sammer

Udar



As soon as this building was ready, the Mother appointed Mona as the overall in-charge of Golconde.

Each room was provided with a set of furniture of simple beauty, made out of Burma teak, with the inside of the cupboard drawers made of red cedar. The furniture was designed by Sammer, one of the architects of the Golconde, and was made by Udar. -Chitra Sen

As soon as the highly renowned Golconde Dormitory was ready, unique as an architectural marvel of its kind, the Mother appointed Mona as the overall in-charge of Golconde. The utmost diligence, dedication and courage with which she carried out her onerous duties till almost the last days of her life, have become legendary. Where the proper maintenance, reputation and well-being of Golconde was concerned Mona would admit no compromise. A single anecdote will suffice to illustrate this point.

-Aniruddha Sircar

Sri Aurobindo wrote about Mona's work in a reply to a letter. But first a few words about how this came to be written at all. Although Golconde was constructed to house sadhaks, it eventually became a guest-house too. In 1945 a doctor, who had probably come for the Darshan, had occupied one of the rooms and had damaged the surface of a table for which Mona must have expressed her displeasure. His friend, a sadhak, wrote to Sri Aurobindo complaining about Mona. Here is only a little extract of Sri Aurobindo's answer to that letter.

-Sunayana



Mona has taken the responsibility of the house and of keeping things right as much as possible. That was why she interfered in the hand-bag affair, it was as much a tragedy for the table as for the doctor, for it got scratched and spoiled by the hand-bag - and tried to keep both the bag and shaving utensils in the places that had been assigned for them. If I had been in the doctor's place, I would have been grateful to her for her care and solicitude instead of being upset by what ought to have been for him trifles, although, because of her responsibility, they had for her their importance. Anyhow, this is the rationale for the rules and they do not seem to me to be meaningless regulation and discipline. Sri Aurobindo



Here is an excerpt from a letter of Sri Aurobindo: "As regards Golconde and its rules – they are not imposed elsewhere – there is a reason for them and they are not imposed for nothing. In Golconde Mother has worked out her own idea through Raymond, Sammer and others. First Mother believes in beauty as a part of spirituality and divine living; secondly she believes that physical things have the Divine Consciousness.

underlying them as much as living things; and thirdly that they have an individuality of their own and ought to be properly treated, used in the right way, not misused or improperly handled or hurt or neglected so that they perish soon or lose their full beauty or value; . . .” The Mother hoped that if right people were accommodated there or others trained to a less rough and ready living than is common, her idea could be preserved and the wasting of all the labour and expense avoided. . . . Mona has taken the responsibility of the house and of keeping things right as much as possible . . .”

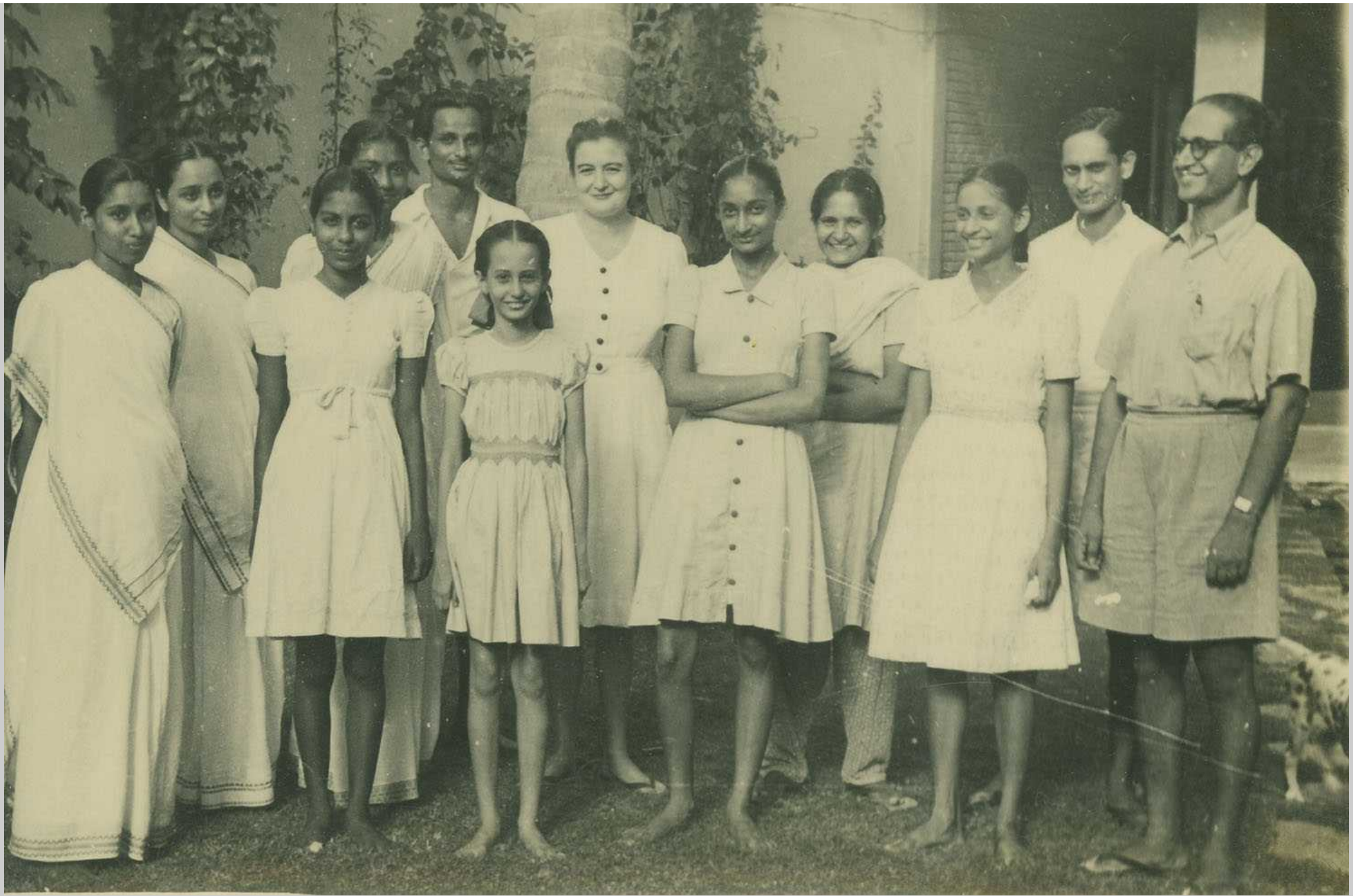
Sri Aurobindo (25 Feb 1945)



