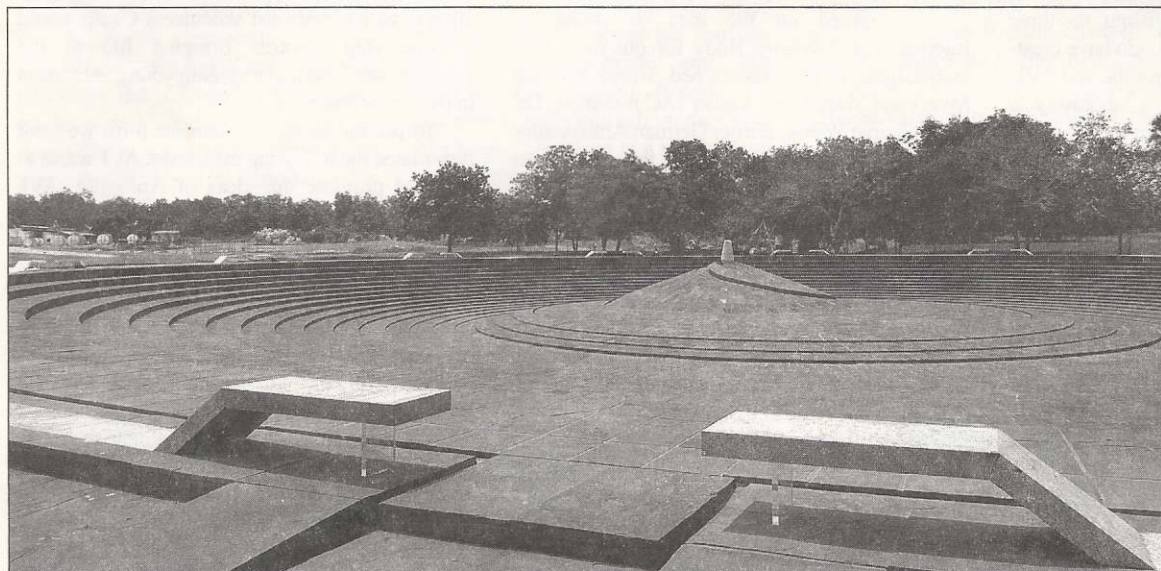


Auroville Today

SEPTEMBER 2004, No.188

Matrimandir progressing

A lot of progress is being made at Matrimandir. To finish the work inside the structure the Chamber will be closed for an expected three months from December onwards.



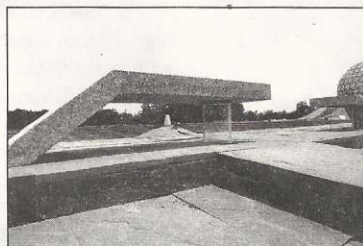
The amphitheatre is almost finished. Underneath these granite structures that mark the 16 stairs at the periphery, lights are yet to be installed.

“So what is it you want me to tell your readers?” says Gilles Guigan, one of the executives of the Matrimandir. “That we are making quick progress? We are! That we have problems with the outer skin? We do! That the work inside the structure will be ready by the end of 2005, barring unforeseen circumstances? That is our hope!” And he proceeds by rattling off an impressive list of finished work inside the structure. “What remains to be done is fixing the inner skin; incorporating the water element into each of the four pillars; creating the two marble structures besides the landings, each with a living flame; finishing the ramps; and making essential changes within the Chamber itself. With a bit of luck we should be able to complete all this by the end of 2005.” Sounds good. But what are the possible unforeseen circumstances?

Gilles scowls and points at the ramps. “As everybody knows, years ago white glass was imported for the parapets of the ramps and sent it to a factory in Calcutta to be bent into the correct shapes. But the factory got into a workers dispute and there has been a lockout ever since. We never managed to get our glass out. We are on the point of giving up hope and re-ordering the glass and having it bent somewhere else. That might give us a big delay – also as the work to match the various glass pieces is very precise.” Pointing at a stack of aluminium triangles Gilles shows the Peace Chamber – painted an impressive deep blue, only a few details need to be finished before it can receive its first visitors.

Work inside the Chamber is scheduled to start on December 1. “The eight openings in the ceiling, four for the air-conditioning and four for the artificial light points, will be closed,” says Gilles. “The central hole will be adapted for both normal and artificial lighting of the globe and serve as the air conditioning inlet. During that time we’ll also adjust the entrance doors, and finish the work on the roof: position the new heliostat, and install a new, foldable crane with 500kg lift capacity. It will be used for maintenance and repairs. The crane will not be visible from the ground. At the same time we will install a new air-conditioning system to replace the present outdated one which is more than ten years old. The entire work will take an estimated six months; but we hope that the work inside the Chamber will be finished within three months. During this period the Matrimandir will be closed. Instead, the public can visit one or more of the meditation chambers inside the petals surrounding the Matrimandir. One is almost ready, the other eleven are in an very advanced state.” Gilles shows the Peace Chamber – painted an impressive deep blue, only a few details need to be finished before it can receive its first visitors.

The work outside has met with a serious setback. The primer material, the first layer for the waterproofing of the skin, has proven to be defective and

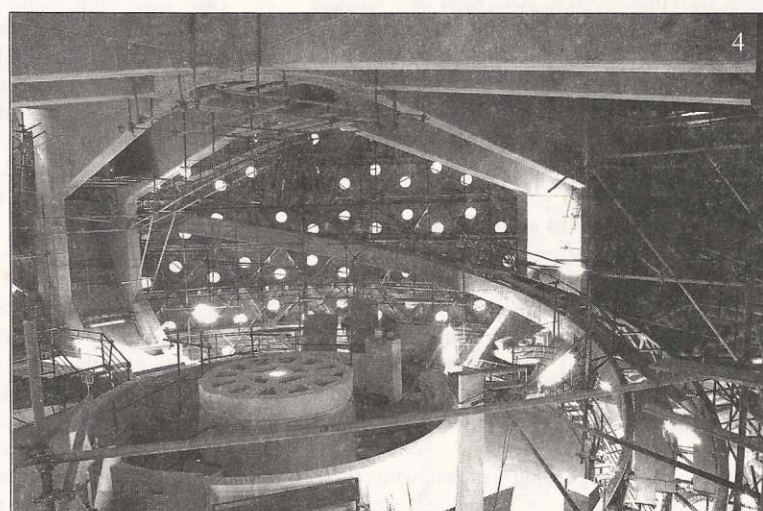
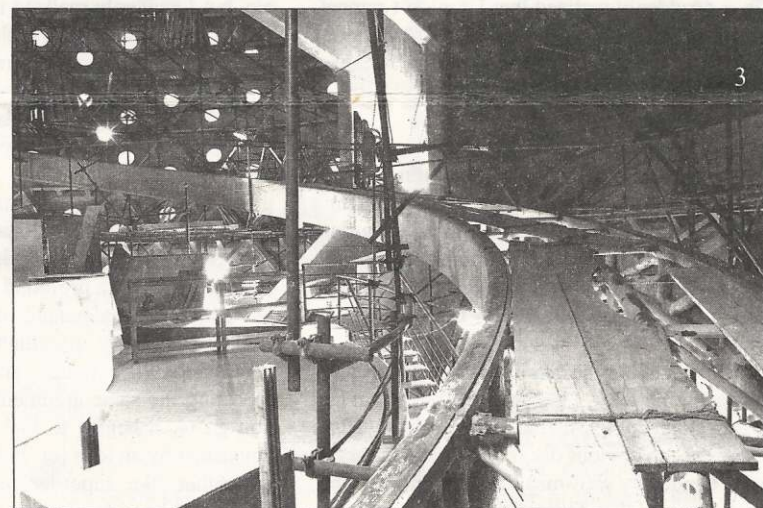
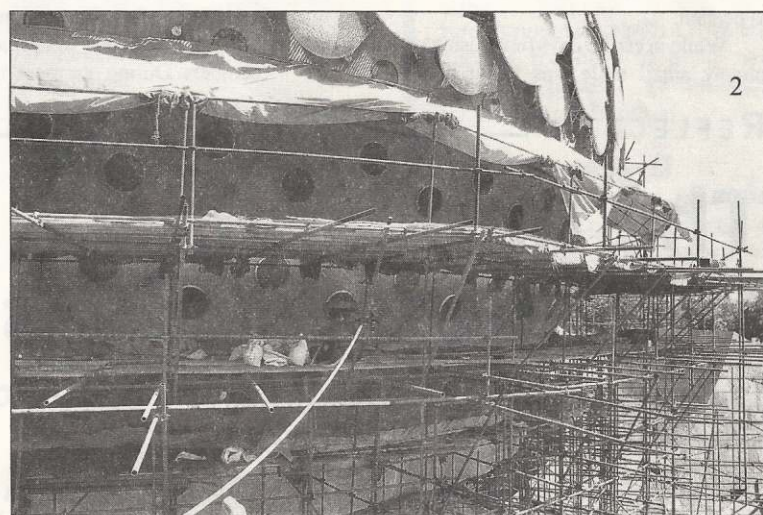
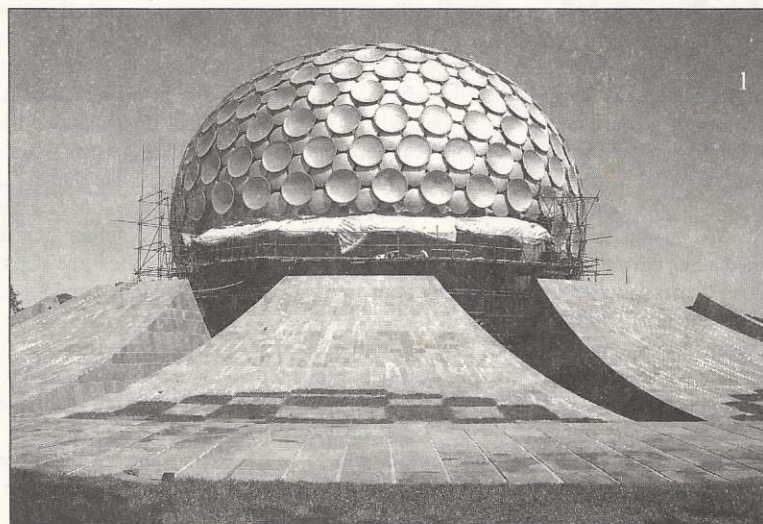


the entire waterproofing needs to be redone. Kemper, the German company who supplied the products, has taken full responsibility for the fault and will bear the costs of replacement. But the work involved is massive. All the discs have to be removed, the skin sandblasted, new primer and new waterproofing put and the discs re-installed. Says Gilles: “This work will be done in sections, so that a large part of the Matrimandir will remain covered and the building won’t look naked. But it means a delay of at least a year. We don’t expect the outer skin to be finished before the end of 2006. The sandblasting also delays the work to be done underneath the Matrimandir, such as installing the stones for the pathways and the marble for the pond.”

Other works outside are progressing well. The amphitheatre is as good as finished; the last small petal is being shaped, and the first pathways have been arrayed in red Agra stone and white granite. The workshops and storerooms which were located in the future gardens have been removed, and the landscaping of the entire oval is being finalised.

