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Architect James Jagadish McCabe is a long-time devotee of Sri Gurudev who, along with his Florida firm, Atlantic Architects Group of Indialantic, is in charge of building LOTUS. Jagadish spoke candidly with The New Saivite World about the project while walking through the cavernous structure.

New Saivite World: Mr. McCabe, could you describe Swamiji's role in the work of building LOTUS?

Jagadish McCabe: I would say he is the architect and the builder. He and I have worked very closely for many years with it, and even now he comes down. Yesterday morning we spent two hours together going over two different aspects in a great deal of detail. His involvement is total...

Q: Was much special research necessary to equip yourself to handle LOTUS, it being such a unique architectural project?

A: Yes, and it has been a kind of constant update on different systems and techniques of construction...It's been quite an experience. Sometimes I feel like an architect in the Middle Ages, for here there is a real involvement I can rarely get in any project. It is like the master builder concept where you just get down in the mud and really understand the problems and solve them.

Q: Do you foresee building more LOTUS's?

A: Actually Gurudev talks about that, I'd like to build them forever... Last week he was talking about the next LOTUS and it sounded real serious. He said once we get it going and the feeling of LOTUS spreads that he thinks we'll need to build more centers.

Q: How does LOTUS integrate with Integral Yoga?

A: We had a really good discussion about that very thing the other day at a committee meeting for the LOTUS dedication in '85. We discussed it quite thoroughly, and how to present LOTUS to the world, and what it actually represented. Gurudev's feeling was that it represented his ideas, basically, which are very ecumenistic. And integral yoga itself is very inclusive. And he felt that the world would see it and understand it. So, I would say it's philosophically Gurudev's idea, but it is so inclusive that I think the world is going to find it a very comfortable spot.

We were very concerned about how to present it to the public without the attendant problems that we've all had with presenting things like this to the public. Gurudev said, "It doesn't matter. If your heart is in the right place, people will see it. They will just have to see it and understand it. People that want to feel differently already do. And we are probably not going to change their minds."

Q: How much has the Ramalingar shrine built in Vadallur, India, influenced the conception of LOTUS?

A: I've heard recently a lot about it from devotees of Gurudev's from India, and they were devotees of Sri Ramalingam, and they were very involved in the light, and so I would say it had a very strong philosophical basis, very strong...

Q: How would you respond to the thought that LOTUS's design emphasizes religious difference rather than unity?

A: Well, I see the 12 altars as being almost secondary to the uniqueness of the building and the oneness. The center really is the light, and the whole graphic with the light coming out of the center and shedding its light on the various religions tends to unify them...

But the central altar isn't an altar in the sense that we are used to in any religious tradition. It's almost just a graphic. It's a yantra, a meru - which, of course, is a three dimensional yantra - and the light comes out of that. The center of the shrine is tremendously charged. It has a gem box in the lower part of it, and all the way through the center, everything is right on that center - the main altar, the light and the colophon up above, spire which is some kind of cosmic antennae...

And the whole building is a yantra in itself. So, to be within the yantra, within a tremendously charged space, I think on the metaphysical level is really where the strength is. That's why I say it's a personal experience.

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