

# AUROVILLE TODAY

January '89

Number Three

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**Candles...** around the Banyan tree, Russian voices at the bonfire, and even a few drops of rain. Yes, the New Year felt special this time. It is traditional to become idealistic and a bit sentimental on the New Year. But it does feel as if a fresh wind is blowing, cleaning out the cobwebs and dust. For while the American, Russian and Indian exchange students were singing songs and planting trees, Auroville has been quietly going back to basics - but with a new energy and spirit. Town planning is in motion again. And last month we finally had the

courage and will to stare an old shadow in the face - our attitude to money. A 2-day seminar on the Auroville economy initiated the process. It continued in work group discussions, in surveys and excitable tea-shop conversations. In this issue we try to give the substance and the flavour of that process, which may be pushing us one step further along the road to our "impossible" dream.

Mother, of course, didn't waste words: - "It is the lack of push towards the future that impedes the flow of money."

The Editors

economic experiments and the present economic set-up of Auroville and they discussed the ideal Auroville economy and the ways to get there.

The seminar started with a recitation of the Ganesh mantra. It was followed by an introductory session in which Auroville's past economic systems were reviewed. All participants expressed their expectations (which, among others, were: to come closer to Mother's Dream; to acquire more information on our economic functioning; to realize a change of consciousness) and everybody was given the opportunity to read a compilation of what Mother has said on the Auroville economy.

In the afternoon, through a skillful use of different group dynamic techniques, a wealth of ideas were generated. The next day, the seminar concentrated on the major ideas which had come up the previous day and tried to formulate concrete proposals.

**"If it wasn't for us,  
Auroville would not be  
there!"**

A "bowl of spaghetti" was the description thought to be most fitting for the incoming and outgoing money-flows of Auroville. At present, Auroville's main sources of income, listed in order of magnitude, are: individual monies, foreign donations, Indian donations, government grants and contributions from Auroville commercial units. The major source is individual monies: it is the Aurovilians themselves who by their initiative, their work, the input of their money, their capacity to generate and attract funds for development have created the majority of Auroville's assets and made possible the many activities we see today in Auroville. "If it was not for us, Auroville would not be there", exclaimed one of the participants, when she realised that the major income source, the 'private' money, greatly exceeded the total of all other income sources.

In recent years, the development of Auroville's economy has taken a turn which is quite common and accepted elsewhere in the world, but which does not reflect Auroville's aspirations. Two groups have developed: the "earning side" (productive units) and the "spending side" (community services, etc). And with the development of these two groups, strong differences emerged, both in income and in attitudes. Each group has a major objection

to the other, which roughly comes down to the following:

'Spenders' say of 'earners' that they do not contribute sufficiently to the collective and if they do, they wish to decide themselves where the money goes.

'Earners' against 'spenders': they do not work sufficiently for the collective, and do not trouble themselves to organize their units in such a way as to reduce spending to the minimum.

One clear conclusion was that a decent basic minimum should be guaranteed for each Aurovilian, that this basic maintenance should be related to work for the collectivity, but that it should be independent of where one works and what kind of work one does, so that one can really choose one's work from within.

The amount of that basic minimum was soon agreed upon: Rs 1,000 per month, instead of the present insufficient average of max. Rs.600,- per month. It was also agreed that, in order to cover the costs of collective services like health, house building and repairs, administration, road repair and so on, each Aurovilian should contribute to the collective a certain amount per month.

Mother has mentioned that each Aurovilian should work at least five hours a day for the collective, for six days a week. With this in mind, agreement was reached that the right to a basic minimum should be linked to the obligation to work these minimum hours for the collective. At present, what 'work for the collective' does and does not include, and how to practically realize the ideal that all Aurovilians receive the basic minimum, is being studied by a group that was set up to investigate how to realize this proposal. This study group would also start to collect the facts and figures of Auroville's economy, about which no one has a clear picture at present. Other topics were studied as well, such as economic development and planning, and investment in Auroville's future: in the economy and education.

The seminar has been a step towards a more conscious effort of the community to improve its economy. It has served in the first place as a forum where the many different ideas and attitudes among us could be expressed, exchanged, listed and listened to. The seminar was a very positive experience of collective research and has started a process which hopefully will lead to a more conscious, transparent and collective economy.

Report by Carel, Yoka.



## THE AUROVILLE ECONOMY:

### UNITY WITHOUT UNIFORMITY

"For in this ideal place money would be no more the sovereign lord. Individual value would have a greater importance than the value due to material wealth and social position. Work would not be there as the means for gaining one's livelihood, it would be the means whereby to express oneself, develop one's capacities and possibilities, while doing at the same time service to the whole group, which, on its side, would provide for each one's subsistence and for the field of his work." (From Mother's Dream).

These words of the Mother, together with much more that She has said on the Auroville Economy, formed the basis for a two day seminar on the Auroville Economy on November 14 and 15, 1988 entitled: "The Auroville Economy, Unity without Uniformity". The purpose of this seminar was to arrive at concrete proposals to help Auroville move towards the realization of its ideals. The main topics: how can we create a viable economy for Auroville? In

what ways can we ensure a basic minimum of food, clothing, health care and shelter for every Aurovilian? What should be the relation between work and money? What are the wider implications for our society of an inequality of financial possibilities? In short: how can we move towards another system, more true to our inner aspirations, more close to Her Dream? Some 35 Aurovilians participated in this seminar; they studied Auroville's past

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## Unknown Auroville

### Anusuya and its inhabitants

*Anusuya is a greenbelt community that was started at the end of the 1970's. It was a difficult place to settle; people came and people went. Wolf, Yvon and their three children arrived there in 1984. They had decided in Holland (where they had worked for the Auroville International Centre) to "just jump into Auroville" and within a matter of months of arriving here, they were told: "There's a place that's looking for people. Are you interested?" They came, they looked, they stayed.*

**Auroville Today: How did Anusuya look when you first saw it?**

Yvon: Wild. Really wild! But very beautiful and very quiet.

**Did you have plans about how to develop Anusuya?**

Wolf: No. There were obviously possibilities there, but at first we began working on what needed to be done — a house, a windmill and so on. It was a whole field of practical experience. You'd need things, so you'd make them and you'd learn on the way.

**Yvon: "The attitude to work in Auroville is different. You're not just producing. You are a part of what you're doing."**

**So self-sufficiency is important to you?**

Wolf: Yes. It's a challenge to try to use the possibilities around you and not have to rely on others. But not self-sufficiency at any cost.

**You've been here 4 1/2 years now. What have been the major changes?**

Wolf: Auroville has changed and this has affected us here. When we first came, there were regular budgets (financial support). Then we produced what we could and used or distributed it. When the budget stopped, we started selling our farm produce. But we quickly found out that you can't live off a small farm like this. We needed other products. So as we had many fruits and plants, Yvon began food processing — jam and so on. We took on more workers. Then I had to build a windmill, and a vandi, and this brought me into contact with another material. I began to work in wood and started a small carpentry workshop. And now Yvon has begun making clothes for children.

**You could both be doing what you're doing here almost anywhere in the world. Does it make a difference to do it in Auroville?**

Yvon: Yes. Here you are involved with the whole process. You grow the tree, you cut it, you work with the wood. The same with food processing. Life here is very basic. There is a strong contact with nature and with people's basic needs. When you work, there is a strong connection between the material and yourself, the mood you're in, which is much stronger than I've experienced in the West. And the attitude to work in Auroville is different. You're not just producing. You are a part of what you're doing.

Wolf: There's a concentration of something here, because each person, in their own way, is trying to reach something else, trying to get out of the mess that the world is in. That makes a difference.

**You mention business. Some people feel that business represents an old vibration and has no place in Auroville. What do you think?**

Yvon: Business means exchange — there is nothing wrong with that. But when you start producing just for the money, you cross a line. As the demand gets stronger, it pulls on you. You produce more and more and then your relationship to what you're working with changes. It becomes impersonal. Perhaps that's what people are afraid of when they use the word 'business'. The

problem for us in Anusuya is that things are always so tight financially that when we see a chance to release the pressure, we're eager to try it. But then you may get caught. Wolf: It's our relationship to business and money which is the trouble. That's why we tend to reject it. But I don't see that we can just drop it at the moment. So we've got to learn to deal with it. At the moment I'm stuck. I'd love to do carpentry for fun, to give the products away. But then, how do I pay my workers and keep the place going? But there's something else too. If I got a regular budget, perhaps I wouldn't have to care so much if people liked my products. Maybe we still need this push to make us do something well. It might be too easy otherwise.