While we walk around the Matrimandir, a group of visitors approaches for meditation. Says Gilles “The temporary closing of the Matrimandir at the end of this year will also mark the time when we have to decide on our visitors’ policy. Personally, I believe that we’ll need to limit visitors’ access to the amphitheatre and perhaps the Chamber. But the 12 gardens, for example, which The Mother identified as places for concentration and experiencing different states of consciousness, may need to remain closed. How to organize all this is still a question for the future.”

Carel



From top to bottom: Photos 1 and 2: The discs on Matrimandir are removed by sections so that the skin underneath can be sandblasted and a new layer of primer and waterproofing material applied. Photo 3: Work on the ramps has come to a standstill as the glass for the parapets is stuck in a factory in Calcutta. Photo 4: View of the second level. The inner skin is the major work left. In the centre of the staircase is the symbol of The Mother, through which passes a ray of sunlight. It is concentrated by the heliostat on top of the Matrimandir and directed through the crystal in the Inner Chamber, and again through the centre of Mother's symbol until it reaches the water in the pond underneath the Matrimandir.

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The Auroville International dilemma

In the last issue of Auroville Today, we summarized aspects of the 20th annual meeting of the Auroville International Centres which took place in Retiro das Rosas, Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Here, Friedrieke reports on the discussions regarding the role of the centres.

Our discussions focussed around the question of how we can revitalise our Auroville International (AVI) organisation, which presently seems too weak to stand up to the challenges lying ahead. To find out where we want to go our first questions were: What is the aim and purpose the AVIs see for their work and action? What is the role the AVIs are given and should be given from the side of Auroville?

We shared the experience that, due to new media like the websites, the giving of information is no longer the most important part of our activities, as many people find their own way to Auroville and when they contact us they want substantial co-operation, like offering themselves for voluntary work or special project involvement. Here we see the future challenge to get people involved in Auroville who can contribute with special skills, like researchers, scientists, artisans, technocrats etc. A close co-operation has to be established with Auroville telling us who and what is needed.

While in earlier days fundraising on a comparatively small scale was a big help, today the

demands of many projects, like Village Action for example, have reached a scale where governments or other big organizations have to be contacted. This brings us closer to the task of bringing Auroville in contact with national governments and global organizations like UNESCO. But in order to fulfil this task we need a concerted action between Auroville and AVI, whereas at present there is still a lack of co-ordination and information sharing. A future great aim could be to bring together, like the three steps of Vishnu, the three bodies that Mother and Sri Aurobindo have created or envisaged: the Ashram, Auroville and AVI. Mother wanted Auroville to be a laboratory, a field for experiments on all levels, inner and outer. In working this out Auroville needs support from a strong AVI.

We see the big challenge is to help Auroville secure the international side of Auroville, which Mother wanted to belong to "humanity as a whole". In this connection we mentioned the importance of the International Advisory Council (IAC) and a better future co-operation with its members. During our meeting we heard the news

about the nomination of new IAC members, which we warmly welcomed, even if there were some reservations about the strong Indian/Aurovilian representation in this body, because the IAC was initially created to represent the international community. One point where international support may become crucial is the need to ensure that Aurovilians of foreign origin can remain in Auroville and will not be asked to leave India without due cause being shown.

We agreed on the idea to create an International Advisory Body for our own AVI association. Names mentioned were: Norman Myers and Mary King, former IAC members, Dr. Hans George Wielek, former German Ambassador to India, Dennis Kucinich, the American Democratic Party candidate who knows Sri Aurobindo's works, Doudou Diagne, UNESCO Director for Intercultural Affairs (now designated IAC member), Lynne Twist, American activist on alternative approach to money, Peter Russell, English writer and scientist, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Argentinean Nobel Prize Winner for Peace, Gilberto Gil, Brazilian singer and Minister of Culture in the Lula government.

Those of our members who can establish contacts with these persons were asked to approach them with the idea as soon as possible. In this context we should start a new move to link up with UNESCO and to make connections with the India chair at the UN.

In this context some criticism was heard regarding an apparent lack of willingness to work with us from Auroville's side. Some of these criticisms were: Auroville still lives in a glass bubble, it still has a "small village" mentality; it is too self protective, not open to novel ways already proven successful outside; it still has not understood the

universal message; it is not really attractive to young people from outside; it is not keeping us informed when good co-operation would bear better fruit.

One special point of discussion was the lack of co-operation with the International Zone group regarding an initiative by AVI Germany to create an International Volunteers Camp around the American student's hostel in the International Zone (IZ). While the American project holders were very much in favour and a well worked out plan was presented the issue was not openly discussed in the International Zone forum but rejected by a majority of IZ group members present at one meeting. In this connection it was felt that the agreement reached at the California 2002 meeting to make the pavilion groups part of the IZ group was not being properly implemented. Board members unanimously supported the idea that the creation of an International Volunteers Camp would be one step towards bringing life to the International Zone and engaging young volunteers in the development of it.

To put the above in a concise form we have formulated the following manifesto: AVI wants to live and promote the ideas of Auroville. AVI wants to be the interface between Auroville and the world. AVI wants to give practical help and advice, responding with new developments in the international world and the changing needs of Auroville. AVI is aware of the special relationship between Auroville and India and wants to co-operate with the Governing Board and the Working Committee in maintaining a harmonious relationship. AVI wants to help maintain the international character of Auroville and work in close co-operation with the International Advisory Council. AVI wants to work in full partnership with the International Zone group of Auroville. AVI wants to bring Auroville in contact with all countries of the world through actively engaging the youth of each country and strengthening the links with the UNESCO and other international organizations in order to fulfil our aim of Human Unity.

The next Auroville International meeting will take place from January 11-15, 2005 in Auroville.

REFLECTION

The unbearable heaviness of ideas

The predictability of the reconciliation meeting called by the Auroville Council caused Alan to reflect.

Call it premature senility. Last week I was driving through an Auroville forest when I suddenly realized that I couldn't remember what I had been doing for the past two hours. Panic, a moment's panic, before the synapses flickered again: Ah yes, I'd been at a meeting at the Town Hall.

On the face of it, there was no reason to forget this. I rarely go to the Town Hall, this was my first community meeting since returning from a visit to the West and the topic was a heavy-duty one: the need to create a new spirit of reconciliation in Auroville. So how could I forget such an important occasion? Clearly my mind was on the way out.

Or was it? As the details of the meeting started wandering back, I began to realize why it had been so forgettable. Not that it was a bad meeting. There was no obvious discord. On the contrary, it was attended by well-meaning Aurovilians who, having agreed that Auroville was in a precarious state, then proceeded to state what they thought was going wrong and how this could be remedied.

The problem was that my attention kept wandering. I noticed that B had had a haircut (not bad), that C looked as if she'd had a tough summer, that D seemed to have found a new girlfriend, that E... 'Pull yourself together,' I told myself sternly, 'This is an Important Meeting.' But no sooner had I screwed myself back into the thread than I was unravelling again.

At one moment something flashed before me: it was a televised image of a British Trades Union Congress. As a boy I was fascinated by these meetings. There was that moment at the end of a debate, for example, when the chairman would call for a show of hands. Then he would total up the votes. The strange thing was that, while there might be no more than 300 people in the hall, the final vote-count would be something like eight and a half million votes for the motion and six and a half million against. It took me some time to realize that one man's raised hand stood for the three million members of his trade union.

But why was I remembering this now? Then I recalled something else about those Trade Union Congresses, and that was their absolute predictability. Year in year out the unions - or, should I say, the union leaders - argued and voted the same way, so that if you knew the topic beforehand (and the topics were endlessly recycled) you knew exactly what each union leader would say when he (I don't think there was any she in those days) clambered up to the podium. It was all rather like an elaborate ritual.

Now, perish the thought that Aurovilians be compared to unreconstructed British union leaders, but I suddenly realized that, almost without exception, I knew what each Aurovilian in that room was going to say before he or she spoke. A was going to talk about the need for more inner work, B was going to complain about the lack of leadership, C was going to propose that we look again at Mother's messages for Auroville, D was going to suggest that all parties to the dispute sit down and have a quiet rational discussion etc. etc.

So what's wrong with that? Well, if you've had an epiphany, a profound moment of enlightenment, I can understand that you might keep restating it at every opportunity. But if you're still waiting for that moment and yet you keep on repeating the same arguments at every meeting you go to, it begins to look as if you've been ambushed by an idea (or, rather, an Idea). Ideas are rather like super-leeches. They perch on leaves and hang from trees, waiting for passers-by. Then they fling themselves onto exposed flesh and start gorging themselves on juicy red corpuscles. However, unlike leeches which eventually fall off, Ideas clamber up onto your back where they dig in their long, dirty claws and gradually get heavier and heavier. Until finally...finally all that is left is a stooped, desiccated shadow of a human being staggering under a huge weight towards a premature grave.

All right, I'm laying it on a bit. But I was depressed by the realization that the meeting in the Town Hall was so predictable. I wanted to shout out, "Surprise me!", and forthwith ban anybody repeating anything they had ever said before in an Auroville meeting. Childish? No doubt. But I think there's a more profound point here. And that is that as long as we lock ourselves up in our Idea or Perception (which, just to seal my unpopularity, I'll suggest are often not much more than projections of unresolved personal issues) we're not available for anything new to come knocking at our door. The difficulty (ah, you see, this is my Idea!) is that we become so identified with our Idea that we don't think it's possible to give it up without doing some terrible violence to ourselves, whereas it's the Idea, that damn Idea on our backs, which is doing the violence by stopping the fresh air getting in.

So why don't we make the next community meeting a bonfire of Ideas? We'll tear the horrid things off each other's backs, fling them screaming in the fire and then...wait. Just wait. Who knows? Something interesting might come strolling by.

Alan

AUROVILLE AND THE WORLD

Pan African Youth Leadership Summit

Sponsored by Auroville International USA and Jasmine, the Auroville liaison in South-Africa, Aurovilian Prema participated in the Pan African Youth Leadership Summit in Dakar, Senegal. A report.

For five days, 150 participants from all parts of Africa and from other continents met in the beautiful hotel Meridian President in Dakar for a dense programme of group discussions, presentations, encounters with African political, intellectual and artistic leaders, enriched by events of African culture, music and dance, and even an impressive fashion show.

At the centre of the summit was the search for means to solve the problems of HIV-AIDS, poverty, illiteracy, corruption and bad management of the environment, which are the recognized obstructions to Africa's emergence as a united, powerful and flourishing continent. By the end of the summit, the participants had decided to establish a permanent foundation with a council that will monitor progress and orientate future activities. A Declaration of the young leaders proclaims their pledge to help solve the numerous problems of Africa.

For me the Pan African Youth Leadership Summit was a very positive and enriching experience in many ways. It brought people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds together and opened new perspectives. It was powerful both on a personal and on a collective level in terms of unifying people and exchanging knowledge and experiences. Many people with whom I shared my experience of Auroville were very interested by the concept and asked me for a brochure.

The programme was packed with activities and we often found ourselves running behind schedule. However, there was always a lot of enthusiasm, and a strong sense of determination from the young leaders to make this summit a success. The high level of energy was positive and focused, and I felt bubbling amongst all these beautiful people a joie-de-vivre and openness which was particularly remarkable and touching.

To my feeling there was not enough time given to the young African leaders to speak their

mind and be more involved in planning the programme and coming up with innovative and creative ideas to conduct panel discussions and the like. No doubt we had great organizers and wonderful speakers but "The youth is not only the future but the present as well."