Gardeners & boys in front line Sadhaks & sadhikas seated (extreme left Shivalingam, resident gatekeeper)

Back row maids (extreme right, paid gatekeeper)

The 1st batch of Golconde workers



The 1st batch of Golconde helpers and supervisors

Mona trained the group of young girls who were her helpers. -Chitra Sen



Mona with the
'Golconde girls',
the main
supervisors &
workers

Mridula, Mona,
Maniben, Kusum,
Lilou, (front)
Pushpa, Kumud

Maniben Patel

One of the first helpers of Mona recalls, "In those days Golconde was the only place for visitors to stay. Some used to get annoyed to follow the strict regulations of the building. So, one day Mona asked the Mother to give her an interview so that she could read out all



the regulations one by one. For every regulation the Mother said, "Yes, it is all right. Yes, they should follow it. What's wrong with it? It is correct." So all the regulations were approved by the Mother. The visitors were provided with a book of rules, which guides them in the use of the fixtures and furniture of the building.

-Maniben



Kusum Visanji Nagda

"I was working at Golconde. My work started early in the morning, just after the Mother's Balcony Darshan - that is at 6.30 a.m. From the Darshan I went straight to Golconde. It was a delight to be in the service of the Divine at that hour. The being was drenched with something that the Mother had poured at the Darshan, which left one in a state where speech disappears and thought is silent.