**How do you feel you are connected to the larger community?**

Wolf: It's not easy to answer. I don't go to big meetings. I don't have the capacity to make decisions for Auroville. My part is to contribute in a different way. By making chairs, for example. For me, it's this dream of Mother, that's why I'm here, and this is my connection with Auroville. Also, I'm physically connected with people through my work. Everything, relating, learning, everything goes through the work here. Yvon: Before I came to Auroville, I thought I'd have the possibility of moving from one community to another, say every half-year or so. When I came, I found it was almost impossible. It takes time to set up a workshop, for example. You can't just put it down. But I'd still like to be able to live in different places. Just to see how others live and work.

**You've both received some knocks over the years in Auroville. What have you learned from them?**

Yvon: To build up a good defense! When you receive a blow, it shows you that you have a weak point somewhere.

Wolf: Sometimes by reacting too strongly, we feed something and make it more of a problem. If it doesn't bother you, it stops. But it's very hard to be like this.

Yvon: These knocks are a very intensive way of seeing yourself. Sometimes people have to put a strong stop on what you're doing to make you see something. As soon as you work with more people, you need these lessons more. I miss this now, working on my own. These knocks are not always so nice, but they're necessary. As long as we get blows, we need them. It's part of the waking-up process! You shouldn't take it personally, because they're doing you a favour!

**Is Auroville too disorganized? Or is this its strength?**

Yvon: What I like in Auroville is that there is a certain flexibility. There's always space for a certain development. But the basic necessities — health, education, etc. — these need to be organized.

Wolf: We should be more connected in Auroville, through work and activities. But the organization, the will to do this, must come from within, not without. We've got to feel that Auroville is one body, that whatever we do, or even think, affects the rest. But for basics — yes, we need structure. At the moment, you have so many small hassles to deal with that you can't spend much time on your real work. Auroville is weak at organizing the basics.

**Wolf: "We have to realize that we are not in competition, but in one boat trying to get somewhere".**

**What are your hopes for the future. For yourselves and Auroville. What would you like to see in five years time?**

Yvon: I'd like to see our roof repaired in five years!

Wolf: Personally, I just hope I fit in somewhere. In Auroville I'd like to see more sense of community, less groupism and much better functioning on a practical level. For example, more stores, etc., so we don't have to go to Pondy. And more looking after each other's needs. We have to realize that we are not in competition, but in one boat trying to get somewhere.

Interview by Alan, 13.11.88

### Auroville Economics

*Aren't we an economy  
Of butterflies and bees?  
A colourful autonomy  
Is what fate for each decrees.*

*Butterflies sip precious nectar  
And enjoy it on the spot  
Bees are playing the collectors:  
They take it home for the common pot.*

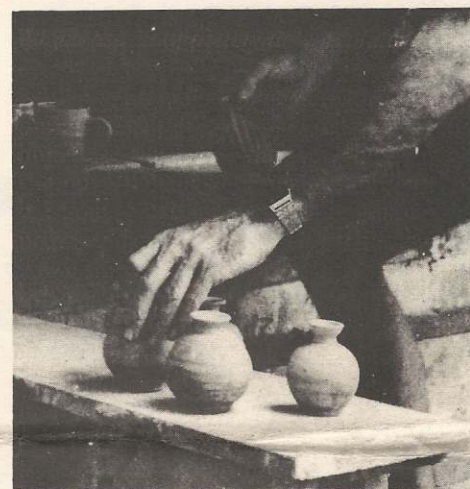
**Moral:**

*Bees and butterflies together  
Should grow into harmony  
And, like birdies of a feather  
Enjoy the collectivity.*

**Proposal:**

*Bees: Nectar sipping on the spot  
Butterflies: Dipping into the common pot.*

(Editorial poem, based on an original idea of W.M.Sullivan)



### The Work of the Potter: Solitary, Creative and Enthralling

*There are three potteries in Auroville. The Aspiration Pottery is run by Michel. Yanne interviewed him recently about his work.*

**You don't come anywhere near a potter on the day of the firing. Fourteen hours of work, interspersed with the anxiety and the hope that some 200 pieces, the product of two weeks of labour, will be finally realized. The next day, Michel was more relaxed and quite willing to talk to me about pottery.**

**Auroville Today: Why pottery?**

Michel: It wasn't really a choice. I spent my first two years in Auroville at Aspiration, taking part in all the collective activities of the time (1977-78), but nothing really satisfied me. Then a friend got it into his head to learn pottery and that simply lead me into this life. It seemed absurd — I had absolutely no idea what I was getting into. I was immediately enchanted and so I did a two-year apprenticeship at Golden Bridge with Ray and Deborah. That was far from sufficient to really understand the craft but I had too much desire to start something to wait any more and I was suffering from not spending enough time in Auroville.

**What brought you to Auroville?**

No! NO! We're here to talk about pottery... Okay, let's just say that for some time in France I had been literally dead; I was in a desert, at every level of my life. I had known about Auroville's existence for several years but I wasn't feeling up to it and I was afraid. I somehow ended up making the step, prudently deciding just to come and have a look... And I stayed. I had a lot of difficulties at the beginning. Pottery has helped me a lot. I started working in Auroville with very few resources, but luckily I had Ray and Deborah's constant support. I wanted to develop a product with a different quality,

something between stoneware and earthenware. I took on a worker to help me and we set up the Aspiration Pottery together. There was nothing on that spot; it was very close to the village, next to Pour Tous. It lasted nearly two years and I was never satisfied. And then I had a firing accident — just imagine, when I opened the kiln nothing was there any more, only little heaps of clay where each piece had been. It was an apocalyptic vision and for me it symbolized the destruction of matter. Vanity of vanities, it was enough to make a sanyasin out of me. Finally it pushed me onto the path that I follow today.

**Which aspect of pottery do you prefer?**

At first I was only interested in the wheel, working the clay — the perfect form, the pure line. Pottery, you understand, is like a human body; there's the foot, the belly, the shoulder, the neck... I'm constantly seeking harmony, rhythm... meanwhile you can improvise. I could talk about it for hours. Then it was the study of glazes, materials, and, finally, firing techniques. Now it's back in balance. The three aspects are absolutely connected, but I have less time to work at the wheel now, and besides I have to keep up the commercial side.

**Is the production sufficient to support the workshop?**

It's enough to allow the unit to develop tranquilly and to support three workers and myself.

**How do you see yourself on the economic level in relation to Auroville?**



Up to the present time it has not been possible for me to contribute in a regular manner, but honestly that was never my essential objective in creating the pottery. Now I hope it will soon be possible. It's a way of feeling connected to the collective life, a way of participating. Like giving those who are really interested the chance to learn; I have a passionate pupil at the moment. I would also like to collaborate with architectural projects. There are a lot of things to do on that side; a whole world to explore. Also I think you've got to distinguish between crafts and small industries, which absolutely have to produce. As far as I'm concerned, I prefer to stay modest and be sure of always having the freedom to create.

*The state of our economy is totally berserk, and yet there's an attempt to restructure something more collective. Do you think it would be a good policy to ask units to pay towards Auroville's collective development a percentage which, without calling it that, would amount to a tax?*

That's been already tried and it didn't work. What could be more stimulating would be for each work unit to decide what it is willing or able to contribute for a given period. Once you've committed yourself it's a kind of challenge, and at the same time you keep your freedom of choice. That could be a first gesture towards emerging from this long, individualistic phase. It's also valid for other sources of money.

*Has the Foundation which has just come into existence brought changes in the way the pottery functions?*

No! I think rather that it may help, force us to organize ourselves - which we've been trying to do for several years already. And on the level of administrative red tape, it can't be worse than Artisana Trust. It was a nightmare in the early days and I was in a state of permanent revolt. Now I'm calm.

**"This search for beauty, for harmony, gets a real grip on you."**

*What does pottery bring you in your personal life?*

Equilibrium, endurance, I don't know.

*After all these years have you found out why you chanced to choose pottery?*

Found out...? No! But let's say that through my work I'm trying to express a certain aspect of beauty in everyday objects. I don't think of myself as an artist, but this search for beauty, for harmony, gets a real grip on you; it's a force that drives you on and gives you the strength, despite any number of setbacks and disappointments, to continue your apprenticeship, which is so very, very long. I often get the feeling that I've only begun. There's no end to the search for beauty.

Interview by Yanne.