Overall great resolutions were passed, expressing a vision of openness and togetherness to overcome all the difficulties Africa faces today, and a commitment to make these vision and goals a living reality as soon as possible. What's important now is that all this isn't put in the closet and forgotten, but that individuals keep the motivation to work together, to connect further and create networks that can grow.

Africa is rich with spirituality and culture and with abundant natural resources; it is very unfortunate to see the extent to which the continent has suffered and is still suffering. It is for me at the very start a question of ethics and of respect for each other and for Mother Earth, which is absolutely indispensable...

Although the role of the international delegates was not clear, and there was no space for me to present Auroville as much as I would have wished, I have spoken to a number of people who are very interested and would like to visit some day. I feel very happy about this link between Auroville and Africa and hope to stay in touch with them.

Prema



Prema

The Basque momentum

Rosana Agudo talks about the growing interest in the Basque country in Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's teachings and about the interaction with Auroville which may lead to the Auroville Pavilion of Basque culture.

On November 10th, 2003, a travelling exhibition on Auroville was opened in Bilbao (Spain). On November 20th the Spanish translation of Sri Aurobindo's book "The Ideal of Human Unity" was presented by Dr. Ananda Reddy. (brief news column, Auroville Today #179, December 2003)

"So what was behind it...?" Rosana Agudo looks at me with a penetrating gaze as if to fathom what to tell me – her own life-story, the discovery of the inner guide which ultimately led her to Auroville, or just the story of the exhibition in Bilbao and its importance for the Basques. She decides on a middle course.

"The story of the Auroville exhibition in Bilbao has to be understood against the background of the Basque Country. Most people know that the Basques inhabit a small region on the Bay of Biscay at the western end of the Pyrenees, the mountains that separate France from the Iberian peninsula. That region, called the Basque Country, covers a small area of about twenty thousand square kilometres. Today it consists of seven districts located in two different European countries: Spain and France.

"The Basques have lived uninterruptedly in this small region since the beginnings of recorded history, though only a short time as an independent state (The Kingdom of Pamplona, around 900 CE). They have their own language, called Euskara, which is probably the oldest surviving language in Europe, even though it is not an Indo-European language and shows no resemblance to languages in neighbouring countries. The Basques also have their own age-old cultural traditions and literature.

"In Spain, during the dictatorship that followed the Spanish Civil War, a deliberate attempt was made to eliminate the Basque language and culture. Basque became a forbidden language. For decades, children had to study in an unfamiliar language, and were severely punished when they spoke in Basque, even at playtime. It was only relatively recently that the language was again permitted, and since then there has been a strong revival of the Basque sense of national identity, language and culture. At its most extreme this sense has found expression in armed revolutionary uprisings that aim at creating a separate state for the Basque districts in Spain. In France, this drive has been less extreme. In Spain, the revolutionary attacks have left many people scarred and scared. I think I am on safe grounds to say that the vast majority of the Basques in Spain are not really interested in a separate state, but very much favour the growth of the Basque identity and culture."

She pauses, and then proceeds to tell something about herself. Rosana Agudo, it appears, discovered the inner guide some ten years ago after a dramatic occurrence in her life. "I was in business, but suddenly life became hard to live and I got very depressed. Nothing made sense any more. I wondered if I needed psychiatric help – and then I got an unexpected inner experience which completely changed my outlook on life." The change was profound. Rosana

changed her profession and, more importantly, started to practice meditation and to explore all kinds of 'spiritual activities'. "Someone advised me to read a book of The Mother, but I wasn't really interested. After all, I had my inner voice which told me what to do. It did not tell me to read The Mother's books." Five years later she met a renowned Basque medical doctor, Dr. Anton Artinano, called Arti. He told her about his spiritual guides, Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, and showed Rosana Sri Aurobindo's photograph on the cover of a book. "I realised in a very natural way, nothing dramatic, that my inner guide was Sri Aurobindo. I knew it was my path, and for the first time, I heard about Auroville."

Together with Arti she started manifesting their dreams. Arti owned a large piece of land on a mountain-side, and with a dozen friends from

successful. Most Aurovilians were difficult to approach and had 'closed to visitors' written all over them. It was frustrating. You understand, I was all alone, it was hot, I was walking everywhere, but I could not contact those Aurovilians! But in spite of them, I felt that something very deep was going on." Her second visit happened two years later. This time there were more contacts. But the real break-through only came when Rosana chanced to see the photos that were being prepared for the Auroville exhibition at UNESCO in Paris. "I realised here was an exhibition I could show in the Basque country! Anandi and Joseba, two Spanish Aurovilians who themselves hail from the Basque country, enthusiastically backed the idea, along with other Aurovilians working at Auroville's Future."

Meanwhile, the political situation in the Basque country was getting



Members of 'Lur Gozoa' under the Banyan tree. From left to right: Elena, Jaione, Itxar, Begoña, Nerea, Anandi (from Auroville), Rosana, Amparo, Carmen, and Adela

their meditation group, Rosana and Arti began an experiment with the earth. "We flattened a piece of land on the mountain and moved tons of rocks in order to make a conscious contact with the earth. It was very hard work. We planted trees, flowers, and built a sweat lodge in the style of the Native Americans. The day we wanted to finish it, the sky had turned dark and incessant rains poured down. We did not even talk to one another, we just worked until, at three o'clock in the morning, we finished it. Bedraggled we thronged into the sweat lodge. Then we realised how each person individually had gone through a deep experience – a conscious connection between us humans and the elements had been established, as if Nature and us had consented to evolve together. We later baptized that piece of earth 'Lur Gozoa', meaning 'The Joy of Earth.' Ultimately it became the name of our group."

But Arti had another dream. He would like to create 'Aurobilbo'. Bilbo is the Euskara word for Bilbao, and the name implied a place which would be a bridge between Auroville and the Basque country. "We decided that I would go to Auroville and experience what it really is. This was in 2000. But then, during the preparations for my trip, Arti died in an accident. It was a terrible shock. Nevertheless, I made the trip to Auroville. That first visit wasn't very suc-

worse. The meditation group Rosana was leading decided to do something in an attempt to deal with the problem. "I had a copy of the unpublished Spanish translation of Sri Aurobindo's book *The Ideal of Human Unity*. We decided to work with this as a help to understand the Basque problem. We embarked on a number of unique sharing sessions. The twelve of us – all women, by the way, we lack a certain male energy! – are all completely different in our outlook, and to talk about what it means 'being Basque' is not easy. The experience was such a catharsis for each of us that we decided to pool our money so that we could publish this book. For we all realised that this book is very important for the Basques to understand the importance of unity."

The ideas were coming together. What if the presentation of the book could coincide with the exhibition on Auroville? And who better than Dr. Ananda Reddy, with his international experience of talking about the work and vision of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, to present this book? Ananda was approached and consented readily. But the work in Bilbao was more difficult to pull off – though here, too, it was the hour of the unexpected.

"For us it was very important that the Basque government supported the idea. I started contacting many institutions as we wanted a good exhibition site in the centre of Bilbao and a first class auditorium for the presentation of the book. The architects' association of the Basque country offered a good location for an exhibition, right in front of the Guggenheim museum, but they asked me not to mention the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, which initially put me off. But then I decided

PHOTO: ANANDI



Rosana Agudo

to hang the pictures, and below them I put the words of Sri Aurobindo – and they were impressed. I went to all the big companies and the Basque government asking for support. And I gradually realised that it did not really matter if they would finally support us or not. What mattered was that they listened, often for more than an hour, when I presented Auroville and talked about Sri Aurobindo, Human Unity etc. Finally we received financial support from several sources: the Caja Laboral, the Council of Architects of Bilbao, and the Departments of Culture, Energy (EVE) and Environment (IHOBE) of the Basque Government.

We got a very big place at the centre of Bilbao for the presentation of the book and a place for a second exhibition in the Archives building of the Bilbao government. Anandi, Joseba, Luigi and Anupama flew to Bilbao to help. We made a big book on Auroville, translated into Spanish from the Auroville website. The media reported very favourably on the exhibition and on Ananda Reddy's presentation. In all, it was a great success."

However, some people had questions. One of those was a very important person from the Basque government who expressed his unhappiness that all the explanations and texts were in Spanish, not in Euskara. "I replied that it had been my intention to present the texts in both languages, but as they had only donated money for one language, I had chosen Spanish because it is the more widely spoken language. He understood. Then he asked me about building a Basque pavilion in Auroville. I replied that I thought it was a brilliant idea, but that first we would need to heal many things in the Basque country. For we would need to build a pavilion for unity, not for expressing disunity."

Like the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture for Tibet, a Pavilion of Basque Culture would help to focus awareness on the national consciousness in the Basque country. "But," says Rosana, "the people first have to learn about the background, discover Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, and if possible start working on an inner experience. On that basis a pavilion could be started." Asked whether she would be able to describe the specific character of the nation soul of the Basques she replies, "The Basques are those who keep the memory. That is perhaps the mission of the Basques: to keep the memory. But we will need time to further elaborate on this."

Lur Gozoa has now embarked on publishing *The Ideal of Human Unity* and the information on Auroville in Euskara and plans to give presentations across the Basque country and the Spanish territory. This July, Rosana visited Auroville with all the members of Lur Gozoa. "Our general impression was positive; all felt that there is something important here which we want to support. We also want to establish a living bridge between Auroville and the Basque country. For we all realised that what you are doing in Auroville is the same as we aspire to do here. But we don't want to create an Auroville International Centre in Bilbao. We want to remain independent." And with a mischievous smile she concludes, "After all, we are Basques."

In conversation with Caryl

In brief

August 15

India's 57th Independence Day was celebrated on the 15th August 2004 at Bharat Nivas. Mahalingam hoisted the National Flag of India and children of Auroville Schools sang patriotic songs.

To celebrate Sri Aurobindo's birthday, the traditional bonfire and meditation took place in the early morning at the amphitheatre near the Matrimandir.

On the eve of Sri Aurobindo's birthday, Aurovilians met at the Sri Aurobindo World Centre of Human Unity to invoke his presence and dedicate themselves to his vision.

Keet roofs - I

In the aftermath of 93 children being burnt to death when their keet-roofed school building in Kumbakonam caught fire, the Government of Tamil Nadu has instructed all schools to dismantle keet-roof structures. Isaiambalam school, which had five such structures is now faced with a crisis and appeals for help to build new roofs. Contact isaiambalam-school@auroville.org.in

Keet-roofs - II

Following the fire at Kumbakonam, the Inspector of Factories has issued a directive that no thatched sheds or structures made of combustible materials should be in any factory premises even for temporary purposes. Auroville commercial units have been instructed to dismantle any such structure, where the space is being used publicly by unit workers.

Population update

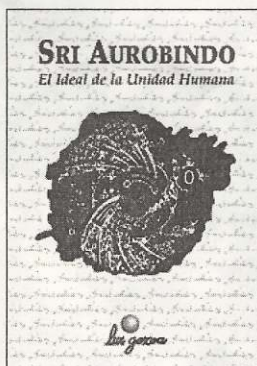
As per August 1, 2004, Auroville's population (Aurovilians and Newcomers) was 1791 people (956 males and 835 females), comprising 1377 adults (729 males and 648 females) and 414 minors (227 males and 187 females). This figure excludes long term and other guests. Regular updates can be found at website www.auroville.org/society/av_population.htm

Increase of Central Fund contribution

In recent economic seminars it had been proposed to increase the 'in kind' services as well as the 'in kind' portion of Aurovillian Maintenance without in depth discussion on how to raise the funds. In the absence of an Economy Group, the FAMC has decided to raise the monthly contribution of Aurovilians to the Central Fund from Rs 1200 to Rs 1500 as an increase has not occurred in the last three years, prior to which the contribution would increase by Rs. 100 per year. An increase is also needed to cover other Central Fund expenditures, inflation over the past three years and because some Central Fund contributions have decreased.

