

AUROVILLE TODAY

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It is a long time since we provided an update on what is happening at Matrimandir. One reason is that discussions regarding the work there have been intense over the past months and we have not wanted to influence the outcome by premature reporting of the process. However, there is so much interest, both within and outside Auroville, in what is happening that it now seems appropriate to attempt some clarification of the main issues.

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Matrimandir, February 1997

Matrimandir The Ultimate Transformer

**"It is like the Force, the central Force of Auroville,
the cohesive Force of Auroville." (The Mother)**

Ruud Lohman, in one of his essays on Matrimandir, wrote that if the Matrimandir workers understood the full significance of what it means to work on the structure, they would probably be unable to continue with the simplest task there. Writing about Matrimandir is a similarly daunting task. It's not simply the sheer scale of the project—which encompasses occult as well as exoteric dimensions—but also the fact that Matrimandir, as a power-house of transformative energy, often seems to focus all the difficulties, all the knots and complexities of Auroville as a whole.

Today, however, the difficulties have accumulated to the point where work on major areas of the structure has slowed down dramatically or stopped. Technical problems are clearly one major factor. Among other things, the ferro-cement elements of the outer skin have developed cracks, the outer skin urgently needs to be waterproofed after previous waterproofing attempts proved unsuccessful, and the rammed earth under the concrete cladding of the petals has settled causing a danger of cracking or collapse. Questions have also been raised about the durability of some of the materials used, particularly the ferro-cement of the outer panels and the fibre-reinforced polyester used for the disks and in one design of the inner skin, and there is concern about possible toxic emissions associated with certain proposed waterproofing compounds. There is also the possibility of enhanced fire danger inside Matrimandir if polyester instead of an inert substance is used for the inner skin. In addition

to all of this, there is concern that Roger's design, which specifies that the disks be mounted a short distance away from the outside skin, will make cleaning and general maintenance of both the disks and skin extremely difficult.

One of the reasons why the Matrimandir Forum, as the group set up nine months ago by the Residents' Assembly to decide upon major questions at Matrimandir, is finding it so difficult to resolve the above issues is that contradictory information is sometimes forthcoming, from different individuals and institutes, concerning the dangers and advantages of the different options. But another difficulty in deciding upon such issues is that technical considerations often shade into and are influenced by considerations of aesthetics, of design, of feasibility, of environmental ethics, of personal predispositions and loyalties, as well as by different interpretations of what Mother wanted so that nothing, it sometimes appears, can be solved without solving the rest!

Matters of design and aesthetics, of course, are closely linked. In the famous

seven hour meeting on Matrimandir in 1987, two quite different views regarding the function and therefore the desired outward appearance of Matrimandir were put forward. One view interpreted Mother's comment that she couldn't "see" the outside of Matrimandir as meaning that it should be very low key, a simple protection for the Chamber. This view favours a very simply patterned finishing, without disks and, originally at least, without petals or gold. This orientation also believes that the materials used for the outer covering should reflect the simplicity, timelessness and noble quality of the materials used for the Chamber. The other main design approach, based upon Mother's acceptance of the model shown to her by Roger, sees the outside of Matrimandir as symbolic of the supramental sun or consciousness emerging from matter. This orientation is associated with the disks, the gold and the petals, and, at present, with the use of certain experimental, less durable materials like fibre-reinforced polyester and ferro-cement. The two orientations also favour different inner skins, one solid, the other translucent.

Since 1987 there has been a certain convergence of viewpoints. Some of those Aurovilians who originally opposed the use of gold have now accepted it, and few people are openly suggesting that a design incorporating disks should be scrapped completely. The debate now focusses more upon the configuration of the disks, upon how they should be fixed to the outer skin, and upon the choice of materials for the skin and disks. However the choice of materials is itself influenced by different views of how Mother regarded the exterior of Matrimandir. Roger, who had many conversations with Mother about Matrimandir, says that she saw the outer skin as mutable, a reflection of the changing consciousness of the Aurovilians. Since it might change every twenty years or so, longevity of materials, he argues, should not necessarily be the predominant concern. Others disagree, bearing in mind Mother's reply to the question about the way in which she wanted Matrimandir to be built—"strength, safety, durability, harmonious balance". How people align themselves regarding the different conceptions or emphases depends upon a number of factors, one of which is loyalty to or sympathy with the approach of two of the main proponents of these different concepts. For, in many ways, the different concepts favoured by Roger (the architect) and by Piero (whose engineering skills have done so much to ensure that the basic construction, including the chamber, has been carried out to the highest standards), reflect very accurately not only differences in their personalities and manner of working, but also archetypal Auroville tensions like those