## The Auroville Economy: Computers or Hibiscus?

In spite of threats of a monsoon downpour, five per cent of Auroville made its way along the unfamiliar paths and tracks to Sharnaga, skidding and sticking in the mud, here and there taking wrong turns, but eventually arriving at the 'Palacio'. This was lesson one: a symbol of the process. It made me remember that in fairy tales the venture into the unknown goes through whatever mud and perilous adventures to reach the palace (and of course the princess...). In this case, the Palacio is beautiful, but not yet finished, and so the monsoon did leak a bit though the roof.

I did not expect very much of this conference and the prospect of meeting intensively for two full days could be a waste of time and encourage more frustration. Obviously, others had similar apprehensions. But unlike for some other meetings, extensive work had gone into planning and organizing this seminar and there seemed to be unanimous agreement that the meeting was a success. Now, how could that happen?

This question of why the meeting 'worked' is more interesting in some ways than the actual content of the meeting (see the nicely documented minutes and other reports of the meeting in this issue). The deeper issue involves how would-be Aurovilians can explore the human unity issue when they're such a diverse group, very individualized and in their mind quite sure of how things should be. On the big question of money, everyone has a vested interest

and plenty to say. However, it was not so much *what* was said but *how* it was said, that was important. The songs, poems, relaxations and good meeting techniques contributed a lot to an open atmosphere, where everyone could breathe freely, be themselves and be listened to without hostile reactions.

On the second day, actual discussion of issues could take place against the background prepared by the first day. At one point one could note opposing trends that might be called the computer versus the hibiscus. One participant gave the example of someone who just grows hibiscus, as being an unproductive person. After he had been reminded by others that the Founder of Auroville Himself had designated one particular hibiscus flower to be the flower of Auroville, and had given a host of other beautiful names to the many hibiscus species (like the *Supramental Consciousness*, the *Power and Beauty of the New Creation*, etc.), the group eventually could conclude that neither assembling electronic components nor growing hibiscus determines an individual's value to Auroville.

At the end of it all, it became quite clear that joy and endurance were needed, above all, to keep the Auroville process going and growing. The steps toward a collective economy must be taken, the steps along the path to the palace, however muddy.

An impression,  
Bill

## Ferrocement News

Tency and Gilles of CSR Biogas have recently attended the Third International Symposium on Ferrocement, held from 8 to 10 December in Delhi. Previously they had been invited at the University of Roorkee to give a talk during the 2nd Asia Pacific Training Course on Latest Developments in Ferrocement Technology. There they

presented the research and development work done in Auroville in the field of Ferrocement Biogas Plants. At the Symposium in Delhi, they presented a paper, which was published in *The Proceedings of the Symposium*. Many interesting possibilities and contacts resulted from the 3-day conference, such as the possibility of a Ferrocement Training Course to be held in Auroville, and the manufacturing of ferrocement doors on a larger scale.

## AUROVILLE — From Suburb to Community?

— By Stuart

*Stuart, a student of Sociology from Canada, has visited Auroville three times since 1981. This year he hopes to become a resident of Auroville.*

Auroville stands sociologically as an example of values taking precedence over individual material interests. The individual relationships with the divine and the recognition of the divine working in a collective context give meaning to words like human unity, freedom and individual development — a far cry from the value placed on competition in the capitalist world. Yet Auroville is part of a world capitalist system which increasingly includes even the world's so-called communist nations. It can therefore be no surprise that Auroville itself is taking on a normal capitalistic development pattern: free enterprise, the internal exchange of money, wage-labour, and the loss of an ethos of sharing and trust.

In my view, Auroville cannot expect a different pattern of development to occur "naturally". But Auroville has a distinct advantage over other places. It has been given the mandate to organize itself.

The two-day seminar, *Auroville: The Next Step — Unity without Uniformity*, could be another step in a renewed process of organization that gives real hope to transform what could otherwise be routine economic development. Where is the hope to be found? In the eyes, the words, the very

presence of many of the participants shone a vision which is there in spirit but not yet manifest in organization. The hope therefore lies with those same people, and others like them, who are willing to say, "There is this work to be done and we are the ones to do it". This work is to come together to say "no" to a pattern which is presently natural and expected, and to begin to find a different way, by at least working together on it. Auroville can give hope to everyone by invoking in the modern mind the recognition that there are forces beyond those of egoistic desire and self-interest that don't just fizzle out when it comes to people relating to other people on a large scale. Auroville's opportunity to really shine and lead as a community in the world comes from its capacity to create this understanding through its example.

Certainly the present answer is not to control each other through a centralized economy that limits and restricts. Perhaps the answer starts to take shape when people come together, and by seeing the beauty in each other's eyes, start to give more than they thought possible.

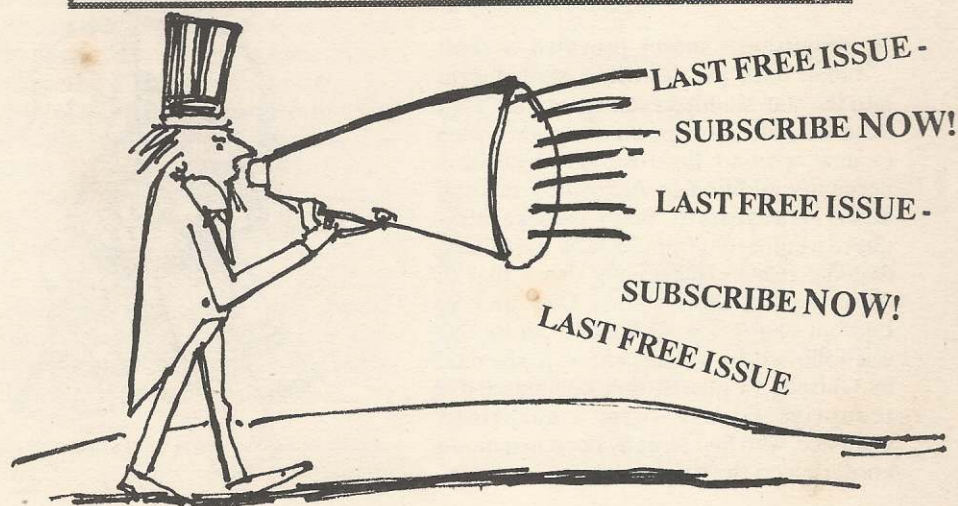
A collective is not a collective by virtue of its people living in proximity to each other. That's a suburb.

### STATISTICS ON AUROVILLE OCCUPATIONS, NOVEMBER '88

ACTIVITY	PERSONS FULL TIME	PERSONS HALF TIME
ADMINISTRATION	11	3
MOTHER'S AGENDA	3	4
ARCHITECTS	13	2
ARTISTS	11	9
MAINT. OF INDIV. COMMUNITY	19	20
COMMERCIAL UNITS	38	22
CULTURE	3	1
EDUCATION	38	29
FARMS & DAIRIES	25	4
GREENWORK	29	20
HEALTH CARE	17	10
INFORMATION	7	10
MATRIMANDIR CONSTR.	30	12
CHILDCARE	11	6
RESEARCH	6	8
SERVICES	30	13
TRANSLATION	3	1
TOWN PLANNING	0	4
UNKNOWN	20	2
VILLAGE ACTION	4	2
TOTAL OCCUPIED	406	185
CHILDREN	157	

N.B. These statistics are based upon a quick survey, therefore they may not be totally accurate. Yet they may serve to give a general indication of the situation. (Eds.)

The total of the number of jobs filled by Aurovilians (i.e. 591) exceeds the number of adult Aurovilians (i.e. around 500) for obviously some people do two (or more) different part-time jobs or even more than one full time job!





## LET'S QUAVE! WHERE? DOWN TO YAHOO LAND, WHERE ELSE!\*

*Last School, that hotbed of a bright new wave of young Aurovilians destined, come the year 2001, to take our citadel by storm, was the site, in this pleasant month of December, of two events worth noting: India Week, and the third annual Last School Fair.*

Having always wondered whether Sri Aurobindo's poetry would ever appeal to the video generation in Auroville, it was a splendid surprise to attend the poetry recital that opened India Week at Last School. For there Sri Aurobindo and Tagore were the most popular poets chosen for the event by the students. They put on an admirable recital of poems and songs of different Indian poets, in English as well as in different Indian languages, including Hindi, Sanskrit and Tamil. The harmonious settings and rock garden of Swagatam were tastefully arrayed with examples of Indian folk art, silks, statues, furniture and panels throughout the week that lasted from December 12th through 16th. A series of informative talks were given by teachers and guest speakers on a variety of subjects that included: the modes of Indian classical music, Sri Aurobindo's rôle in the Indian revolutionary movement, India's linguistic diversity and a debate on post-partition India. The BBC series on Mountbatten was screened which, although unreliable and one-sided as a documentary, still served the purpose of providing a starting point for a discussion of the events that led up to India's independence. The last day ended with everyone dressed in Indian attire, ranging from lungis and banyans with holes in them, to saris and punjabis that could rival anything seen in the marble-floored hallways of a five-star hotel. An enthusiastic general knowledge test expertly hosted by Georges and Arjun brought the well planned and organized proceedings to a close, confirming the theory that the pursuit of knowledge can also be fun.