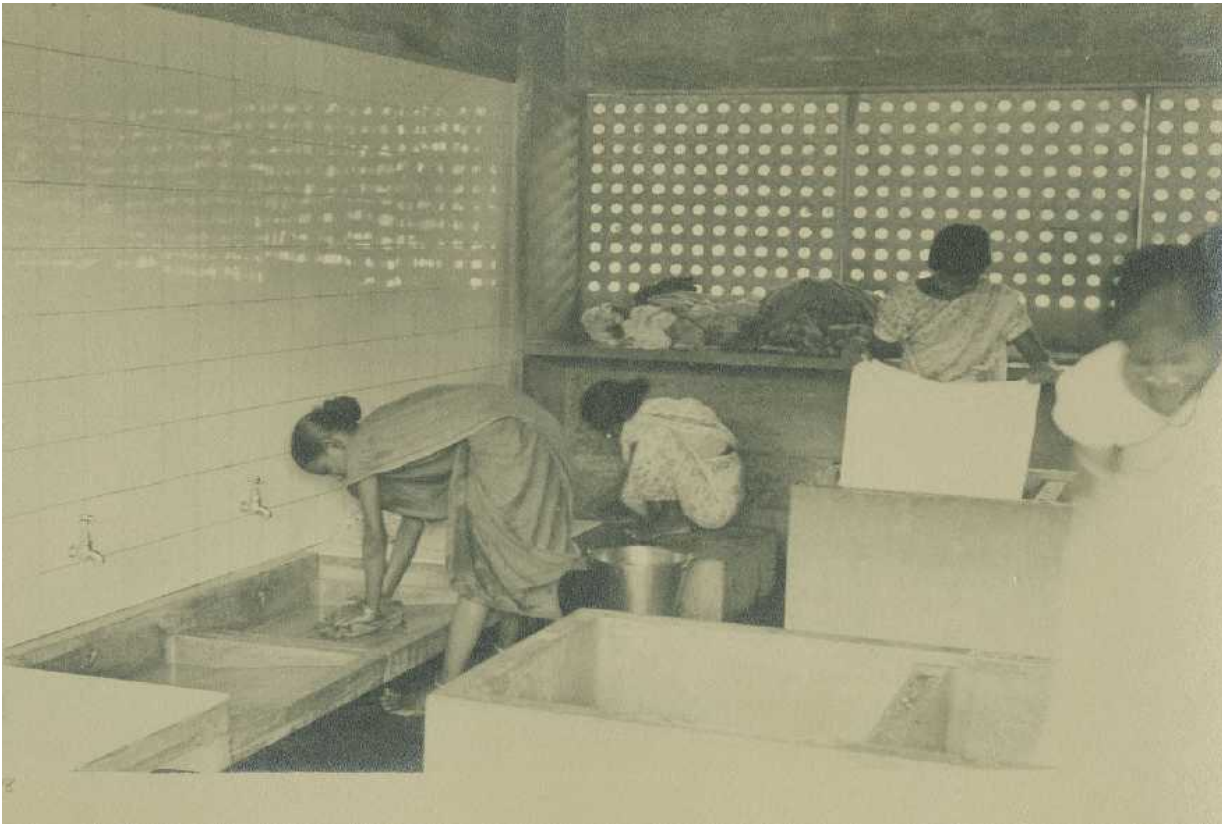
"Fortunately, my work demanded no speech and I did not have to forgo that succulent silence. (continued)

"My responsibility was to mark the laundry given by the inmates, indicating their room number. This work was beautifully organized. The inmates were supposed to leave their laundry outside their room neatly bundled. A maid would make a round of every corridor to pick up the bundles and she would leave them in room 1W8 - that means First Floor, West Wing, room no. 8, the place reserved for numbering the laundry.

"I would undo the bundles one by one, check which items were numbered and which not and add the number when needed. Oh, how I enjoyed it! It took about an hour. This hour was full of that rich silence, that the Mother, still unfolding, had given, nothing disturbing the inner intensity.

"The intense absorption would slowly thin and fade as one met with the world. I was back in half an hour. By now the maid had made her second and last round, collecting laundry bundles and leaving them in 1W8. I restarted the same process – the work is the same, the joy is the same. But not the silence."

-Kusum V.



It was a joy to step into the Laundry. It was well designed, always neat, clean and well maintained. All the washing was done by hand, and the jobs were distributed: there were soapers, washers, rinsers. On sloping cement benches the servants sat scrubbing the already soaped clothes.

Soaping was done by one worker and supplied to four scrubbers, each of them with their own seat and four basins for rinsing – first in hot water in one basin and then three times in cold water.

-Kusum V.

"By afternoon all the items were washed, dried, folded, sorted and ready to be placed in their respective places - for example dusters for different purposes had their own distinct corner. Inmates clothes were taken to the inmates rooms. This distribution was done in the afternoon."

-Kusum V.



*Maniben
(centre) with
Pushpa,
Mona,
Ruth.*

"I remember after the servants left in the afternoons Mona and myself cleaning the toilet bowls which had yellow marks due to water stagnating. We two would also do gardening when necessary."

-Maniben

"For some time the Mother used to give interviews in Golconde Office. She came there after Her game of tennis was over. Later She took the interviews in the Playground. One day after her interview in Golconde she stood in the middle of the staircase. Mona asked the Mother, "Mother are you tired"? The Mother said, "No, but whenever I come here there is a fear settled on these steps and each time I remove it." Then we understood that as there was no railing on the first flight of the steps the elderly visitors used to get a little afraid."

-Maniben

*Entrance
staircase*





Once in 1949, She called a group of ashramites in Golconde and read out to them her play "Vers l'Avenir", which was to be staged in our theater on December 1 for the School Anniversary.

-Maniben

The Mother



M. André

*Krishnalal by the
Golconde lily tank*



When the Mother's son André came to the Ashram for the first time, the Mother waited for him at the gate facing the road of the Golconde main gate. Everyone present sat around her. As one enters on the right hand side there is a wall which was in brick at that time.

(continued)

*The Fresco by
Krishnalal*



Mother blessing the whole world gathered around her. Now this wall is plastered and there is a painting by Krishnalal depicting the Mother's idea.