Auroville Boutiques

The FAMC has constituted a sub-group to define the principles on which commercial activities at the Visitors Centre and at the Auroville Boutique in Pondicherry are established and run. The group is also to look into the usage of the names of Matrimandir and Auroville as well as Mother's signature for commercial purposes, sale of products from village units through Auroville's Village Action, and possible development of periodic open-air markets.



The Spanish edition of Sri Aurobindo's *Ideal of Human Unity* carries a photo of the galaxy of Auroville

Lights on Savitri

David Johnston examines Savitri from a Jungian perspective

My intention here is to briefly reflect upon Sri Aurobindo's magnum opus, *Savitri*, which he himself declared was both a legend and a symbol. By legend is meant a story that, in this case, finds its origins in the Vedas, India's source scriptures, and which later was given form as a human tale in the Mahabharata. As symbol, Sri Aurobindo's rendition penetrates to the truth behind and represented by the story. Savitri is, in fact, an epic poem and an archetypal expression of what is involved in humankind's potential self-fulfillment. It consists of underlying behavior patterns for a spiritually individuated life. The Mother, Sri Aurobindo's spiritual collaborator, goes so far as to contend that "It is the prophetic history of the earth, embodying in itself the fulfillment of man's life on earth". The following lines from the poem are indicative of the scope and beauty of Sri Aurobindo's vision:

*O Sun-Word, Thou shalt raise the earth-soul to Light
And bring down God into the lives of men;
Earth shall be my work-chamber and my house
My garden of life to plant a seed divine.
The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,
The body of earth a tabernacle of God.
(Book XI, Canto one, p.699)*

In a letter to a young man, the eminent psychologist C.G. Jung expressed similar sentiments. In it, he wrote: "One must be able to suffer God. That is the supreme task for the seeker of ideas. He must be the advocate of the earth. God will take care of himself. My principle is: Deus et homine. God needs man in order to become conscious just as he needs limitation in time and space. Let us therefore be for him limitation in time and space, an earthly tabernacle". It is as if Sri Aurobindo depicted a divine fiat and Jung, the necessary human response for its fulfillment.

According to Jung, the appropriate myth today for contemporary individuals is the myth of consciousness. This ultimately involves becoming conscious of all psychological opposites, including the masculine and feminine principles, good and evil and their reconciling synthesis. He described the process in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, a study representing the fulfillment of his life and work. It is noteworthy that the opposites referred to are not those of the personal complex-ridden psyche, nor only between the ego and non-ego, that is to say the Self, but the opposites in the godhead itself. Sri Aurobindo's poem *Savitri* is a poetic rendition of this very realization.

Savitri as Legend and Symbol

Briefly, the legend of Savitri involves a childless king, Aswapathy, propitiating the Mother of the universe for a son. She grants him his boon and the additional boon of a daughter, who is a portion of Herself. As the tale unfolds, his daughter, Savitri, after a long search, finds her mate in Satyavan, the son of a dispossessed king, Dyumatsena. After one year together, Satyavan dies, as prophesied. Savitri then accompanies the Lord of Death to His realm and persuades him to allow her to return to life with her beloved.

According to Sri Aurobindo the poem as a symbol revolves around the following archetypal phenomena. King Aswapathy represents human aspiration for the realization of a divine life. Savitri is the embodiment of a portion of the universal Mother, whose purpose for incarnation is to enable humankind to fulfill its prayers. She represents the Divine Word, who is born to save. Satyavan represents the soul of which the essence is "the divine truth of being". Dyumatsena symbolizes the Divine Mind, which has here fallen blind, losing not only its vision but its natural right to its heavenly kingdom.

Sri Aurobindo based his symbolic rendition of Savitri on his

own experience, vision and understanding. The nature of the symbol for him is essentially the same as Jung's understanding. The latter noted that it is a "sensuously perceptible expression of an inner experience," based on the transcendent function involving the reconciliation of opposites. He described it as a "libido analogue" that effectively canalizes instinctual energy into new form. Likewise, Campbell defined the symbol as "an energy evoking and directing agent". He approvingly quoted Thomas Merton, who observed that the 'true symbol' awakens...consciousness to a new awareness of the inner meaning of life and of reality by way of affective relationship to one's "deepest self". The true symbol, in other words, is a vehicle for the spiritual transformation of consciousness.

The Cry for Myth in the Contemporary World

The existentialist psychologist, Rollo May wrote a book entitled *The Cry for Myth* where he expressed his conviction in the urgent need for myth in our day. Living myth, according to both him and Campbell, contribute to a sense of individual and communal identity, as well as provide the foundation for a moral order. In addition, they each contended, myth can awaken consciousness to the mystery of being or the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* of the existential nature of the universe.

Sri Aurobindo's poem *Savitri* fulfills all these requirements for the new age that is in the process of being born. The poem is, in fact, a dialogue between a highly individuated individual and the archetypal powers of the unconscious, fulfilling Jung's appeal for the need, today, for an active dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious. The result is a symbolic myth that speaks directly to what Sri Aurobindo referred to as the "Cosmic Self," that is the individual's innermost being and the "general mind of man".

Campbell likened mythologies and religions to great poems. The poet, according to Robert Graves, was originally a priest and seer, at least in the Celtic tradition. This is also true of other traditions including the Hindu tradition, dating back to the time of the mantras of the Vedic cycle, some three to seven thousand years ago and perhaps beyond. Sri Aurobindo is a contemporary poet-seer and *Savitri* a high order mantric poem. The mantra consists of words of power that find their source deep within, while being "framed in the heart". According to Sri Aurobindo, its purpose is to "create vibrations in the inner consciousness" that encourage the realization of what the mantra symbolizes. *Savitri*, in other words, is not only a visionary poem, but its mantric quality renders it a vehicle for the transformation of consciousness and for a life organized around the Self.

Perhaps it is not correct to say that there is no coalescing myth or worldview that provides a focus for life today. But if there is, it is a narrow one organized around materialistic science, technology, consumerism and the profit motive, somewhat modified by humanistic concerns. Moreover, as the industrial age gives way to the information age and the modern mind gives way to post-modernism, a centerless, open-ended relativistic world without reference to any authority is growing, where even this focus is being increasingly subjected to narcissistic individualism and the will to power. This comes along with the quantification of life, social isolation, mass-mindedness and alienation from the instincts and the power of symbols. It also encourages compartmentalization in both individual life and the life of the culture, where the left hand doesn't know or even care what the right hand is doing. Jung's observation that everywhere one hears the cry for a *Weltanschauung*, that is a meaningful worldview or philosophy of

life, is more relevant today than ever.

When a people's myth breaks down, life becomes fragmented and disoriented. This has always been the case, whether it be in the second and third century classical Greece, Egypt of three thousand BC or the Hebrew world of Isaiah. During the breakdown of classical Greece, Lucretius wrote that he could see "aching hearts in every home...forced to vent themselves in recalcitrant repining". In Proverbs 29:18, we are warned that when there is no vision, people destroy themselves. It is not difficult for sensitive individuals to relate to both these observations today. Increasingly, people find life meaningless and without purpose, while defending themselves in all manner of ways, whether it be through mindless consumerism, obsessive involvement with new technology, or through excessive use of alcohol and drugs, whether legal or illicit. Add to this a popular culture of movies, music, television programmes, video games, and possibilities on the internet that generally appeal to the lowest common denominator, while often celebrating destructive tendencies and shadow qualities, and the situation looks anything but hopeful.

People have often had a coalescing worldview that gives meaning to existence and focus to all activities of life and social patterns. At least, this is the case in normal times when society is functioning creatively and productively in tune with its ideals. The most recent period in Western consciousness of an integrated worldview dates back to the middle ages, when all life and art was organized around a Christian conception of life based on a geocentric universe. There was, however, considerable repression which exploded with the Renaissance, the period when there was a creative shift in consciousness towards more direct concern and involvement with life in this world, along with the exaltation of the human ego. This coincided with a heliocentric conception of the universe and the beginnings of the development of the scientific mind and positivism or objective reason.

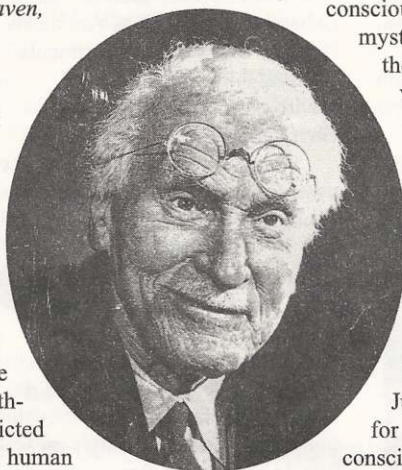
But today, not only has our thinking turned more subjective but science has given us a new view of the reality of the physical universe. Now the sun itself is perceived as but a star amongst billions of stars, and our universe a part of a galaxy of stars and planets, amongst millions of galaxies. Meanwhile, leading physicists have come to regard physical reality to be of a unitary nature. In psychology, C.G. Jung has given evidence for the unitary nature of all reality, both physical and spiritual, in his conception of a *unus mundus*.

The chaos of the present post-modern condition is giving birth to a deep-seated yearning for direction and purpose, integrated around a spiritual center and wholeness. There is a cry for a guiding myth and an integral *weltanschauung* that is in harmony with the most contemporary view of reality, and that does not repress life but fulfills it in all its multifacetedness. There is, in addition, growing awareness, especially among women, of a need for a re-evaluation of the feminine, which in some quarters is acknowledged as a need for a return of the Goddess. As a mythic poem of the Goddess as heroine, who assimilates death in order to release the soul and truth of being into life, Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is a response to all these aspirations. It is a myth for our time.

Conclusion

Sri Aurobindo's epic poem *Savitri* is a symbolic myth that responds to a deeply felt need in the contemporary mind. Not only does it represent a world-view that is in harmony with the most recent understanding of scientific reality but, as a symbol, it penetrates to the essential truth of that reality. It concomitantly describes what is involved in the fulfillment of a spiritually individuated life. This is the goal of Jung's myth of consciousness for our time. Not only is *Savitri* a vision for individual and collective self-fulfillment but, as a mantra, it has a directly transformative effect on the inner consciousness. Such a magnificent poem calls for intelligent reflection.

David Johnston



Carl Jung



Sri Aurobindo

FESTIVAL

The Glastonbury experience

Seven young Aurovillians worked at a world-famous festival

So what would you expect going to one of the world's biggest festivals?...think again...again. Try: mud; shit-pits; British weather; cold open showers; brilliant music; naked hippies; peace flags. And the best frickin' time of your life!!!

So, in a big big field in small small tents with lots of rain and much more mud, singing "Buffalo Soldier" (or what we knew of it anyway) very very loud, a group of Aurovillians attempt to survive in the wild wild English wilderness that is the Glastonbury Festival.