The Last School Fair, held on the afternoon of the 24th and billed as something of a medieval extravaganza, lived up to its expectations. It was the best held so far. Booths displayed handicrafts, furniture, pottery, woodwork and information on the work of the Village Action Group. Pancakes, samosas, Belgian frites and a variety of Tamil snacks were offered. Panels displayed photos of the previous year in Last School, and an open air selection of paintings of different Auroville artists hung from trees in a nearby grove. As the afternoon progressed a Tamil puppet show competed with the musical performance of the Rolling Vundi Review, which in turn, lacking sufficient amplification, ended up competing with the best cake of the year auction. Elsewhere Kumar was looking a bit wet in the dunkershern pond, Gordon sat at a desk intently writing poems to order, the more adventurous were seen climbing a large tree for a pulley ride down a rope stretched to some scaffolding set up far below, and a variety of dart and dice games attracted the amiable, colorful, milling crowd.

A renaissance sunset provided a short break until the festivities spilled over into the star-studded evening and the Last School Auditorium, packed to overflowing (a new open-air theatre might well be a necessary addition to Auroville's cultural desert in the years to come). Nadaka introduced a humorous fashion show, explaining that the reason that finally drove him to Auroville was the fact that Dior and St. Laurent had stolen all his best ideas; this was followed by a mime show, performed by Ghiselle (a guest), that commanded a receptive silence from a surprised audience, who had already been in a mood bordering on the boisterous.

However, the event of the evening was, of course, Johnny's new and much awaited play: *Sleeping Dogs Don't Lie*. This was a musical drama, performed with gusto, humour and talent by the students of Last School, and supported by a back-up band in the shadows, composed of some of our leading living-room blues musicians, led by nine-year-old Savitri on the violin. The play was announced as not being for those of an excessively conservative nature and, from the opening scene on, it proceeded to poke fun and parody everything from Auroville's great collective trials and tribulations ("Human Unity? It's a good idea, but how to tell who's human from who ain't?") to video culture and rock and roll. As the play unfolds we follow the misadventures of one Bramblemoos Brando (well acted by Vici), who is abducted on a trip to the jungle of pandemonium and enslaved as a lover to the queen of a tribe of matriarchal cannibals (a regal performance by Pujal). The admirable efforts of his parents, Livingstone and Mary (acted by Auroson and a suddenly very female Leo), to track him down and bring him back to civilization (That's where you come from, that's where you belong), lead them into hot water. But they don't take no for an answer — Auroson's accent and the wicked swing of Leo's purse make that quite clear — and their saviour Brother Brimstone (Akash), a video-preacher with a direct reel to God and all the answers (It's all a movie anyway), moves in to convert the cannibals to a diet of video and vegetables. But the tribe has other problems. Worshippers of the mystic bone, they are bitterly divided on how to cover the bone of bones: one faction wants to cover it with banana skins, the other with rooster feathers. Enter the architect, who, with no time to spare, quells the factions in rousing, soul-inspiring French English by coming up with a solution no-one had ever thought of: banana feathers! The reaction is unanimous, "This dude's loose, let's quave" are the Tribe's parting words. Events lead, many enjoyable scenes later (which included a great song and dance number by Auroson, a jungle-disco party, and a number of appearances by the neem-tree choir) to the final conversion of the cannibals and their return to civilization (the play ends with a cocktail party attended by all in an apartment in New York City and the marriage of Bramblemoos Brando to Devi Dewdrop). A bard once remarked: "All's well that ends well!" All is certainly well in Last School and thank you Johnny and all you students, named and unnamed, violinists and down-home delta bluesmen for a great performance and thoroughly enjoyable evening!

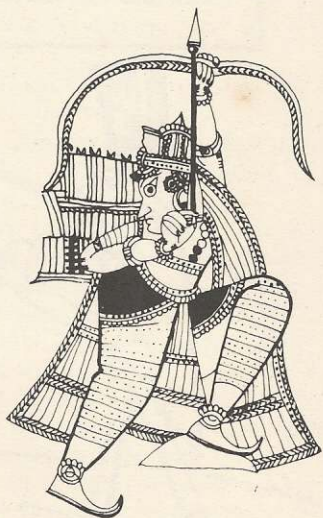
Roger

\* There's no misprint in this article. You'll learn more about Auroville's underground slang in one of the next issues!

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## Selvi's Pancha Bhuta: A danced story for children of all ages

We just had a wonderful encounter!

Selvi, a little girl (played by Joy) took us with her in her dream in which she meets the *Pancha Bhuta* or Five Elements. Together with Selvi we had for an hour the chance to be four years old and we were able to catch Akash — the first and most elusive of the five elements: Ether. It was fairylike, refreshing, instructive, poetic, full of inventiveness and a rare beauty; and performed to perfection. I'm trying to hold back my enthusiasm, but, between ourselves, I found it quite extraordinary. So thank you Joy, Paulo, Ila, and all of the team who participated to help realize this play. We won't forget Selvi's Pancha Bhuta soon.

Yanne



A "Fair" likeness of Johnny.

Editorial team: Alan, Annemarie, Bill, Caryl, Francois, Roger, Tineke, Yanne.

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## The Auroville Economy:

### Two views on the way forward

*Judith came to Auroville in 1971. After helping with the Matrimandir excavations, she moved to Kottakarai, where she did afforestation and orchard work — and began a family. In 1981, she began working at 'Nandini' — a service providing basic personal necessities for Aurovilians — and then moved on to 'Pour Tous'. In 1985, returning from a holiday, she walked into one of the least sought-after jobs in Auroville — administering community maintenance. Since April, 1987, she has been employing her administrative skills in Auroville Trust.*

**"When the seminar began, it soon became clear that the question of personal maintenance was the key..."**

**Auroville Today:** You helped organize this recent seminar on the Auroville economy. Where did the idea come from?

Judith: The initiative came from the Institute. (Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research, based in Auroville — Eds.) Later, a small group was convened to organize it and I became involved. Originally, I had envisaged that we would cover the whole Auroville economy. But when the seminar began, it soon became clear that the question of personal maintenance was the key — that until we solved that, we could not talk about the rest.

**An efficient collective economy is often seen as a means to solving this. What do you understand by the term "collective economy"?**

I have no overall vision. This is what we are trying to discover in these meetings. A collective economy could be something centralized, not necessarily in terms of all the money, but in terms of decision making, of how we distribute the money. But this idea has its limitations. It's asking too much of human nature at present. We don't have the vision.

We're looking for the unity with diversity and basically this is a question of consciousness. What is clear at the moment is that, in terms of our economy, something has gone off. When you leave a lot of the dealing with money to individuals, there is a tendency for them to get caught up in the power this gives them and to lose the vision of the whole. We have to find a way to encourage the feeling that everything belongs to everybody or nobody in particular. But at the same time we must allow space for each person to express themselves, to be creative, above all to allow the Divine to work through the individual. That's the real aim of Auroville in all its aspects.

**What does this mean practically?**

I feel that the productive units should not feel that the money is theirs. We have to get away from this feeling that just because I put myself, my energy into something, I can say what happens to the profits without referring to anybody else. I think that it should be left entirely up to the unit to decide what is surplus, but once the surplus has been decided upon, the allocation of this money must be done by a wider, overseeing group. And people like Ulli, for example, who have a good sense of money management, must be a part of that group. The present situation gives a disproportionate power to the productive units and this is not right.

Another thing to do is to de-link work and money, at least in terms of, "If you work here you can get so much and if you work there you'll get so much more." I acknowledge, however, that there is a link between work and money, and if you don't work for

the collective you don't have any right to expect it to support you. We are too small a community to support a large number of non-contributing members.