The Mother expressed the wish that on the wall there should be a painting showing the

-Maniben



“When Russian Olympic Gymnasts visited the Ashram for a few days in 1956 the Mother asked Mona to give them dinner in Golconde on the last day of their stay. The Mother wanted chicken served to them. Mona told the Mother that there is no facility for that in Golconde. The Mother told Mona, “What are your difficulties, tell me.” The Mother asked Pradyot-da to make arrangements for proper lights. Mona called her old cook who was very good. The cooking was done at Mona's house.
(continued)

*Mother welcoming the Russian gymnasts
– April 1956*

The Mother took out all her plates, bowls, and cutlery and gave them to Mona for that dinner. We cleaned them up. Tehmi, Sutapa, Neel and Gautam Chawala helped us in arranging the tables.

-Maniben

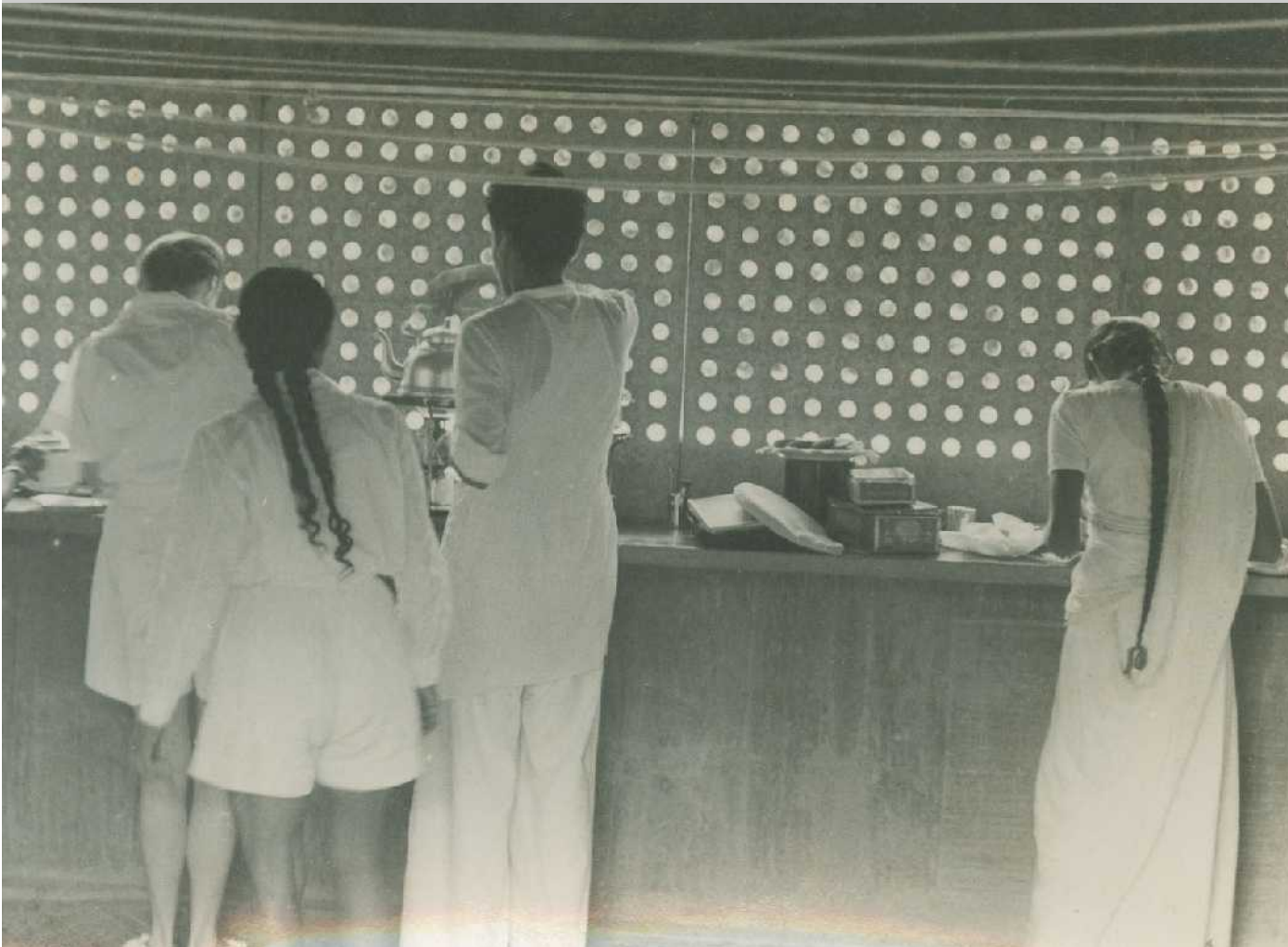
The Mother told Mona, "My work in Russia depends on this dinner." The Russians were very happy. The next day the Mother told Mona, "It was successful."