Glastonbury is situated in the south-west of England, in the exact locality of Avalon, made famous as the home of Morgane in the Arthurian legends. Since the 1960s, it has also been home

to one of the world's most renowned festivals of the performing arts. Hosted by Michael Eavis, a local Pilton farmer and, more recently, his daughter Emily, the festival covers 900 acres of farmland (don't worry, the cows were looked after) and has 16 major event areas and innumerable smaller ones. Every year over 1000 individual performances are organized, not to mention the Kidz Field play area, the Greenpeace Field, the Stone Circle, Mini Glastonbury (where you can get married for the day), the cinema, and many many whackos. (We caught sight of priests screaming 'kiss the priest!', crucifix-wielding Jesus lovers, giant praying mantis mobiles, vodka nurses and mud monsters.)

A 3-day ticket (camping included) costs

£112 for ye average punter; not that we paid! We were lucky enough to be accepted to work in the green Tent under the Children's World charity, run by Arabella King, Di and Lynn Chamberlain, and Kerri Hendry.

continued on page 5



Left to right: Sven, Suryamayi, Adrian, Mukta, Sam, Aditi and Amba

The future of Auroville's education

Auroville cannot offer its teachers a sufficient income. This calls for a mandatory rethink of the future of its education. Is an Auroville International Boarding School a solution to the problem?

In the June-July 2003 issue of Auroville Today, Helmut Ernst, a Friend of Auroville who lives in Germany, proposed to create an international educational campus in Auroville as a means to develop the city within 15 years. His ideas were received with interest, but found no takers. Now, a year later, Auroville may be forced to reconsider. The immediate reason is not so much a concern for the growth of Auroville, but a concern for the quality of the education Auroville provides. That

any general solutions – but something has to be done or we will not be able to get and keep teachers.”

What can be done? Auroville's education depends primarily on three sources of income. The Government of India contributes about 35% of its running costs, 12% is received from incidental donors while a staggering 53% is coming from Auroville's own resources. Auroville's portion, paid by the Central Fund, is generated from profit sharing by Auroville's commercial units, guesthouse contributions

“Innovative Primary School Design” award from Designshare, a US based organization that offers consultancy in school designing, evaluation and information sharing, for her design of the Auroville Kindergarten. The prize not only brought a nice certificate to hang on the wall, but unexpectedly an invitation to be part of a design group for an international boarding school in Goa. She accepted. “It opened my eyes to another reality, that of the commercial importance of education. In Goa, a complete new campus is being designed for 600 children at an approximate cost of Rs. 22 crores. Schooling will range from lower Kindergarten to 12th standard. Salaries for teachers range from Rs 40,000 a month upwards, and the head teacher will earn Rs 170,000 a month. The feasibility study demonstrates that the total investment will be paid back in 5-7 years, and that thereafter, the school will be a great economic engine. It made me rethink Auroville's system of financing its

11 or 12. From age 12 onwards, Auroville's education would not only target Auroville children, but also children from all over India and abroad whose parents are interested in the educational system that Auroville offers. The fee structure should be such as to guarantee a decent income for not only the high school teachers, but also for the Aurovilians teaching at the other Auroville schools. Such a boarding school would make the Auroville education not only self-sustainable, but ultimately profitable.”

Doesn't the concept of a boarding school clash with the educational ideals as outlined by Mother? “I don't think so,” says Suhasini. “Firstly, the principle that some people in Auroville pay for the education of their children is not new: parents who are Long Term Guests or Newcomers are already requested to make a contribution for their children's education. Also Aurovillian parents are regularly approached for donations. Then, if we look at the example of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram itself, we see that its International School, set-up by The Mother, is a boarding school. She even said that for many children it was better not to stay with their parents! Lastly, Auroville's educational ideals could lead us to formulate our own curriculum, which includes the freedom to teach without exams. The school would teach all its students in accordance with its curriculum up to say the 10th grade. After that, the student could be offered the choice to continue the school's curriculum – with no exams, or to study for one of the internationally recognized certificates so that the student would be able to pursue higher education in India or abroad. This is the system which will be followed by the Goa International School. This school is accredited by the International Baccalaureate organization. Students who wish to study for a certificate work to get this Baccalaureate, which is accepted for admittance by universities in Europe, USA and India.”

What about the mixture of Auroville and non-Auroville children? The economics of such a school would probably indicate a ratio of 1:4 so that a minority of Auroville children would sit in classes together with a majority of non-Auroville children. Says Suhasini: “I think it would be a big advantage for the Auroville children. The Auroville children will already have been imbued with the Auroville culture during their period in the Kindergarten and the primary school and will carry that with them. The school's curriculum will be tailored to Auroville's requirements. The teachers will be Aurovilians, except for those



Suhasini

subjects for which there are no qualified Aurovilians. The teachers will be well paid, and where we do not have qualified people, we could hire them from outside, something which we cannot do at present. The set-up would allow us to provide a much complete education than is done now.”

She illustrates her ideas by giving details about the Goa school: “They have a huge compound of 55 acres which is used for the primary section (lower kindergarten to 5th grade), the middle school (6th to 10th grade) and the high school (11th and 12th grade). The campus has besides classrooms, sport facilities, an administration building, dormitories, a kitchen/cafe-teria, an auditorium, a library, a media centre, shops, accommodations for staff, and service buildings such as for laundry. Rules for entering and leaving the campus will be strictly monitored. The students are to run a number of the departments themselves, as part of their curriculum. For example, they will run the shops that sell the things children need, so that they learn about shop management; they will run the library and learn about access to information; and they partly run the media centre. The latter is a special development of the Goa school. In the media centre they get classes in hardware and software, learn to use computers, design their own websites and so on. The interesting thing is that the children will be stimulated to teach other children – which appears to work better than if they are being taught by adults.”

The compound for an Auroville International boarding school could be smaller if Auroville would only aim at a boarding school from 6th standard onwards. Says Suhasini, “I would like a discussion to start among the Auroville educators about the future of Auroville's education and about the modalities of an international boarding school which, in my opinion, is the only way out of our present predicament. A feasibility study should be made, the required investment budget drawn up and a campus location found. If Auroville rejects the idea, fine, but then it has to come up with another solution for the present and future problems. For Auroville's education can't continue as it does.”

In conversation with Carel



The new Kindergarten 'Nandavanam' in Centre Field, at walking distance from the existing Kindergarten

quality is directly related to the quality of the teachers, most of whom depend on the income (called 'maintenance') provided by Auroville to meet their costs of living. For years that maintenance, now in the range of Rs 3,000-4,500 a month has been too low. In the article 'Meeting the basic needs' in the March issues of Auroville Today this year, a poignant letter written by one of the teachers stated the problem:

“Hello. Just a short note regarding economy. Lately I have been listening to and talking to many teachers who are really worried about their finances. I know it is not only the teachers, but these are the people that I have been talking to. As you know this is a work that requires a lot of commitment and focus. But some people are wondering if they have to try to think of a second job in order to make ends meet – some are already doing it and are stretched beyond their limit. At the same time, we have a couple of young teachers who do not have houses and they do not have the money to build a house. What should they do? If they leave our schools, the children and Auroville will suffer. I don't have

and other donations. From Auroville's total monthly income, the schools get the lion's share.

The problem is that an increase of the schools' budget cannot be expected. The *White Paper on the Auroville Economy* presented by the Dutch Professor Henk Thomas and the Indian Chartered accountant Manuel Thomas in May 2002 convincingly demonstrated that major improvements in the commercial sector, Auroville's main income generator, cannot be envisaged in the foreseeable future. Neither can Auroville rely on additional income from the Indian government – perhaps rather the contrary. In consequence, Auroville's financial constraints neither allow for adding more teachers, nor for an increase of teachers' maintenance. As teachers cannot be expected to continue teaching without a sufficient income, their choice may be either to take up an additional job, or leave school altogether.

Auroville architect Suhasini Ayer thinks that another option is not only feasible, but promises to turn a costly service into a money generator for Auroville. In 2003 she won the

education. It is not a question of copying the Goa model, but to study which elements could be used, which not and how such an idea can be adapted to Auroville's situation.”

Seeing my eyebrows raised at the idea of such a concept for Auroville, Suhasini explains: “The boarding school concept is a very common phenomenon in England and India, though not in the rest of Europe or the USA. In India, private boarding schools are on the increase. They generally offer excellent education. The trend is that such schools are being established all over India, as large commercial institutions have realized that education is a highly attractive venture. Some boarding schools offer education starting from Kindergarten; others, such as the Kodaikanal International School which has educated many Auroville children, do so from the 7th standard onwards.

“For Auroville, I would propose that we think of starting an International Boarding school from 6th standard onwards. That would mean that Auroville's primary schools would educate the children up to age

continued from page 4

When Sam worked for Di two years ago at the festival, she saw it as such a good experience and an opportunity for us to pursue. We contacted Di earlier this year and requested work for seven of us. She trustingly accepted us on a 'no deposit' term, which made it possible for us to make it a reality. Chopping vegetables until your hands reek of capsicum, serving performers endless supplies of chips and cheese (in the company of 'hot Scottish guy') and washing burnt greasy dishes in buckets for four (or six) hours a day is not the most glamorous of jobs – granted. Better than cleaning out the 'shit-pits'. At least we had tea...oh, and fresh strawberries and cream. Yum. No complaints.

Di was great. Kerri was great. Hot Scottish guy was hot. Atmosphere was spiffingly magical and...we got invited back!

The general vibe exuded from all the festival-goers was one of serious peace and love, free from the stress and restraints of daily life – this was smiles all round! The comradeship is like nothing you've ever imagined: if you're cold – “oh, sit by our fire luv”, if you're hungry – “want some food?”, and you definitely don't need to be sad to merit a HUG, a novel concept to us Aurovilians.

Despite the rather...um...friendly sanitary conditions and the knee-deep slosh, the magic remains unblemished for entire week. Don't yer wellies (the best investment you'll ever make) and a thick

(muddy) fleece and you're sorted.

Check this out for a Friday: get up 11:45, on shift 12:00 noon, out at 4pm and the revelry begins. We plod off to the first of many many many mind-blowing performances. On the agenda: Snow Patrol, Franz Ferdinand, Kings Of Leon, and then – OASIS! After four hours of solid mosh pit occupancy, QUAL'EE TUNES and cries of “God Save GLASTONBURY!”, Oasis finished their astounding hit-laden set (including ‘Wonderwall’, ‘Champagne Supernova’, ‘Little By Little’, ‘Don't Look Back’, ‘Rock n'Roll Star’) with a deafeningly unforgettable rendition of The Who's ‘My Generation’.

The rest of the weekend seems a little surreal now, however we have

vivid memories of ‘ye olde Englishe’ and lots of new friends...Saturday and Sunday saw legendary Paul McCartney, James Brown, Ben Harper, Muse, Ocean Colour Scene in the Acoustic Tent, FatBoy Slim and the Chemical Brothers; and newer artists such as Scissor Sisters, Lost Prophets, Black-Eyed Peas, Joss Stone, Starsailor, Supergrass and the Divine Comedy. Basically, an exceptional variety.

All in all, this was an amazingly proper life experience that brought us together in a fun, intimate, yet responsible way – definitely to be repeated! Singularly unique. You have to be there to believe it – see ya next year! BOLLOX!