**Is the distinction between individual and community work always clear?**

Collective work is not difficult to define. It's clear on an intuitive level. And then I'm quite clear if somebody's commitment is questioned, they must be able to demonstrate that they do a minimum of 5 hours of work a day, 6 days a week, for the collective. But for many people this doesn't come into question — their commitment is obvious.

*The feeling appears to be growing, both in these meetings and the community as a whole, that we've reached a fairly extreme point of individualism and now we need to ensure, as a community, that the basics are covered for everybody who contributes to the work.*

Yes. This is what I believe. But I don't see the last few years as leading us away from the ideal. I think Auroville evolves by spirals and it's been worthwhile to be responsible for ourselves and to become conscious of what we're really doing. In this sense, the individual accounts at 'Pour Tous' have been a useful exercise in self-knowledge. I've also seen the level of prosperity in Auroville go up very much in the last few years.

**Judith: "All surplus money generated in Auroville should go towards personal maintenance, as a first priority."**

But, yes, all surplus money generated in Auroville should go towards personal maintenance, as a first priority. This means that everybody who does work for the collective should be provided with the means to eat, buy clothes, have a roof over their head that doesn't leak, and to have the minimum necessary transport. I'd like to see the elimination of poverty in Auroville, though I don't believe that the commercial units alone can solve this for the whole community. It is up to the individuals as well.

**Poverty?**

It exists, albeit less and less. I think there's enough money in Auroville now, mostly in the private sector, to eliminate this, if it is channelled towards maintenance rather than development, rather than putting it into projects which we can get outside finance for. And I'm sure that if there is a minimum sense of security in the financial aspect, this will release more money into the general flow, because people will not be keeping it in the bank as a lifeline. They'll be more willing to put it where the community needs it at any moment.

The big development money will come from outside. Auroville will be built by the world.

**Is money difficult for Aurovilians to deal with?**

There's a very strong feeling among many people that they don't want to deal with it at all. This is behind the idea of free services and no money exchange. I would like this too. But I recognize that it's not workable at the moment. If we are not confronted with the necessity to create the wealth, it puts a very unfair burden on those who are taking the responsibility of doing that work. It's too easy.

*In recent years, there has been a sense that the productive units and the rest of Auroville have drifted apart, that communication between the two has been difficult. Was this evident during the seminar? Do you see signs that the gap is being bridged?*

This division came through very clearly in the seminar, particularly because on the first day almost nobody from the productive units came. On the first day of the seminar for example, a will was emerging to create a new collective economy in Auroville in a radical sense. It would have been more or less back to a common pot with everybody being taken care of by a central fund, which would finance all the necessities. One of my hesitations with this was the feeling that we cannot depend totally on the productive units; the money must also come from individuals.

On the second day, however, when some people from the productive units came, they said that we've tried it all before and it didn't work. And they wanted to break the big problem of Auroville maintenance down into smaller budgets.

My personal feeling is that we are listening to each other and if we continue to listen to each other, something may happen. My hope is that this sense of 'us' and 'them' in the community will disappear. We have the possibility now if everybody is willing to give a little, to synthesize and to all go in the same direction.

... ..

*Ulli is one of the founders and managers of Aurelec — Auroville's computer company. He was one of the few representatives of a commercial unit to attend the recent seminar on the Auroville economy. The following extracts illustrate some of his views on a possible way forward.*

**Auroville Today:** What do you understand by the term "collective economy"?

Ulli: For most people, it is linked with a common pot — putting everything together and having a group of enlightened Aurovilians distributing the resources ac-

**Ulli: "We should allow every conceivable form of economic system to manifest here..."**

cording to community needs. I don't believe in this. I don't believe in any ruling body able to make decisions which would be binding on other Aurovilians. We need a balance between the individuals and the collective, between unity and diversity. We should allow every conceivable form of economic system to manifest here — provided, of course, that it fits with our ideals. At the same time, we should have a body which is conscious both of the different economic systems in Auroville and of the needs of the community. This body should work out with the community the collective needs and the priorities.

**How would they do this?**

One way would be to forget about the individual and his maintenance requirements. Instead, look at every activity which deals with money, and define its budget. Say the Visa Service needs 20 hours a week to perform its function. Let's say that's valued at 1200 rupees a month. Then it is up to them how many people they wish to employ on that budget. This way we can break down one big problem — the Auroville deficit — into 30 or 40 smaller problems. Then we can request Aurovilians to relate to one or other of these budgets. Up till now, Aurovilians have taken the right to do anything, irrespective of whether it was useful to the community or not, and still expected the community to support them. The community should give the support to the individual to express himself and make ends meet. But if somebody rejects three or four possible activities offered, then it's clear they're on their own. They can't expect community support. Then, once the budgets are identified, we can collectively try to define priorities.

*Okay. Let's assume the priorities are defined. Then what?*

Then the group who have been working with the community on this will present, with as much transparency as possible, the community's assessment of the immediate priorities to those who are generating or bringing in money. The group will say, "These are our requirements. We leave it up to you to identify with a need and to contribute what you wish." Nothing can be imposed. If prioritised activity is continually not getting funded, that's valuable feedback. Then it's time to examine it closely.

**Why should the money generators have the right to choose?**

The individual related to the generation of funds has a right to identify himself with what he wishes to contribute to. People should be allowed to realise their dreams, to help realise their visions.

**But the most successful generators of money are not necessarily the wisest distributors.**

No, therefore, perhaps, so much should go into unspecified, so much into specified. At the moment, perhaps only 20% of Auroville's needs are covered by funds from productive units — the rest comes from elsewhere. If that 20% is badly distributed, it cannot play havoc. Another way to prevent an imbalance of money power is to ask everybody, not just the productive units, to contribute to the Auroville economy. Basically, if everybody starts from the point of giving more than he takes, then we can cover the small percentage of those who are old or sick or have to drop out for a moment. Also, not only the productive units but also individuals should contribute to the running of community services. The individual budget should always include an amount to cover such services. If we accept this responsibility to contribute more, then we can cover all budgets and it's no longer a question of how to get a few thousand rupees more out of productive units.

**What has been your experience in this recent series of meetings on the Auroville economy?**

I was very positively surprised by the welcome I received. Even when I expressed views others didn't share, people listened and tried to understand. At the Seminar I was speaking about all these things — efficiency, budgets, etc. — and Patricia said to me, "It makes a lot of sense, but I feel something is missing." And without thinking, I said, "Precisely. That's why you're sitting next to me." If we can accept that we are here for the same thing, that we complement each other ... Yes, this feeling I found very inspiring. This is a real, not a phony collectivity. Not people meeting because they've been told to. But I've also observed in these meetings that we fail to look at the realities of our past experiments. We

**"We fail to look at the realities of our past experiments... Consequently, we tend to repeat the same mistakes"**

see them with preconceived notions, out of a fear of being confronted with something that puts ourselves and our beliefs into question. Consequently, we tend to repeat the same mistakes.

*Interviews by Alan, Dec. '88*

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## Letters Page

The editors reserve the right to shorten letters if necessary.

To the Editors,  
Auroville Today.

Please refer to the Editorial of your 2nd issue: "Between 1968 and 1972, a whole team worked on the plans of the city of which Mother dreamt. Mother directed the research, accepting or rejecting the proposals. The work progressed step by step. Then a model was constructed and presented to the world: the Galaxy."

You thus give the impression that the Galaxy was worked out by Mother in great detail and therefore should not be questioned. The facts do not seem to corroborate this interpretation:

\* It is in March '66 that Roger presented the "Radiocentric" plan to Mother; She approved it. Still unsatisfied, Roger worked with his team in Paris during the years 1966-1967 to try to draw a better plan. The Galaxy was finally presented to Mother and to the world at the end of 1967, in time for the inauguration of Auroville.

\* On 13.4.68, Mother told Satprem: "Yvonne has ideas on education (I do not intervene); he, Roger has ideas on construction (I do not intervene)!"

\* On 20 & 23.4.68, Mother mentions the Galaxy for the only time in Her Agenda; there, at one instance, She refers to it as being "one of the projects of Auroville".

\* In 1971, when Bharat Nivas had to be located, the only site available was in the proposed residential zone. Mother told Roger to rotate his plan so that this site would then be in the international zone. Mother's flexible approach to town planning did not take into consideration the fact that the galaxy was oriented according to the prevailing winds and the sun.

Mother indeed asked Roger to draw the plan of Her city and guided him. She approved three master plans that were presented to Her; the Galaxy being the last one. We believe that Mother was however not at all rigid about it. It is also hard to believe that the planning process would have stopped 21 years ago and that we would not have to keep up with the movements of the world.