- Maniben

"Whenever the Mother wanted to get some work done accurately, properly, then Mother used to give that work to Mona. When Sri Aurobindo's Room was renovated in 1948, Udar was in charge of that work. Once the work was over Mona with her team of Golconde girls was put in charge of cleaning and rearranging the room. On the last day when we were polishing the floor the Mother came with biscuits on a tray. She said, "You all have your hands full of polish, how can I give you biscuits?" Lallubhai said, "Put it directly in our mouths." We happily opened our mouth wide and the Mother put in each one's mouth one biscuit. What a wonderful joy it was!

-Maniben

When the regular playground groups were formed Mother used to encourage even the ladies to join the group. When I went to ask the Mother if I could join the group, She asked me, "Have you got the time?" I was quite disappointed and told Mother, "Yes, Mother, my work is over by 5 p.m. and the Playground groups start at 5. 30 p.m." Then She told me that I could join the Playground group activities. But by 1958 I had to leave the group as there was so much work the whole day and I was getting tired by the evening.



I wrote to the Mother that I would like to leave the group. The Mother said, "Yes, you leave the group and rest in the evening."

-Maniben

Making tea in the kitchen
Mona, Maniben, Jayant Patel, Kusum V.



Golconde maids - 1979

Mona, thanks to her English upbringing no doubt, was someone who treated all the servants, (the paid staff as opposed to the Ashramites) with a lot of care and affection. She set up a special bank account to help the women save money which otherwise their often-useless
(continued)

husbands would have frittered away on drink. She also made sure that they were clean and well-dressed. She knew all the servants by name and they all loved her. There are several photos of the Golconde staff over the years.

-Vilas



*Golconde
maids
- 1991*



*Golconde
maids
- 1999*



*Golconde
Staff
- 2003*



*Golconde
ladies
- 1991*

Now, after sixty years the new batch of Golconde maintenance staff is carrying on the legacy of scrupulous work and are maintaining the building and its surroundings as it was when it was first opened.
-Chitra Sen