Mukta, Sam, and Suryamayi

Glastonbury Glossary

hot scottish guy – Martin (lol!)
bollox – euphoric exclamation
frickin' – amazing, excellent,
wicked, epiphanic
Glastonbury virgin – one who has never been to Glastonbury before
proper – real
punter – customer
‘shit pits’ – sanitary contraptions
slosh – muddy mud
spiffingly – wondrously
qual'ee – rumba rumba nella (very very good)
tunes – music
veterans – long time attendants at the Glastonbury Festival

Creative links

A studio of artistic creation opens in Auroville to help promote local products

An increasing number of units in Auroville have started in the recent years. However, it is clear to many that in Auroville there is a growing need to work together on promotion and marketing as well as on creation. Some Aurovilians have embarked on marketing a selected range of products from Auroville units but the majority of units market independently. With the recent reformation of the Auroville Business Council (ABC) and the increasing demand for Auroville products from outside, it is evident that a higher level of collaboration is needed and possible.

L'etoile du Sud Studio was recently opened by an inspiring young woman, Estelle, who works towards carrying her dreams of a united Auroville production into reality. Four years ago, at the age of 26, Estelle found her home in Auroville. "I had always had a strong desire to go to India," explained Estelle, "but I knew little of Auroville, or of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo. But when I landed in Auroville with my two sons, I knew it was the place for us."

In time Estelle found herself involved in Papyrus, an Auroville unit which produces a wide variety of paper products for inside and outside markets. While working on the creative side of the business, Estelle began establishing contacts both within and outside Auroville concerning products being made by unit holders in Auroville.

The creation of *L'etoile du Sud Studio* was the result of many conversations as well as her own desire to use her creative abilities in collaboration with others which would benefit Auroville. "It came to my mind because having worked for the past three years with different units, I found that the unit holders are often busy with production and do not have the needed free time to go into creation. Also I could see very clearly that more and more people from India and abroad are looking for products coming from Auroville. They can feel through those products the unique qualities of Auroville as an international city. So putting all that together, it came to me that something had to be done to make a bridge between

Auroville and the outside, especially with India, because India is a huge country, it's a huge market and many possibilities are here."

As a service unit of Auroville, *L'etoile du Sud Studio* has two main goals: to enhance the range of creative products being made by Auroville units and to help promote and market these products. "The team of artists and designers of *L'etoile du Sud Studio* offer free advice to the production units of Auroville about aesthet-



Estelle

ics, which may then adapted to the unit's already existing market," explained Estelle. "We also organize exhibitions such as with Amethyst in Chennai and Microsoft in Bangalore and markets for festivals such as

Christmas, Diwali, and Pongal in those places. We invite the units to represent themselves or we select people to represent them."

The products that are sold through the studio have a margin of 100% over cost price which, depending on the quantity, is divided between the unit holders, the artist of the studio who created the product, and a small percentage goes to the studio to cover running expenses. Also, 5% goes to education in Auroville and 2% to the arts in Auroville. This is a very strong point for Estelle who states, "I find that the largest inspiration in Auroville is the children. When I look at the children of Auroville, there is no doubt that something special is going on here. Also, when you work like crazy in a business, you need to take a break, go to see a play, a dance performance or what not. Our artists in Auroville are creating that for us. It has a cost and we have to pay for it."

L'etoile du Sud Studio, being relatively new, is still getting known and understood by the community. But what have been the responses from unit holders so far? "I think people know there is a need for more creation and design. They feel also that some designers are there to create for themselves and they are not so much helping the unit to grow. But as the aim of the studio is to enhance the range for the units and benefit Auroville as a

whole, it is easier for the unit holders to understand what we are doing and maybe think 'OK, we can give them a space, doing two or three prototypes.'"

Estelle already has contacts to exhibit Auroville products in Chennai, in Bangalore (with Microsoft, IBM and Dell showrooms), as well as with Himatzingka Seide Limited who have showrooms called *Atmosphere* throughout India.

She is also working on a website which will present the products designed by the studio as well as having links to the individual websites of the Auroville units with whom she is working. "If a buyer wants a product that is already made in any unit, they can go straight to them, they order and we won't take anything for the studio. If they want something customized, then they will come to the studio to get something special from and produced by those units but designed by the studio."

The enthusiasm and energy behind the creation of *L'etoile du Sud Studio* has given it enough momentum to lift it off the ground. Estelle hopes that in time more artistic individuals and unit holders will join in its collaboration so that Auroville as one can move more efficiently and with high quality into the international world it represents.

Sunaura

CRAFTS

An Auroville pottery guild

Four potters at Mandala experiment with creative collaboration

The pieces have just come out of the kiln. Stacked around the wisdom tree on the circular stone slab, the glazes pop and ping, cooling in the afternoon sea breeze. An azure Krishna emerges out of a bark print slab frozen mid-sway with his flute. Multiple globular pots with mysterious openings are gathered in a group; their grey, lavender and blue glazes bearing the black calligraphic upstroke of a bamboo brush. In their identical singularity, one is reminded of Russian nested dolls – a group that should not be separated. Their makers Anamika, Adil, Chinmayi, and Krishnamurthy, the potters of the Mandala studio in Auroville, walk around softly examining and communing with each other.

Coming out of creative isolation, these artists work collectively, sharing the mundane responsibilities pertaining to business while still having time for creative expression. Started in 1995 by the German Chinmayi, Mandala pottery soon welcomed the Dutch Anamika, the Tamil

Krishnamurthy from the neighbouring village of Kottakarai, and the Mumbai born-and-bred Adil, each with a unique voice. But in the atmosphere of camaraderie and confluence, their voices mix and mingle and works often reveal mutual influences and styles dialogue with one another.

More recently, the quartet have started to explore the field of architectural ceramics, like a ceramic room divider commissioned by the Bangalore-based architect couple Renu and Sharukh Mistry for a home in the Kodai Hills. The installation is a series of curvaceous slabs and ribs glazed front and back in greens, blues and browns; it hangs seductively on metal wires, strung like a beaded curtain. "When there is a strong breeze, they double up as wind chimes," says Adil. He mentions the increasing appreciation and utilization of architectural ceramics by a small but growing tribe of Indian architects. It

has brought a great dynamism to the group. "For this house in Kodai, several works were commissioned," he says pointing out to a ceramic fish mosaic for the children's bathroom. The team has unanimously named it 'Hot lips', "because of these big flashy red lips from a special glaze we discovered in Delhi!"

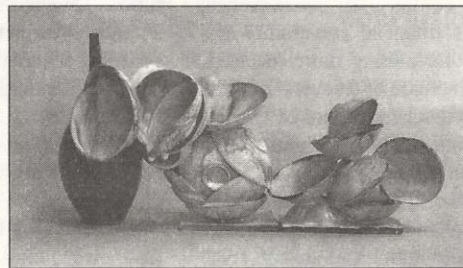
Adil, Anamika and Chinmayi took part in the recent Peace and Harmony Show in New Delhi, India's first juried international pottery exhibition. The exposure and publicity has created a sudden demand for their works. Adil for one cannot keep up with the rate at which his mixed-media mirrors made of polished driftwood and ceramic tiles sell. This interest has raised a dilemma at Mandala Pottery – how to remain small and creative yet simultaneously meet the needs of the growing market? Currently products go only to a few outlets in the country – *Naturally Auroville* at Chennai, *Dhoop* in Mumbai, and *Goodness Gracious* in New Delhi while special pieces for gallery exhibitions are kept in reserve, such as for an upcoming week long show in a gallery in New Delhi in October. Explains Anamika, "A solution came in the form of outsourcing the more basic work to potters in the surrounding villages. We supply the clay to them and they make the pieces to our specifications and design. The

wares come back bisqued after which we do the finishing, glazing, and firing." She adds that outsourcing has not been viewed favourably in some circles. Adil immediately counteracts, "Of course, we have been able to generate skilled employment and promote, in a small way, the local economy in our neighbouring villages. The other advantage of outsourcing has been that we are able to devote time to our own creative work." Is there any fear that their designs will be copied and perhaps a counterfeit market occurring in parallel? "No, the finish and glaze work remains ours, and very hard to duplicate."

Freedom of expression is the hallmark of Mandala. Each of the four artists expresses this differently. Krishnamurthy is a grounding presence, honed from years of traditional pottery skills. His works reveal a solidity, symmetry and

wholeness. More focussed on functional ware like teapots, his style has recently started to "become more free and flowing" in the words of his comrades.

Adil's works exemplify a fearlessness to explore, boldly expressing through clay work that loudly express spontaneity and a raw dynamism. In his recent works, for example, the written text has made its appearance, etched on the clay surface with a rhythmic flow of hand. There are bowls, panels, platters bearing prose, poetry, rumina-



Bowls spilling in a gurgle of harmony, by Anamika

tions, song lyrics, mantras in Sanskrit. Suddenly the works have an extra-aural dimension.

Introspection and contemplation are the basis of Anamika's path. It has led her to explore visual and tactile qualities of form. Bronze framed panels that enclose ceramic tiles studded with a series of half cups create a dimensionality much like the surf-fringed waves that break on Auroville's Repos beach. Another installation shows the rough and tumble of bowls spilling in a gurgle of harmony. She confesses to indulging her playful inner child, more recently "having



A work by Adil featuring Ganesh



left to right: Anamika, Chinmayi, Adil and Krishnamurthy

fun with treating ceramic slabs as painterly canvases." Into these evocative coloured and textures surfaces, she incorporates glass tiles sandwiching 24 carat gold-foil, tiles created from technology that developed out of the Matrimandir.

Chinmayi's works carry an upward aspiration, literally reaching towards the heights. She connects with thrown forms, particularly bottles and pots. Her work-space is quiet; the only sounds that permeate are from rustling leaves. She is at the wheel tenderly pulling the long body of a bottle, then stretching its fluted neck even higher. The form is complete – tall and delicate. She stands up to reach its mouth. She blows in slowly, and a tentative bellow echoes back from its depths and the body expands imperceptibly. A few more puffs, and the form suddenly comes alive. She taps lightly, pausing to listen to a resonant note. Satisfied, she shifts gear. With a smooth river stone, she begins the arduous process of burnishing. Behind her on the shelf, a row of bottles stands in elegant stillness. Their surfaces display varied surface treatments – smoke-fired, bubble glazed, in monotonal black or blurry colours.

Do the Indian customers have specific dislikes or preferences? "What doesn't sell are the low-fire works like the smoke-fired pottery that Anamika and I enjoy," says Chinmayi, "though a few discerning customers do pick these up. Indians generally prefer colour. We Auroville potters had a reputation for favouring dull coloured glazes, but lately our palette has exploded with vibrant shades." She explains how customers are now taken by surprise, reacting positively to this change. "Purple, turquoise, blues, greens, oranges, and jewelled crackle glazes are all very popular." Mandala, obviously, has a colourful future!

Priya Sundaravalli

Visions of the inner eye

Hufreesh's second show of paintings at Pitanga in Auroville features what she calls "seeing in the depths" – both metaphorically and literally.

The central and visually most arresting work is titled 'Transformation'. A solitary serpent with red glowing eyes and a jewel-like skin whose scales bounce off iridescent hues, coils majestically up a blazing torch. The backdrop is a fiery inferno of orange and red flames. "It came to me directly when meditating in the Matrimandir chamber. I knew I had to put it on canvas. And I think I have managed to capture the spirit of the vision I experienced," says Hufreesh.