Yours sincerely,  
Gilles, Auroville, 22.12.'88

Dear Editors,

Auroville Today is really bright — thanks for it.

I just want to draw to your notice one error which appears in Yanne's article "Monsoon Special: The Album". The phone call from Alain announcing the meeting with Rajiv came half an hour BEFORE the Sunday meeting. Although several people were aware of this, neither the facilitator nor the general meeting was informed. I wonder what this says about the level of transparency of the Planning Group and what it means to our collective process.

Truth, Dee, Auroville..

Sir,

I read with great interest the monthly newsletter "Auroville Today" of November 1988. I am very happy to learn that the Government of India has now passed the bill in the Parliament promoting the Auroville Foundation with a three-tier system, having an International Advisory Council, a Governing Board and for the management and day-to-day running of Auroville the Auroville Residents Assembly and its Working-committee.

The Bill will give a sense of participation and direction to this unique experiment in

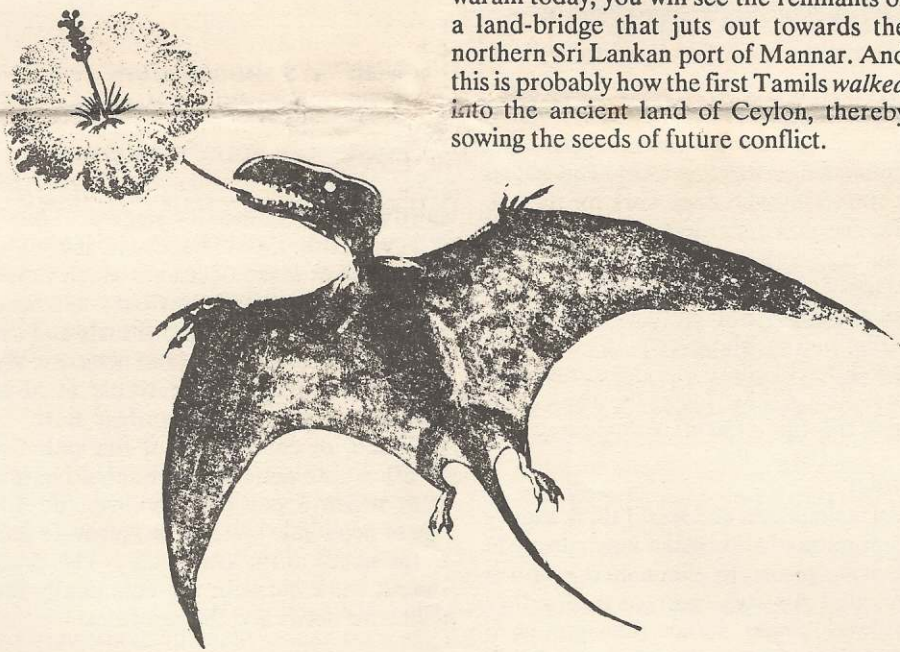
international living. The Mother gave a Charter mentioning that the Aurovilian should be a Divine Servitor — an instrument of Divine Will seized by a spirit of true surrender which according to Her "enlarges you, it increases your capacity, it gives you a greater measure in quality and quantity which you would not have had by yourself."

I am delighted to hear about the pre-eminent role which you will all be playing and I send all the residents of Auroville who are the fortunate and active partners in this adventure, my very best wishes and warm felicitations.

With greater autonomy and freedom, there is great amount of responsibility to become a model and a beacon light of spiritual life and healthy and robust living — to set norms and goals for many others to emulate, apart from deriving a love and joy and happiness out of it. We have no doubt that you will all set an example, as you have already done so far, and build a cohesive, vibrant community to achieve the ideals for which The Mother had conceived and established Auroville.

Yours sincerely,  
R.N. Haldipur  
(Ex Lieutenant-Governor of Pondicherry and Arunachal Pradesh, ex Director of I.R.M.A.)

Bangalore, 5-12-1988



Here is my evidence! Smythe-Buckfast.

Sir,

With regard to Mr. Smythe-Buckfast's letter in the first issue of your publication, I have the following comments to make.

Mr. Smythe-Buckfast displays his appalling lack of knowledge in the field of paleontology when he states that he observed a "Pterodactyl indica" (sic) near the Matrimandir. Firstly, there never was any such creature as a Pterodactyl indica. The various species of Pterosaur are certainly not "birds" and most of them are also not "large". They do not "flap", they glide by jumping off the Matrimandir or any similar structure. They categorically do not feed on Hibiscus flowers.

The beast he observed was in all likelihood a local subspecies of *Dimorphodon*. Therefore, whereas I am in no position to judge his merits as a greenworker, I suggest he lays off paleontology, which is a serious science, not to be approached in the cavalier manner his letter displays.

Secondly, his remarks about the "Entry Group" are vacuous in the extreme. It is well known that all the members of that august body are (with one exception) *Dimorphodons*. (The exception is an *Ichthyosaurus*). But seriously, *Dimorphodons* sitting in unbiased judgement on *Dimorphodons*? We may as well expect the *Fraternophagus suporensis* to give up their diet of

white lambs, doves and olive branches. In conclusion, let me advise Mr. Smythe-Buckfast to stick to greenwork and not publish such frivolous letters which serve only to give serious scientists a bad name.

Sincerely,  
Sir Hero S. Neogy, FRCS  
Auroville University

## SRI LANKA: AN ISLAND OF BEAUTY... AND TERROR

Did you ever notice that the island of Sri Lanka was included (with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Burma) in the map of the "true India" that the Mother once drew? "This is the map of the true India, in spite of all passing appearances — and this will always remain the map of the true India, no matter what people may think of it", she said.

Of all the South Asian countries, Sri Lanka is the one that is nearest to us in Auroville: Tamil Nadu and Ceylon, as it was formerly called, are only separated — at their closest — by a few kilometres of water. Near, too, as 2 million Tamils live there (and 55 million in Tamil Nadu!) and as, politically, India and Sri Lanka's destinies have been interwoven for centuries. 4000 years ago, we find Ceylon mentioned in the Ramayana. Rama goes there with an army of monkeys, to rescue Sita from the clutches of the *asura* Ravana. In fact, some geographers believe that one, probably more than 6000 years ago, India and Sri Lanka were linked by a narrow strip of land, which gradually was washed away by the sea; if you visit the town of Rameshwaram today, you will see the remnants of a land-bridge that juts out towards the northern Sri Lankan port of Mannar. And this is probably how the first Tamils walked into the ancient land of Ceylon, thereby sowing the seeds of future conflict.

million Tamil workers from the mainland to man their tea estates in the central hills; the racial imbalance that was created by this massive immigration was to have terrible repercussions eighty years later.

In 1947, after a long struggle, the British granted India its independence; but in Sri Lanka, where there never was any national movement to speak of, they just handed over the keys of the kingdom and left... From then onwards, the Sinhalese, who, thanks to their being the majority, had the power of the ballot, elected their own politicians; and these politicians, in turn, catered to Sinhalese nationalism and their animosity towards the Tamil minority: in 1956, Mrs Bandaranaike made Sinhalese the only official language of Sri Lanka; in another move, she deprived hundreds of thousands of Tamils of citizenship; and, in 1972, Buddhism was declared the only state religion. Worse, pogroms broke out against the Tamils, and hundreds were literally massacred.

In 1981, the Tamils of Sri Lanka tried to organize themselves politically under the banner of the TULF (Tamil United Liberation Front), but as this party was later banned by President Jayawardene, the youth wing of the TULF seceded and, assuming the name of LTTE (Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam), took up terrorism and violence to assert the rights of the Tamil minority.