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Slowly, clumsily, often bruisingly and exhaustingly, a space is being cleared for something else. For absolute sincerity and for true collaboration based upon the surrender of personal needs to the larger needs, the larger call of Matrimandir.

between vision and attention to detail, between received and evolving wisdom, and between the vertical descent of inspiration and the organic, horizontal emergence of a shared understanding.

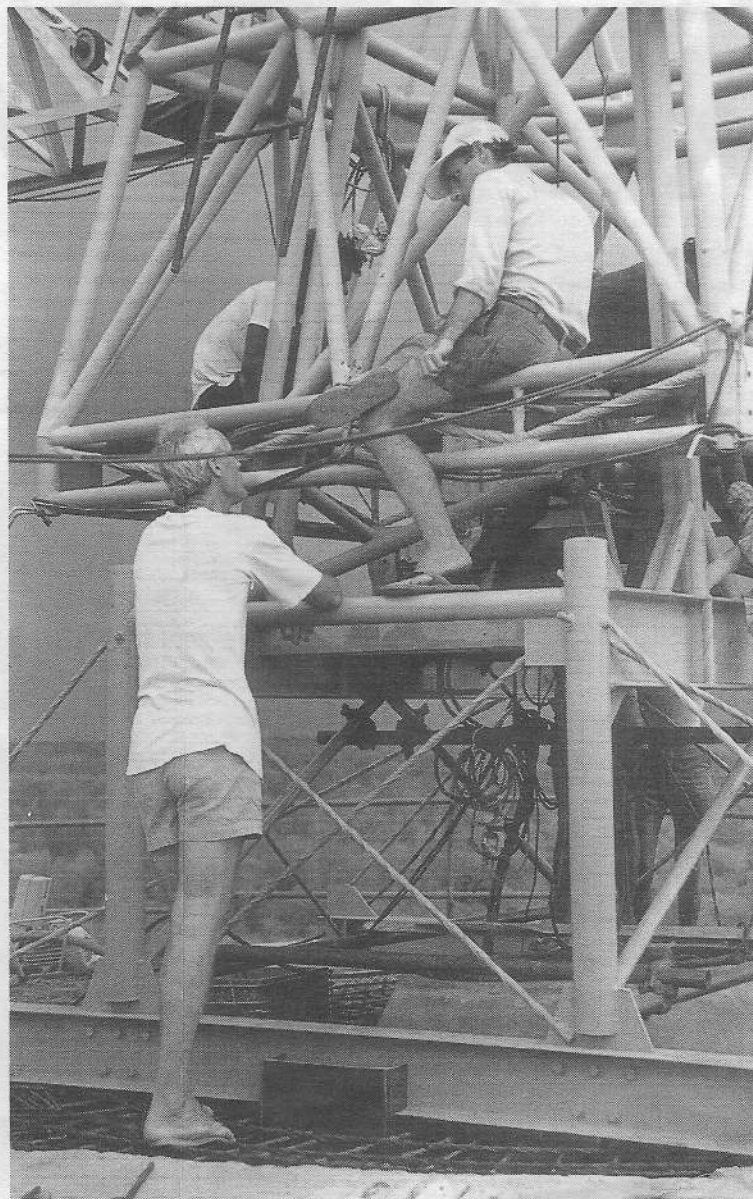
Ultimately, it is futile to attempt to apportion blame for the present difficulties as so many different factors seem to be involved. However, certain major causes may be identified. One, no doubt, was the withdrawal of Piero from active site supervision after the completion of the chamber five years ago. This meant that an ambitious and complex design had to be realised without a highly-qualified on site engineer, leading, as one Auroville architect put it recently, to a situation where there was insufficient understanding of the complex interdependent system constituted by the main structure, the outer skin, inner skin, disks etc. At the same time there was a renewed push, coming initially from outside Auroville, to finish the Matrimandir as quickly as possible, and a big increase in the funds flowing in from donors. All this has sometimes resulted, in recent years, in ad hoc problem-solving and in a

tendency to elevate speed over quality of workmanship.