Asked about the dominant presence of eyes in several of her works, Hufreesh has this to say. "I do have this strange attraction for eyes. For this exhibition, I wanted to focus on eyes. So I started looking at people's eyes, photographing them, and studying them." She explains how in her previous show the eyes were present but this time she wanted to explore them a little bit more consciously. They are particularly arresting in 'Krishna's consciousness', an airbrush work in transparent shades of blue. The viewer is

drawn into his serene gaze from clear and limpid eyes. A white peacock feather and a sacred caste mark give away his identity. Unfortunately, the work is not for sale as it is a birthday gift for her mother.

Hufreesh has been in Auroville since 1995. Educated in Pondicherry at the Ashram School, she is self-taught with no formal

suggestions from friends. I really like it when people come to me and say, 'hey, I have this idea, and can you do something with it.'" She finds these encounters to be challenging and much fun. "It is like you are getting your creative impulse from somewhere outside! And it is up to your talent how you are going to incorporate it onto the canvas."



Hufreesh with 'Transformation'

training in art. Inspiration reaches Hufreesh from any possible source. "While most times, the paintings flash into my mind's eye, I also get

Her paintings show an eclectic mix of styles as if painted by different artists. And yet Hufreesh definitely does not appear to be search-



Krishna's consciousness

ing for her unique personal voice in expression. Says she of this, "While most artists are known by a particular style, I will not hold myself to a single way of expression. When there are so many different parts within me which are insisting on being heard...!" She continues, "And I don't like to fit into any kind of box. But everywhere you see this tendency of people wanting to figure you out." She adds playfully, "So, don't try to figure me out."

Hufreesh enjoys the viewer's response to her works. "It is more interesting for me as an artist to see from other people's point of view. Most times when I paint, it is not thought out, it is not planned. So when people come to me and say, 'I don't understand your painting. What is it trying to tell? Explain it to me.' I ask them, 'Does it touch you. Do you feel anything when you stand in front of it? And if you feel something, then it has done its work.'"

The show has brought much pleasure to visitors of Pitanga for the two weeks it was up. Next, it travels to Pondicherry for the enjoyment of the Ashramites.

Readers may view Hufreesh's exhibition on her website at <http://www.hufreesh.com>.

Priya Sundaravalli

BOOK REVIEW

The architectural heritage of Pondicherry

Pondicherry has a unique architectural heritage. Within the old town, which is delimited by the four boulevards, there are two distinct architectural styles—Tamil vernacular and French colonial. In certain cases these have influenced each other to create a third style which combines elements of both.

However, this heritage is fast being lost. In 1998 the local chapter of The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) listed 1800 buildings of architectural value in the old town. In 2003, only 1200 of these were left. The rest had been demolished or so modified as to make them, from a heritage point of view, worthless. This is a reflection both of changing tastes, of the desire of homeowners to live in a 'modern' house, but also of widespread ignorance regarding the advantages of the old style and of how heritage buildings can be restored and tastefully adapted to modern needs.

In an attempt to remedy this situation, the Pondicherry chapter of INTACH has just brought out *Architectural Heritage of Pondicherry*, which the authors describe as "a user-friendly manual explaining the issues of historic preservation within the Tamil and French precincts of the old city". This beautifully-produced handbook, published with financial assistance from the European Commission under the Asia Urbs Programme-Pondicherry, includes information about the architectural characteristics of each style, conservation principles, legal issues and how to construct new buildings harmoniously within the historic context.

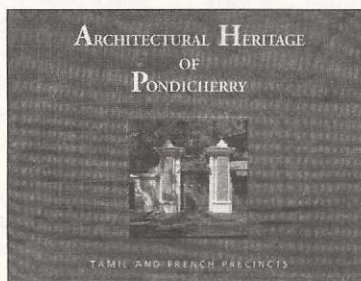
The French section, which was known as French town, is better preserved than the Tamil section. Constructed from 1765 onwards, the French houses in Pondicherry are based upon models from France-

notably Parisian villas of the upper middle class – but adapted to tropical conditions. The characteristics of this architecture include large rooms with high ceilings and many openings, a private garden court, high enclosing walls and imposing entrance gates. The overall effect is one of symmetry and harmony. The façades tend to be unornamented, even severe, which means that one clumsy addition can ruin the total effect. Consequently the authors give very detailed advice about the features of this style and how to retain the effect even with modern additions. For example, in order to preserve the symmetry of the façade, the roof of a modern addition to the restored Hotel de l'Orient is set lower than the roof of the original building.

The Tamil town developed into three quarters – Hindu, Christian and Muslim – yet the entire settlement shares a common architecture. The present town is a hybrid of a European (actually Dutch) planning concept and indigenous building traditions. In contrast to the French colonial architecture which is grand and somewhat austere, the Tamil vernacular architecture of Pondicherry is small-scale, intimate and interactive. The typical Tamil house is organized round a central courtyard or *mutram* which has both a religious and functional purpose. Starting from the public area in the street there are carefully demarcated zones of increasing intimacy which lead onto the *mutram*. Behind the *mutram* are the more private spaces to which only family members are generally admitted. The outer zone is the *thal-varam*, a covered street veranda which provides shade for passers-by, and this gives onto the *thinai*, a raised semi-public verandah space with benches for visitors. These social extensions of the house encourage a lot of interaction on the

streets; hence the term 'talking streets' to describe vernacular Tamil architecture.

The rooms in Tamil houses are much smaller and darker than the French houses. Whereas the French response to the tropical climate was to maximize airflow, traditional Tamil houses retain coolness by keeping the heat and the light out and using the uplift created in the central courtyard as a means of circulating fresh air. Traditional Tamil architecture is 'busier', more ornamented, than French colonial architecture. Because of its smaller scale, it relies for its effect much more upon a continuous streetscape. Thus it is vital to preserve the architectural heritage of entire streets as well as individual houses in the Tamil town.



Unfortunately the present plan of listed buildings in the Tamil town indicates much more a patchwork of individual buildings than entire streets of traditional Tamil architecture.

Apart from detailing how heritage buildings can be looked after and sensitively restored and providing examples of good and bad practices, the authors of *Architectural Heritage of Pondicherry* emphasise that "often heritage buildings are basically in sound condition, and are merely suffering some leaks, cracks, crumbling plaster which is generally caused by neglect and lack of regular

maintenance. In most cases it is possible to renovate and extend buildings for modern usage, by providing proper electrical supply, plumbing and air-conditioning without sacrificing the quality of architecture and at reasonable cost. But sometimes the owners are misled by unscrupulous or ignorant builders that their houses are unsafe and need to be destroyed and rebuilt." And they add, "Generally, repairing old buildings works out cheaper than demolishing and building new structures."

At present the Town and Country Planning Department is preparing a Detailed Development Plan (DDP) under which the old town would be declared a Heritage Zone comprising French and Tamil precincts. The DDP envisages not only listing, grading and notifying heritage buildings, but also the creation of a Heritage Fund to help owners maintain their heritage buildings. Renewed interest in Pondicherry's architectural heritage – and the realization that heritage architecture can be financially as well as culturally rewarding – is also indicated by the fact that two 'heritage hotels', tastefully restored buildings with period furniture, have opened in the past year or so on the initiative of private individuals.

Hopefully it is not too late to save something of Pondicherry's architectural heritage. *Architectural Heritage of Pondicherry* provides the know-how. Now it requires the combined efforts of home-owners, citizens, politicians and administrators to make restoration and preservation a reality.

Alan

Architectural Heritage of Pondicherry. Published by Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), Pondicherry Chapter, Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, July 2004

In brief

Mother's Children

Photos of Nolini Kanta Gupta and other sadhaks of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and children were displayed at the Centre for Research in Indian Culture

Swimming pool

Aurovilians had the opportunity to take their first dip in the newly built public swimming pool of New Creation (25m x 10m) which opened on August 15.

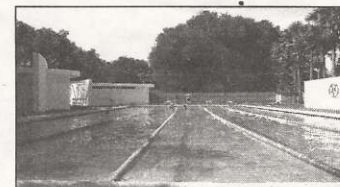


Photo exhibition

Pino Marchese's *Rang Birangee* photography exhibition on 'India in colours' was held at Pitanga.

Pavilion of Tibetan Culture

Poet and writer Tenzin Tsundu gave a talk at the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture on 'Aspirations of a Tibetan Poet'. Tsundu's writings, which have been published in several Indian and foreign journals, won him the first-ever Outlook-Picador Award for Non-fiction in 2001.

Auroville wins £1,130

The race horse called Auroville has come an unexpected second in the Vauxhall Holiday Park Claiming Stakes in Great Yarmouth, U.K., on August 11th. The horse received its name from writer and yoga teacher Justine Hardy, who named it after the city of Auroville. The owner warned against high hopes, stating "Perhaps he is too relaxed and in harmony with the world and lacks a certain competitiveness."

CIRHU

A presentation by Krupal Shah, an architect from Ahmedabad, on his thesis "An Architectural vision and design of CIRHU" was given at the Town Hall.

Kalabhum

The Kalabhum open air amphitheatre is being brought back to life. Undergrowth has been cleared and a thrust stage, surrounded on three sides by the audience, is being created. It is hoped that this will give a greater feeling of intimacy between actor and audience by breaking the proscenium barrier.

August 15th clean-up

Members of the eco-club of Alankuppam, along with Alankuppam's Women's Club and several Aurovilians, spent August 15th cleaning roadside drains and collecting plastic waste. They will continue the work and look forward to more Aurovilians joining them on their next clean-up day, 12th September.

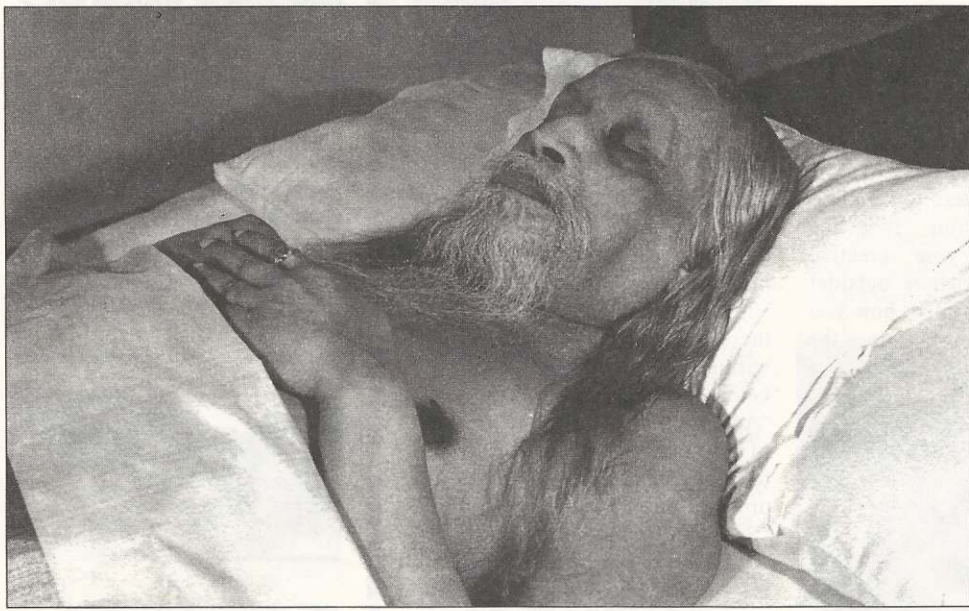
Ritam

The second volume of Ritam, a journal of material and spiritual researches in Auroville, has been published by SAIER. Visit <http://www.auroville.org/index/ritam.htm>; or send an email to kosha@auroville.org.in.