*Golconde
Ladies
- 1999*



Filling kujas with filtered water

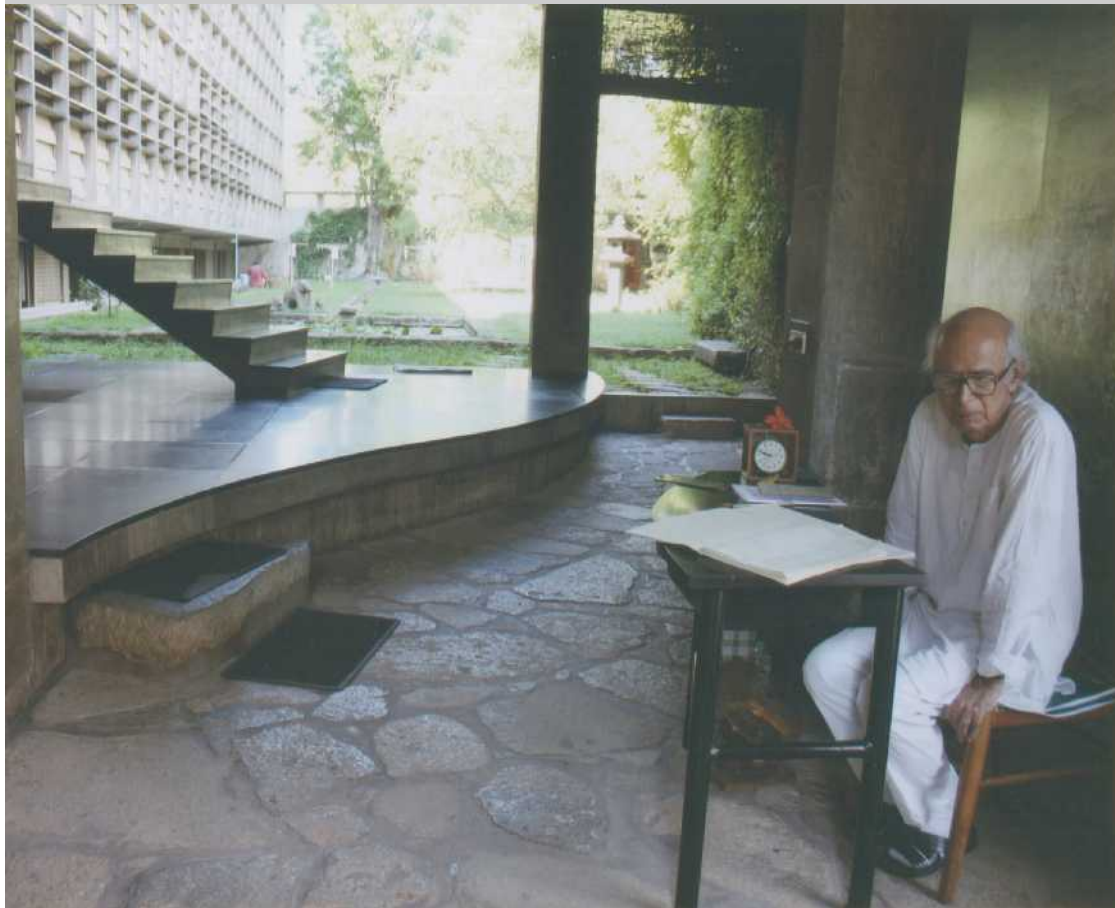


Kuja stand, glass & kuja in each room



Service stairs

Golconde gatekeeper



Prof. volunteering for gate duty

Carrying the washing to the terrace for drying



Hanging the clothes





Running the washing machine

If the place has been admirably preserved, it is due to a daily cleaning and maintenance, of which the practical details have hardly changed in more than fifty years. Twenty seven maid-servants, three gardeners and three caretakers look after it every day. It is a difficult task because of the climate, at once hot and humid. The chores — making the beds, washing the clothes, filling the black earthenware jugs, “kujas”, with drinking water and keeping them in the rooms, begin in the morning.

-Mallory Lane (translated from the French)

Drying clothes (notice apron for pegs)



Golconde is a building with a living personality – a unique, extraordinary building where many (famous) people from interesting backgrounds have stayed,

and again, whatever Golconde is, it is thanks to three factors: First of all, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother (continued)

Sorting out the clean clothes



Folding the dry clothes





who had the vision to commission something so ahead of its time; the architect Antonin Raymond, who had the sense of beauty and the courage to dream up something so futuristic and last but not least, Mona, who dedicated her life to looking after every inch of it with love and an unsurpassed sense of perfection.

- Vilas

Mona



Bed with foldable mosquito-net supports

Mopping floor of residents' room



Golconde is not a building like the others. Its entire surface is equipped with [concrete] shutters, manoeuvred horizontally, so as to protect it from bad weather, always ensuring proper ventilation. The high ceilings promote a maximum circulation of air. The galleries have a double function: they serve as corridor and isolate the individual rooms. The building is mainly of reinforced concrete, the floors are of a stone found locally, somewhat similar to the slate, meticulously polished. The sliding doors, of Japanese inspiration and giving into each room, are in Burma teak like the furniture: rattan bed with cotton mattresses and mosquito net, a cupboard, a chair, an arm chair, a book shelf provided with drawers and a tripod folding rack for hanging one's clothes. Raymond could count only on local labour. The least component of Golconde, however complicated or technical it might be, was therefore custom-made — whence the extreme refinement of the ensemble.

- Mallory Lane (translated from the French)

Mona - August 1992

Golconde is a building of international interest and Mona was THE most integral and defining part of it. It would never have become, nor remained what it is, if it was not for Mona and the perfectionist care that she gave to it. In fact Mona was Golconde and Golconde was and still is (for me and many others) Mona.

-Vilas





Mona doing the Golconde accounts – 1993



Amra doing the Golconde accounts – 2011

Mona used to teach us that one has to know the work perfectly oneself before one can expect the maid to do it well. She would show us by doing it herself. When that is not done, the quality of their work deteriorates.

- Amra



Mona - 1960



Mona folding the washing - 2001

8 July 2004

She (Mona) looked after Golconde meticulously. She did the service to the utmost satisfaction of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. She upheld the flag of the Mother on the building as well as in principle. Her love and attention towards visitors was immense. -P. Rajeshwar Rao

Mona has taken loving care of Golconde for as long as her health would permit – nearly sixty years. After his visit to the Ashram in the 1980s, my father was delighted to learn that the building had stood up well for so many years, its black granite floors and teak woodwork so carefully polished, and its hand-rubbed seashell plaster walls and meticulously formed raw concrete still sound because of the fine workmanship of its original construction and the reverent, diligent maintenance that Mona Pinto has provided it from the time it was built.

-Mira Nakashima



North elevation & garden

*Back garden.
Trunk of "Joy in Fairyland"*



Beside the pond - "Happy Heart"

To live in harmony with this building requires a special attitude and discipline on the part of the residents; and behind the harmony is the support of a highly-organised service-structure. Mona and her staff are an essential aspect Golconde.



View of the Ashram from Golconde construction site



View of Mother's room from Golconde – 2011

This building is so beautiful with such a harmonious atmosphere, that for me it is well worth all the work, especially as the Mother is constantly helping us,

Thank you Mother.