Yet again, after years of open meetings, the decision-making process at Matrimandir after 1991 became more closed, confined to a small group. There was much less communication between the Matrimandir management and the larger community, with the resultant emergence of an atmosphere less conducive to open discussion and shared responsibility.

This has now changed, for with the creation of the Matrimandir Forum nine months ago, discussion of major issues and policy decisions are now in the hands of a diverse group of Aurovilians (which includes the former Management Group) which meets weekly. In recent months the Forum has been wrestling with problems that include the siting and financing of the proposed solar plant for Matrimandir, the question of how to control visitors' access to the Chamber, and with concerns that outside parties may be attempting to influence the pace and direction of the work. None of the above are easy issues to deal with, but their resolution is further hampered by the fact that some of the key players do not attend the weekly Matrimandir Forum meetings, and that the chief architect is only resident in Auroville for a few months each year.

At one level, in fact, we appear to be at an impasse. Yet, as happens so often in Auroville, the pre-



John (above) and Piero on top of the Matrimandir (1980's).

sent "impossibility" may contain the seeds of a higher, integral solution. It's as if, as we approach the final stages of its manifestation, Matrimandir will no longer allow us to paper over the cracks, the unfinished business between us. It's as if we are being told that we must first build Matrimandir as an expression of a certain consciousness between us before we can complete the physical structure to the desired level of perfection.

What form could that con-

sciousness take? Mother often stressed the need for unity, for collaboration between the people working on Matrimandir, stressing that the most important thing was that "You must all agree". This does not mean that some give way to others, "but on the contrary that all unite their efforts to reach a more comprehensive and more perfect result". And this, in turn, requires that crucial shift—the shedding of ego, of all the personal attachments and predispositions which, ultimately, seem to

underlie and colour so many of the struggles around Matrimandir, and which prevent individuals from finding their true place in the concert. For as one member of the Matrimandir Forum put it recently, "There is no problem of design, only problems of ego. When we solve those, all the rest will follow".

And it is precisely this that, beneath all the surface issues, the Matrimandir Forum is struggling with in its weekly sessions. For everyone there knows each other so well that, increasingly, the old arguments no longer call up the reflex responses. Slowly, clumsily, often bruisingly and exhaustingly, a space is being cleared for something else. For absolute sincerity and for true collaboration based upon the surrender of personal needs to the larger needs, the larger call of Matrimandir.

At the same time—as increased attendance at recent Forum meetings attests—more and more Aurovilians are once again involving themselves in the process, research into improved solutions is being actively pursued both in Auroville and abroad, work continues on the meditation rooms in the petals, on the Amphitheatre, the gardens and general infrastructure, and a recent proposal by an Auroville architect for a new way of tackling the main technical problems has generated widespread interest and support.

It's an astonishingly exciting and hopeful time both for Matrimandir and for Auroville as a whole.

Alan

"MAYBE IN AUROVILLE EVERYBODY IS BUILDING MATRIMANDIR; for Matrimandir is not only a physical construction site, it is also a process, it is the whole of Auroville and it is quite clear that Auroville in its growth, with its crises and leaps, its manifestations and confusion, is always an exact replica of where Matrimandir is at physically in its construction. Things at Matrimandir never happen by chance, there is a definite design, a time-frame, a clock, a calendar, and if we had the right psychic eyes, we would see from the state of Matrimandir where Auroville is at each moment.... Previously, when a critical situation arose in Auroville, one had a tendency (at least I did) to jump down off the structure and toss my little weight into the fray. But when Matrimandir is seen as the reflection, the perfect image of everything that happens around it, one discovers that it is much more effective to throw one's weight more intensely into the work and make the link that is missing, in Matrimandir and therefore in Auroville; give the construction a push here and there, and things around you in Auroville also get a push..."