Passing

Governing Board Member Dr. Meera Srivastava passed away on Friday 23rd July 2004 in her home town in Allahabad due to cardiac arrest. Dr. Srivastava had visited Auroville several times.

Sri Aurobindo's Mahasamadhi



An exhibition of rare photographs of Sri Aurobindo's Mahasamadhi, a few of his personal belongings and a selection of some of his poems on death was held at the art gallery of the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture. "I have left this body purposefully. I will not take it back. I shall manifest again in the first supramental body built in the supramental way" was the answer Mother received inwardly when, on December 8, 1950, she asked him to resuscitate himself. After 111 hours of lying in state without the body showing any signs of decomposition, Sri Aurobindo's body was interred in the courtyard of the Ashram on December 9, 1950.

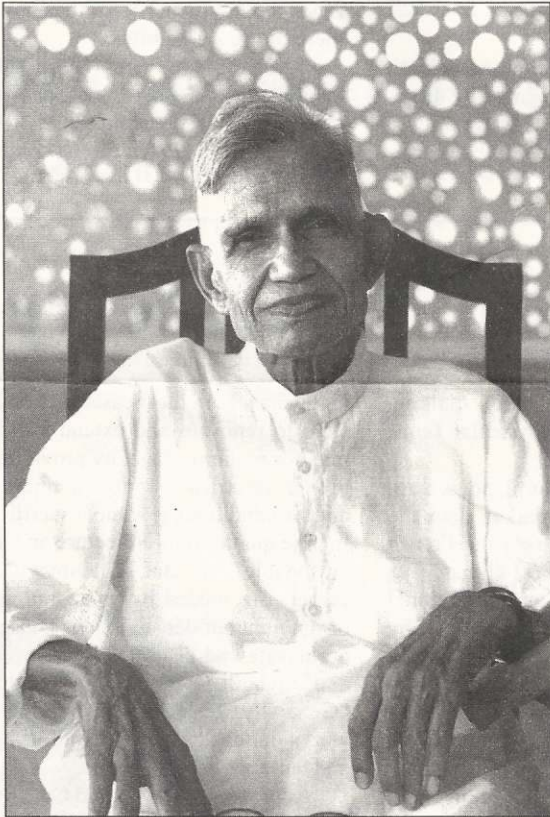
PASSINGS

Madanlal Himatsingka

Sri Madanlal Himatsingka passed away on Friday, July 30th 2004, in a Bangalore hospital. "A greater devotee, friend, well-wisher and supporter of Auroville we have not seen, and we will miss him very dearly," stated the email message that circulated in Auroville that day. It ended "Go and come, Madanlalji; a completed Matrimandir will be waiting for you." Madanlal's deep connection with the Matrimandir was known to all in Auroville.

Madanlal was an accomplished Indian industrialist who owned several jute mills and factories. The death of his son was the catalyst for him and his wife to travel and to eventually settle in Pondicherry in 1953. He realized that to be a channel of the financial power was among the services he could render for The Mother's work. The Mother confirmed this realization. She said that she saw a link between him and Ganapati [the son of Shiva and Parvati, god of material knowledge and wealth, represented with an elephant's head]. "I told him 'turn to him [Ganapati] and he will give you the right inspiration.' And since then Madanlal has been perfect, really; all that he can do he does to the utmost of his ability," Mother said to Satprem in a conversation of January 4, 1964. [Agenda V p. 16]. It was perhaps because of this connection that The Mother told Madanlal, in the early sixties soon after the Sri Aurobindo Ashram had become owner of a house adjacent to the Ganesh temple in Pondicherry, of her decision to gift part of the land around the house to the temple and asked him to facilitate the transfer.

Madanlal became instrumental in fundraising for The Mother's work. He also started the All India Press to publish Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary volumes and the books of The Mother, and ran the VAK bookshop. During the last two decades of his life, fundraising for the Matrimandir and, to some extent for the Auroville Land Fund, was his main work. At the end of his life he sold all his assets and donated the proceeds to the Matrimandir. Even though bedridden, he was often on the phone eager to know the latest developments in the progress of the building. Often, he was seen



near the Banyan Tree in his wheelchair, in quiet contemplation.

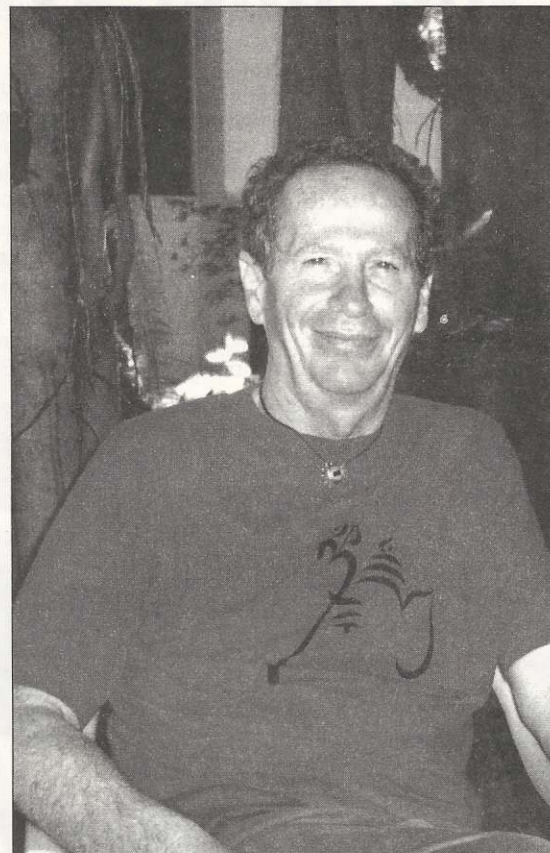
Like many other friends of Auroville, Madanlal derived a deep sense of fulfillment from working for Matrimandir and Auroville. "Look, I am not even an Aurovilian", he once lightly remarked with a twinkle in his eyes during a brief conversation concerning a particularly impressive donation he had been able to muster for Matrimandir.

Apart from being a proficient fundraiser, Madanlal was also an expert on Sri Aurobindo's epic poem Savitri. Prof. Nadkarni, in a eulogy of Madanlal during the AUM meeting in the USA, said he himself wasn't able to memorize Savitri, but Madanlal remembered thousands of lines and, though he suffered from asthma, he would close his eyes and recite whole sections.

The community of Auroville joined in a silent gathering in memory of Madanlalji at the Banyan Tree on July 31st.

Carel

Silvano Nalesso



"Silvano was the first person I met when I came to Auroville..." How many people have written these words to Tineke, Silvano's partner, in the past few weeks! The emails are still pouring in from friends, family and acquaintances around the world, ever since the fact that Silvano had left us became known. After a sudden and brief illness that threw off his balance in the physical, a balance that proved impossible to restore even with excellent medical intervention and care, Silvano lapsed into a coma some 22 hours before making his final exit – ever so gradually, rising into his soul and gracefully withdrawing his being, inch by inch. He chose the 15th of August as his departure date...chose it quite consciously, it seems, since several days earlier he made it clear to Tineke and the doctors gathered round his bed that he wanted 'to go home for Sri Aurobindo's birthday'. At that point, the doctors laughed, knowing how far he was from a point of recovery that would allow him to come back home to Auroville so soon. But, as often happens given our obtuse shortsightedness, we all failed to understand what he was telling us. Two days before Sri Aurobindo's birthday, it became clear which 'home' Silvano was talking about.

Silvano was a man who largely kept himself to himself while simultaneously giving himself freely through service to others. I remember him most keenly in his role as caretaker, provider – first, in the Centre Kitchen, back in the 80's when it was the largest collective kitchen in Auroville, at a time when there were no restaurants yet in the township. He organized teams – everyone had to do a duty, either cooking or cleaning, once a week, but in the end I think he wound up doing most of the work himself, along with a small team.

Before he became chief chef, he used to work on the construction of the Matrimandir in a 'beam team', a job that entailed fitting the half-ton beams into place high up on the scaffolding, to form the space-frame of the Matrimandir.

Earlier still, he worked at Aureka (when it was still called Toujours Mieux), after arriving in Auroville in 1981. A native of Padua, Silvano learned about Sri Aurobindo while he was still in Italy in the mid-70's. He came to Pondicherry for the first time in 1977, along with a group from the centre at Castel St. Pietro. Several of his close friends who came here on that same trip now live in Auroville.

In 1982 Tineke had taken charge of the

Centre guesthouse and the guests used to take food in or from the Centre Kitchen. And there began, somewhere in between the little arguments about how much the guest house should contribute to the kitchen, a long and dynamic partnership between Tineke and Silvano. Over the years, the two of them built up the guesthouse from three small rooms and two keet capsules, capable of sheltering eight guests, to what it is today: a 46 bed guest house with a spacious dining room capable of seating 80 people.

Meantime, Silvano and Tineke received hundreds of guests from all over the world, and Silvano became famous for his pizza. Universally appreciated by Aurovilians and visitors, it was their Tuesday marathon: the roaring fire of the wood oven, lit at 2 p.m., was just the right temperature for the pizza to cook by 7 p.m. It was not unusual for 100 people to turn up for dinner on those evenings!

All this would have been quite enough in itself, but not enough for Silvano; for on top of this he drove his little jeep into Pondy every day to buy the vegetables, light bulbs, toilet

paper, gas bottles, etc., that kept the whole place running. He had done the same run for years on end on his motorbike, a handloom towel wrapped around his head to protect from the searing sun. (Later on, it was his Borsalino hat, brought specially from Italy for him. Unfortunately, though he looked so elegant in it, for some reason he only wore it in the car when he went to Pondy!)

His days were long, beginning early with the preparation of breakfast for the guests and ending only after dinner had been served. Twelve, thirteen or more hours a day, seven days a week. He was a dedicated worker for Auroville who didn't want to refuse any request even if it meant more work for him. A perfectionist with a strong aspiration to improve, exceed, an organizer who gave great attention to detail. This aspiration was his motive and his engine – and, it has to be said that he had his priorities right; for though he served his Auroville brothers and sisters and countless visitors and VIPs and endless guests, always with goodwill and a smile, he knew for Whom in fact this work was being done.

Silvano was a man in a hurry. He always had something to do. The kind of peace we saw on his face and felt in his presence, after his death, was something he never had time for in his life. At his well-attended funeral, his friend Eugene sang a Latin hymn followed by an aptly chosen poem of Sri Aurobindo's called 'Is this the end'. The last two stanzas go:

*'The Immortal in the mortal is his Name;
An artist Godhead here
Ever remoulds himself in diviner shapes,
Unwilling to cease
Till all is done for which the stars were made,
Till the heart discovers God
And the soul knows itself. And even then
There is no end.'*

Barbara

A few days later, Tineke thanked the community for their support and love. As she put it, "He expressed his wish to go home on 15th August. And so he did. In his inimitable style: dressed in his favourite clothes (vest, of course), his Borsalino hat, his bag, pen in pocket and visiting cards, and his cell phone (which as a Divine Joke somehow went along with his bag in his coffin). If you try to call, the response will be, 'I'm sorry, the person you have called is temporarily out of station'.

And so he is. Ci vediamo, Silvano,
Love, Tineke"

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