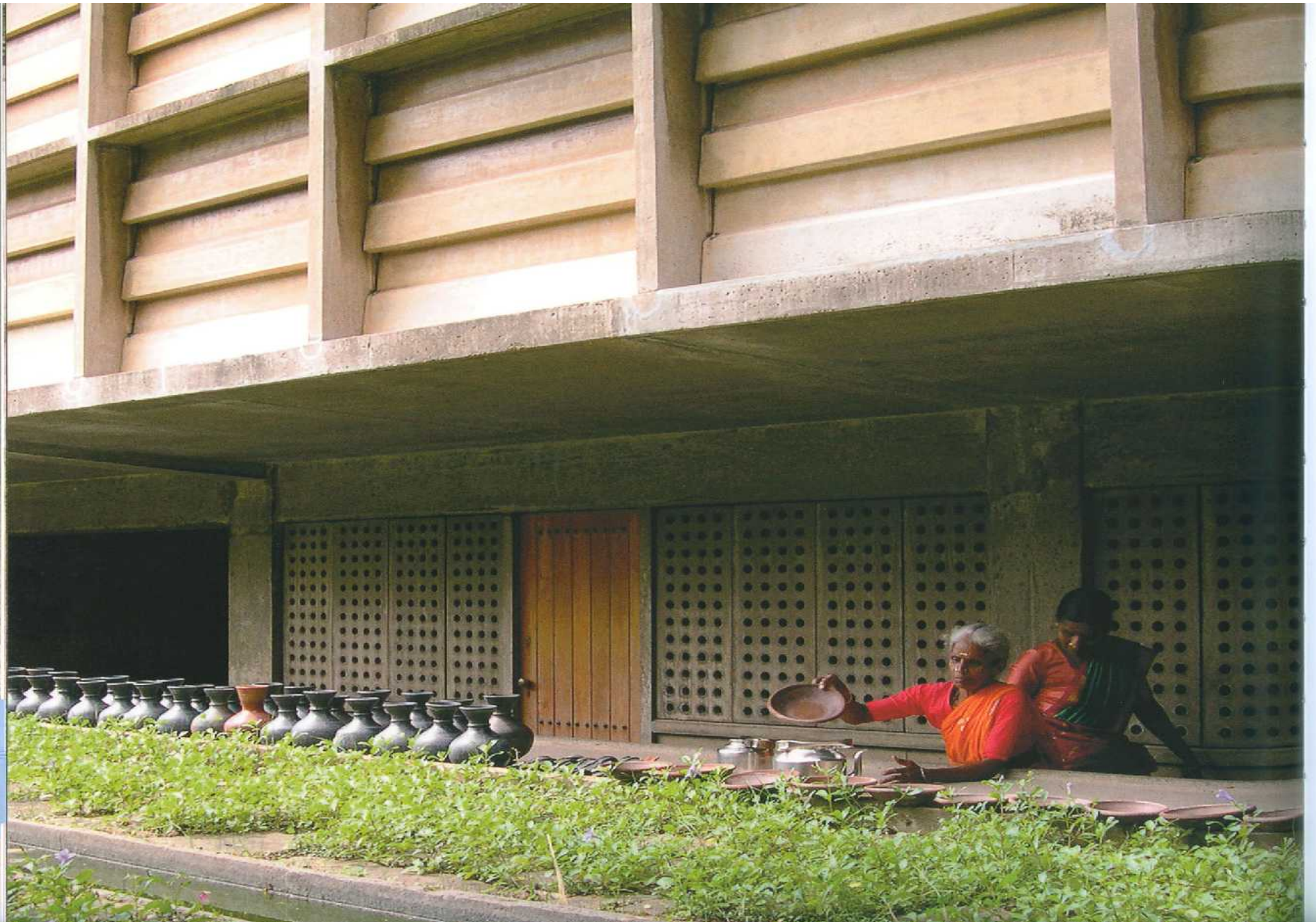
-Amra

Visitors are admitted from 3.30 to 4.30 in the afternoon. One hour later all noise must cease and the activities gradually come to an end by the time the main door is shut at 10.30 p.m.

-Mallory Lane (translated from the French)



*North East elevation
& east service
corridor. Boiler room
on left*



*East
service
corridor
drying the
Kujas*

I have never seen a building so excellently maintained. -A visiting engineer

Karan Singh & wife at the Savitri Painting Exhibition – 21.10.70 with Kiran P. & Udar



In those days all the V.I.P.s: Pundit Nehru, the King of Nepal, General Kariappa and many others were taken to visit Golconde.

-Chitra Sen



Uveraj Karan Singh's visit to Golconde, with his wife & other, also seen Madhav Pandit, Mona, Udar, officials