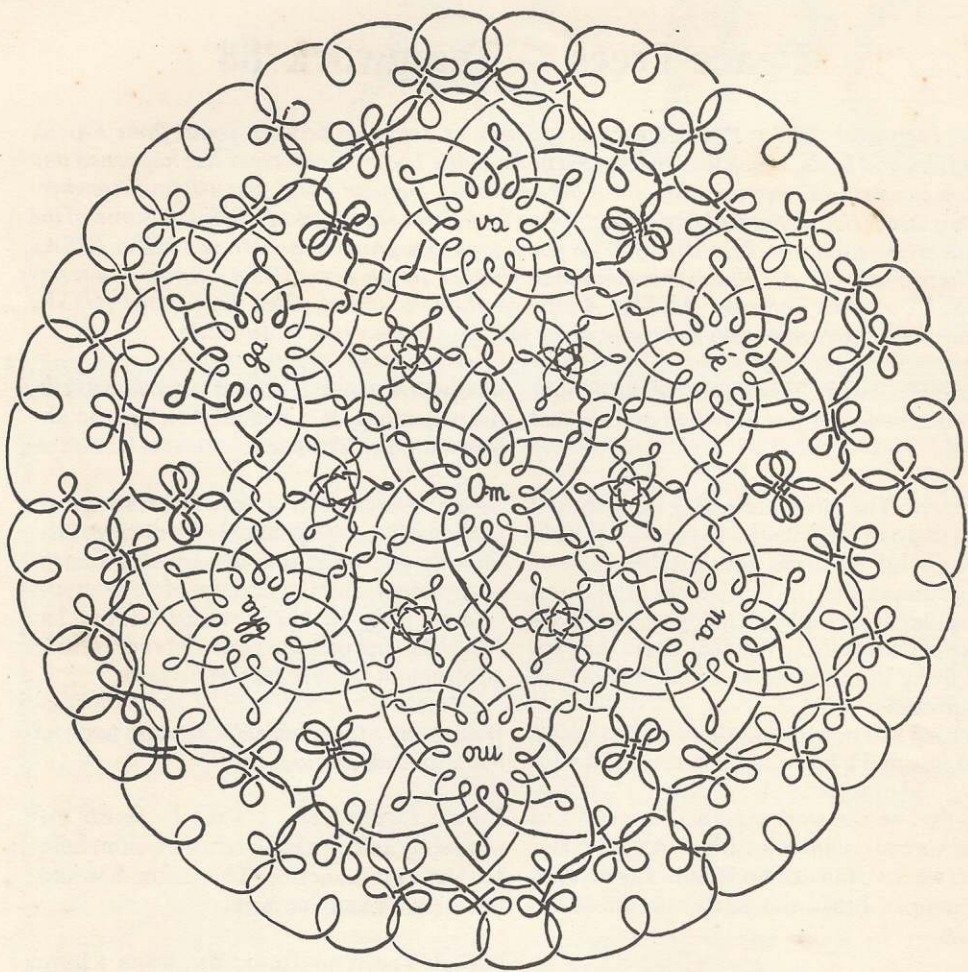
Mr. Rajiv Gandhi gave priority to the Sri Lankan problem when he came to power and, in July '87, signed the Indo-Sri Lankan Treaty. Under this pact, the Sinhalese government recognizes the Tamil minority's cultural, linguistic and religious identity and accords a measure of autonomy to the North-Eastern provinces (where the majority of the Sri Lankan Tamils are situated). In exchange, India promised to send to Sri Lanka a contingent of soldiers (the IPKF — Indian Peace Keeping Force) to pacify the LTTE and ensure the return of the democratic process. And so, 4000 years after Rama and his troops of monkeys, an Indian army stepped again onto the shore of Sri Lanka.

Unfortunately, the situation has again collapsed. The LTTE went back on its word to lay down their arms and has again taken to terrorism, this time against the IPKF. The Sinhalese resent more and more the presence of foreign troops on their soil. The JWP, a Sinhalese extremist group, has unleashed a campaign of unprecedented violence, aimed at destabilizing the present government and establishing a "Sinhalese only" rule. And, in India itself, there is growing criticism against Indian soldiers being killed in another country, and one hears talks about "India's Vietnam".

Last month, Mr. Premadasa, Prime Minister in the previous government, became the new President of Sri Lanka. He inherits a country that, even though it retains a semblance of normality, is on the verge of civil war and economic collapse. The decisions he is going to take in this coming year will be of utmost importance for this tiny island, which the Mother had included in her map, and which is only a crow's flight away from us...

Francois





This design, incorporating Mother's mantra, is by Francois Samson. Francois lived in Auroville between 1979 and 1986. He planted many trees and helped bring beauty to an eroded landscape. For some years he had wanted to return to Auroville — "where my heart is" — but had been unable to do so. Francois died on 10th December, 1988, in Switzerland. His work remains.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND THE NEW WARRIORS

*Danaan Parry helped organize the recent American-Soviet-Indian exchange in Auroville. At one time he was a nuclear physicist, working for the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. Later, he trained as a clinical psychologist, but soon decided that he didn't just want to help people, "to cope with a screwed-up society. I wanted us to take it on together and see if we could do something better". He began working with groups, particularly groups with a history of conflict between them, and began developing techniques to bring such groups together to channel their energies in a creative way. The extracts below are from an interview on 23-12-1988.*

**Auroville Today: Is there a common element in all conflicts, or is each situation different?**  
Danaan: Both are true. In conflict theory we say that the *presenting* problem is never the real problem. In other words, what people think they are fighting about is rarely the *source* problem. And the source problem is very deep and very scary. Part of my job is to let people feel safe enough to get beyond the *presenting* problems to these *source* problems, which are usually issues of self-esteem, intimacy, shame. When people are unready to deal with these inner conflicts, they are projected out onto somebody else. We make that person an enemy so we can feel O.K. about ourselves.

The difference between problem solving and conflict resolution is that problem solving just solves the problem — it puts a band-aid over the deeper issues — while conflict resolution not only solves the problem but also heals the relation between the people involved.

**"Conflict is. It's not good or bad. The question is, how do you handle it."**

*Let's begin with conflict between individuals. How do you go about resolving it?*

I try to create a safe space where both parties can see the problem as a shared dilemma. We do this by establishing ground rules like 'active listening' — allowing everybody time to speak and listen. And one of the main elements of conflict resolution we emphasize is that conflict is O.K. Most cultures are taught to avoid it, and that makes resolution impossible. But conflict is. It's not good or bad. The question is, how do you handle it?

Folks have to solve their own problems. The facilitator creates an atmosphere of questioning and exploration. He doesn't give advice. So the *presenting* problem — the apparent problem — is acknowledged. But then I might ask a leading question, generally to do with *feelings*, e.g. "How do you *feel* when you share that anger? *Where* do you feel it?" Maybe an image, a memory of years ago may come up. Then I may ask, "What has that to do with what's happening in your lives now?" And then, "How can you come up with positive alternatives to solve your problems?"

Then begins a brain-storming stage where the parties are encouraged to work together on alternative solutions. Thus it becomes a shared attack on the problem, not on each other.

*What next?*

They may come up with 5 or 6 relevant solutions. Then, if appropriate, I may draw a conclusion — "I see a common element here". I do it so it impinges upon their awareness of the source problem. So they start getting a sense of the *real* problem they are dealing with. Then, I might ask them to define what they think the real problem is, reminding them that we don't want to put a 'band-aid' on an infection. We want to let the sunlight in. Taking a 'band-aid' off may hurt, but it's worth it. Then two wounded people can begin healing one another — and a wounded healer is a very powerful person.

This whole process may take 10 minutes, or days, or weeks.

*Let's move to the level of groups in conflict. Is the approach to conflict-resolution different?*

From a systems analysis point of view, there's no difference. But now a whole group is projecting its shadow on to another group. It's usually much more difficult to deal with than individual conflict because members of a group have got an in-group to support them in staying stuck. Their self-esteem depends on them going along with the group 'stuckness'.

*How do you begin to break that down?*

It's a tough one... It may help to describe a situation. Some years ago the Pakistan government asked us to help soften the violence between Christians and Muslims in a remote mountain district. Conflict theory says that when two groups are deadlocked in conflict, it is not possible to resolve it in a rational way by inviting everybody to talk. Often this makes it worse. What is needed is to create a third point, a common denominator everybody is connected to, so that the energies of the two groups can be directed there, rather than against each other. And if everybody is sufficiently interested in that third point, the groups will begin to blend.

**"We have to find the third point... so that the energies of the two groups can be directed there, rather than against each other."**

In Pakistan, the third point was the wish of both communities to have better education for their children. So we arranged it that we would teach high-school teachers counselling skills to help communicate with the students better. We didn't tell them, but we organized it that half the class were Muslims and half the class Christians. Half the class was the enemy! — but they cared enough about the counselling to continue. And how do you teach counselling skills? Experimentally. So gradually, through role-playing, psychodrama and mural work, in controlled conditions, they began to confront one another and to begin to see that the other side were really human beings. And it's been proven many times — the way to create enemies is to make the other person inhuman. Power structures in conflict groups do not primarily oppose the enemy group — but they work to keep their own group separate. Then the polarities grow and grow and the groups themselves become incapable of stopping the process. Then an external energy is needed to reverse the process. But if you have to deal with the enemy on a one-to-one basis it is very difficult to maintain that image, because you see yourself in the other person. And this is what happened in Pakistan. They got to a point where everybody was feeling the pain caused by the conflict so intensely that they reached out to one another to help each other heal the pain. Muslims and Christians wound up crying in each others arms. What I learned there was that human beings can come together and heal one another in their pain much more easily than they can in their joy.