(From: *A House for the Third Millennium*, by Ruud Lohman, 1986)



Aurovilians carrying the newly completed crane to be hoisted on top of the Matrimandir. (Ca. 1980)

THE MOTHER ON MATRIMANDIR

"The Matrimandir will be the soul of Auroville. The sooner the soul is there, the better it will be for everybody, and especially for the Aurovilians." (15.11.1970)

"The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine's answer to man's aspiration for perfection. Union with the Divine manifesting in a progressive human unity." (14.8.1970)

"Let the Matrimandir be the living symbol of Auroville's aspiration for the Divine." (21.2.1971)

"The fraternity of collaboration, the aspiration towards Unity in joy and Light." (14.3.71)

"Matrimandir is here to teach people that it is not by escaping from the world or ignoring it that they will realize the Divine in life. Matrimandir must be the symbol of this truth." (June, 1971)

"The Matrimandir is directly under the influence of the Divine and certainly He arranges things better than we could do ourselves." (October, 1971)

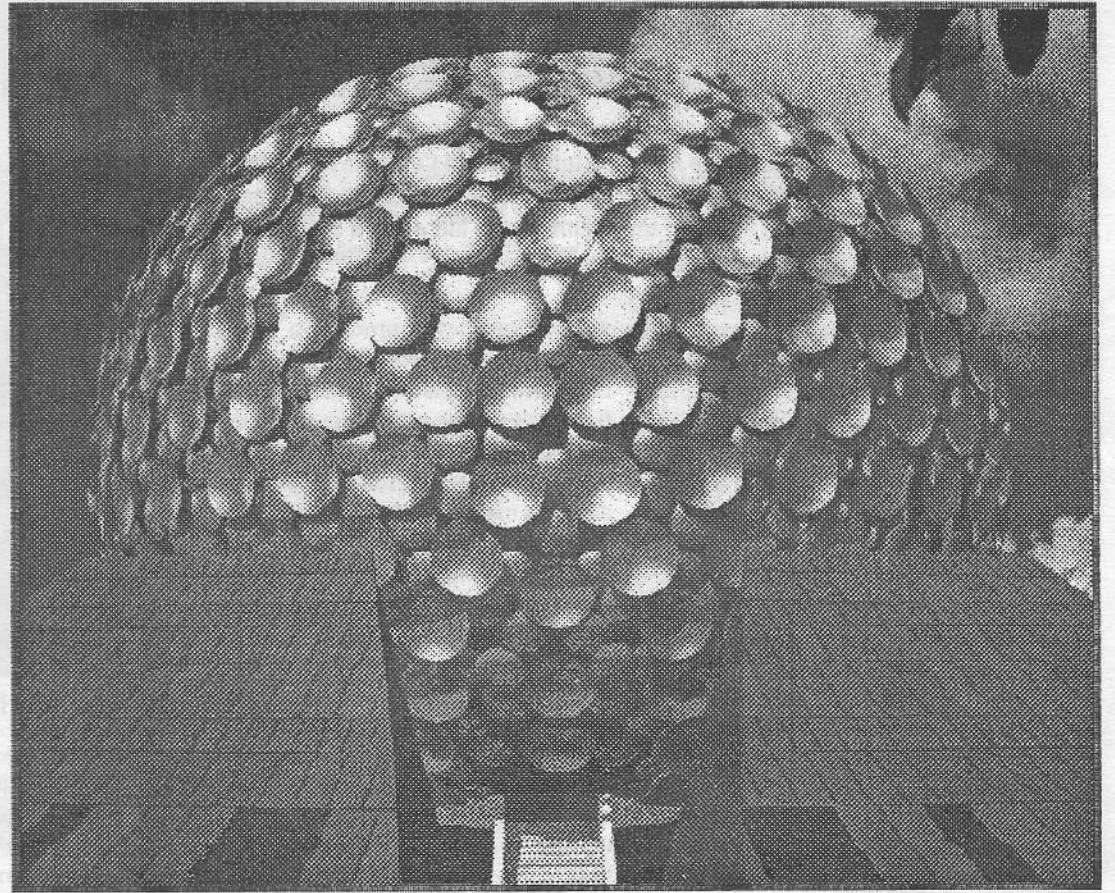
"The safety and strength in the construction should come before personal questions." (20.10.71)

Can you give some general ideas about the way in which you want the Matrimandir be built, so that we shall have no more doubts and may build with light and confident hearts?