*Sri Prakash- Governor
of Madras*



*Mme.
Kobayashi*

*with friends
- 1960*



Dr. Masha - 1960



Sri S.B. Dutt



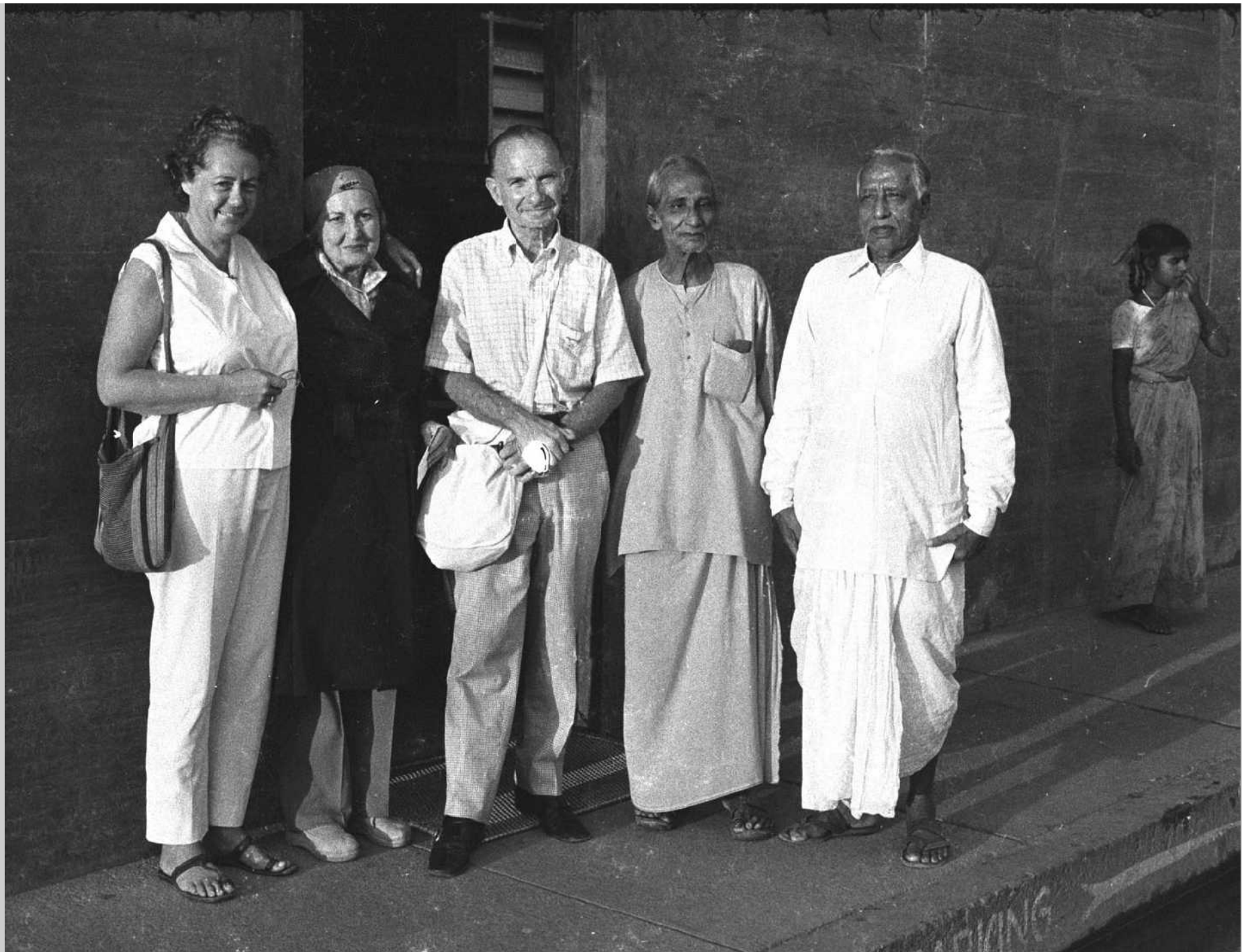
*Mme.
Kobayashi
on the
stairs of
Golconde*



Admiral Rutledge Tompkins with Udar



*Admiral Tompkins with
Dimitri, Eckhard, Udar and
others*



Wil, Jo & Muriel of Matagiri, with Poornanand & Yoganand – 1976



John Hunt with Udar - 1988



Maniben's room is the one that was shown to Nehru when he visited. It was so neat and tidy, that he couldn't believe someone actually lived there.

*Jawaharlal Nehru's
visit to Golconde -
1955*



*Indira Gandhi's visit to
Golconde - November
1955*



"The hallmark of Golconde was perfection. An outer perfection was envisaged there, and to a great extent achieved. The opportunity to work there, with this aim, gifted me with many occasions that revealed new reaches of perfection, unknown till then, and I feel ever grateful. As the outer becomes part of the inner, and the inner reflects the outer, we see that both go hand in hand. So we can move towards Perfection in all ways of life, according to the will of our Master. . . ."

-Kusum V.

Mona would always tell us that when the Mother came here (in Golconde) She said that the pure lines of the architecture (in the rooms) should not be spoiled by keeping things on top of the furniture. This instills in some of us a sense of the beauty of the place that we should try to maintain. Also we feel (at least I do), that Mother is always watching Her creation and, at any time, She may walk in, to see that all is done neatly and beautifully fitting with the care she has taken in building this Golconde.

-Amra