The two communities formed an association. They built an integrated recreation centre where the kids could swim together. It was unprecedented in that part of the world.

*At what level do you deal with conflict between societies? At the top, at the bottom?*

We work on all levels. But the real process of change has to come from the bottom up, in two different ways. One way is from the youth to the adults, the other is from the grass roots to the top of the pyramid. We really do get what we want in the world — the Reagans and Gorbachevs are reflections of our consciousness. If there's enough fear in the world, we'll get more and more nuclear weapons. If there is enough trust, we'll get more and more exchange programmes.

Working with the younger generation — as we have in Auroville these past two weeks — is effective in two ways. One is, they're going to be the leaders of the next wave, new leaders who will know each other as real people instead of as images of an enemy. But we don't just have to wait for this. These kids go home and they change their parents. I've seen it happen in the Soviet Union, in Nicaragua, in Lebanon. They're ready to change the world. They won't be quiet and fall back into a mould that no longer contains them.

*Is a major global shift happening as a result of this process?*

I see it happening everywhere, although you don't read about it in the newspapers. It's the change in consciousness. It's to do with unity, with global consciousness. My dream is of young people no longer fitting inside national boundaries, honouring old ideas of patriotism. And they're beginning to see that we're one family on earth — which doesn't mean that all the family will necessarily get along with each other. But you won't kill them, and you'll help them when necessary. And because these young people are the transition beings from the old way of being to a new way of being, they have to run into the old ways and bear the consequences. For me, this is the new definition of the warrior — taking that old warrior energy that protected some small part of the planet and using it to help make the planet whole again.

*What does Auroville mean to you?*

I came to Auroville for reasons that were not entirely clear to me then. But now I see Auroville as the model for what we're trying to create by doing the "Peace Trees" project. For Auroville is the most powerful demonstration of what I fantasize has to happen everywhere in the world — people from different cultures learning to work together. And it's the only place I've ever been where you seem to be dealing with all sides of it. I've visited a lot of communities that are reaching for the light and totally denying their darkness. Here this is not so. The land, the people, the foundation laid by Sri Aurobindo and Mother keep it in your face all the time. You could have settled in a much easier place, but that wouldn't have created the dynamic that makes you have to deal with the world. For me, Auroville is not only a microcosm of the planetary dilemma. To have had the privilege of exposing the children of the U.S., of the Soviet Union and other parts of India to this process feels exquisitely perfect. Thank you.

*Interview by Alan*

Danaan Parry



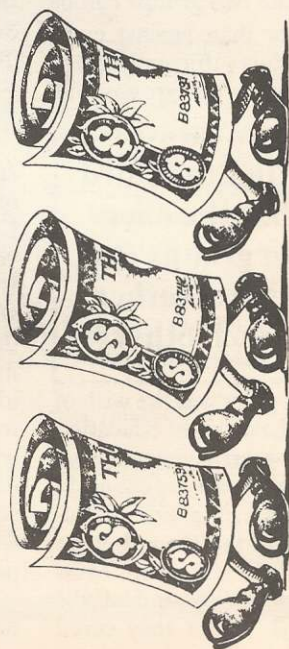


# AUROVILLE TODAY

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BOOKPOST

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In this issue: Auroville Economy, Conflict Resolution and more...



Photos: Guy



Exchange students planting trees for peace: 2000 'Peace Trees' were planted.

## Peace Trees — Teamwork '88

The Teamwork '88 (or Peace Trees) programme of exchange between youth from Russia, America and India, which was announced in Auroville Today number two, has happened and was a success. An interview with one of the organizers, Danaan Parry, you will find elsewhere in this issue. Below you will find extracts of an interview held on 28-12-1988 with some of the students attending the TEAMWORK '88 youth exchange programme. Morgen Miller (USA), Colleen Parry (USA), Nickel Swaminadhan (India), Jonah Loop (USA), Sergei Komarov (USSR), Andres Tonisson (USSR), Anupama Raman (India), Olga Tretyakova (USSR) share their experiences with us on one of the last days of their stay in Auroville.

Auroville Today: What were the most interesting experiences you have had over the last week?

Morgen: The most interesting thing for me was to go to the villages, to see how people live, a lot of them comfortable, in circumstances that in the US we would not consider acceptable, meaning we would not accept people living like that. Here they are all living in the same way and they are all respected.

Getting to know the students of the group has instilled a lot of hope in me, for my future and everyone's else's future, just knowing that we can work together very well and that we can communicate if we really try and that we have fun and understand each other as people. I take this back with me to the USA.

Colleen: The peace of mind that one gets when one stays here a couple of days is most impressive; if I had an ulcer before, it is gone now. I'm more relaxed, self-confident, more than when I came here. I can take things more easily in now.

Sergei: The most important thing for me was to come to know the ideas of Sri Aurobindo. There are no books of Sri Aurobindo translated into Russian at all; there seems to be a small group translating some books now but the result can only be expected in some years.

Andres: I like this psychological place. Here there are people like me, who think about world problems and who look more inside and not only outside.

Olga: I liked most the working together; there appeared something between us, and that was most important.

What did you actually learn about Auroville?

Andres: I learned that people from different nations and cultures can live in peace together and live normal. This is very important for me. I am from Latvia, where there are also many nationalities. And I must say that for the first time in my life I feel that I love snow.

Morgen: I think I will tell them that Auroville is an international community that is working incredible wonders on the land that normally would be considered impossible. A place where people are creating a lot of hope and beauty that will hopefully spread into the rest of the world.

Anupama: Auroville is like a dream come true. That so many people from so many nations have come together is so amazing, and their working bereft of nationalities.

Colleen: Basically that you are building here a society that no-one thinks will work. There have been thinkers since time began that have been wanting something like this to start. They started and it failed. Now I see

it happening here... About Auroville itself: overwhelming. It is beautiful to see the afforestation work done.

Sergei: Auroville is a very interesting experience from the political side of view. Ordinarily you have in each country first a government, and the process of democracy comes only in the second place. In Auroville, the process of democracy is first, government is there only afterwards.

Would any of you consider coming back to live and work in Auroville?

Jonah: Definitely. I want to finish my semester, and enter the school system here for the next semester. Thereafter I would like to work and live here.

Nickel: Ten years from now, when I have made myself a living, I'll come back and help Auroville financially and with my energy.

Colleen: It is hard to imagine not to live here. The wonderful feeling and joy that you get here are unequalled with anywhere I have lived. I need this place to come to get in touch with life. I have been drained, but not sufficiently yet... it may sound terrible, but I think I have to get drained more before I come here.

Andres: I want to be here more times, but I cannot find the peace in myself. In Latvia there is such a hard time now, I must go there and make my folk free.

Can you think of anything practical that you would like to do when you go back that would somehow continue what you have been doing here over the last week?

Jonah: I'm going home, I'll pack and come back here.

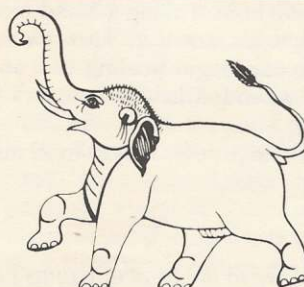
Andres: I am a teacher and think that I must teach my children the peace in the world, the peace between the people, which is a very concrete work and to teach them that they must listen more, not only speak. We must listen.

Anupama: I will maintain contacts with Earthstewards in the USA and Savitra in Auroville and will help to organize more youth camps like this. I am doing a course in mass communications, and I like to help to get through this message of people coming together.

Olga: This summer, on the island Walam in the USSR, there will be a camp in which the children from the USSR and Czechoslovakia will live and work together. A part of the Russian delegation which is here will be there, and we will try to repeat there all the best we have learnt here.

Interviewers: Alan, Yanne, Carel

LAST FREE ISSUE



Registration as a newspaper in process

## AME Programme

The 2nd training course in Ecological Agriculture for Developing Countries will be held in Auroville between 15th January and 11th February. There will be participants from India, Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Nepal. A fuller report on the programme will appear in a later issue of Auroville Today.