"Strength, safety, durability, harmonious balance." (3.11.1971)

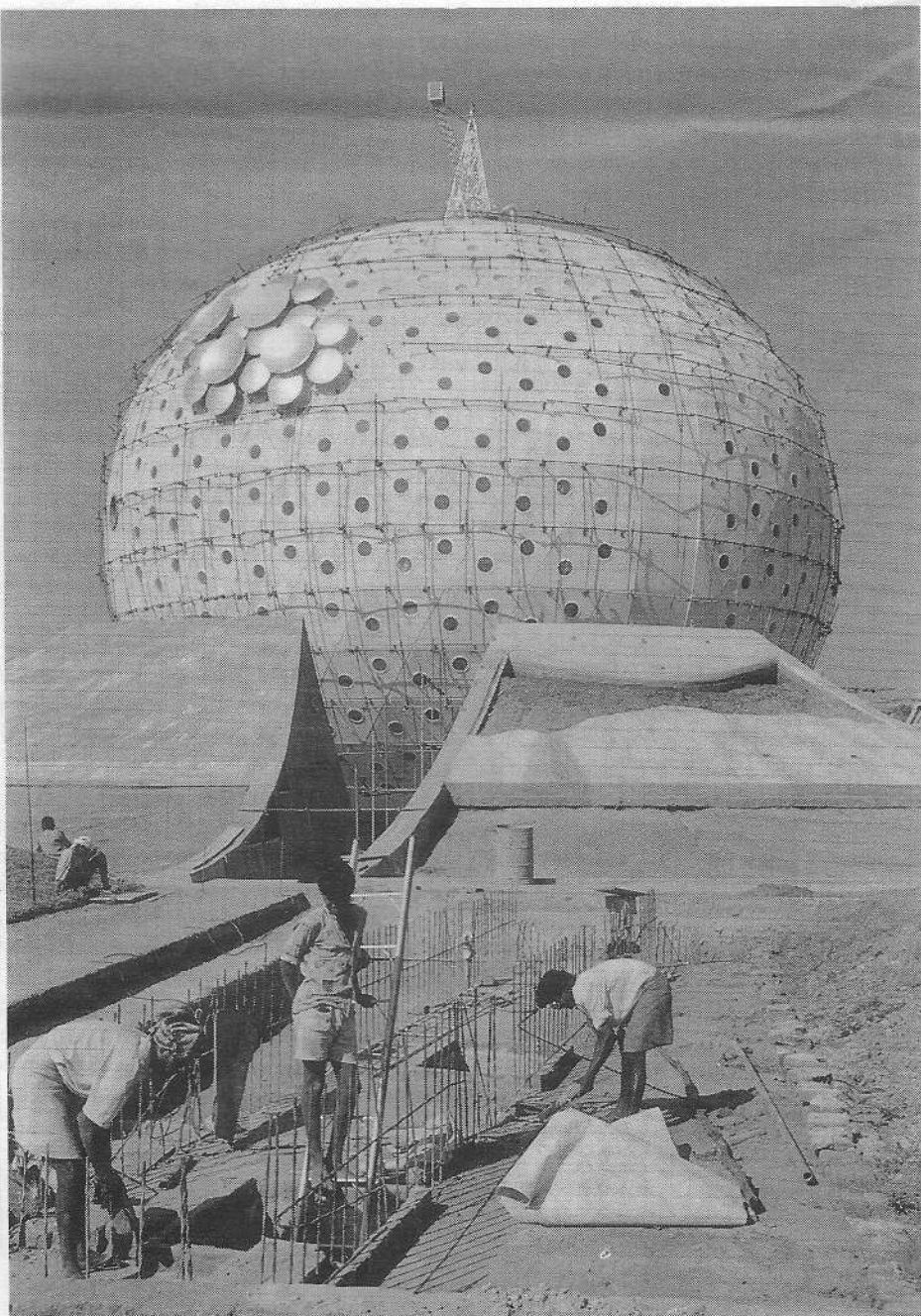
The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Universal Mother according to Sri Aurobindo's teaching.

... To live in Auroville, one must be the willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness. They are going to wince at "Divine", but I don't care! You know, it's the explanation of the Matrimandir at the centre. The Matrimandir represents the Divine Consciousness. All that is not said, but that's the way it is. (7.2.1968)



One of the tools which the Matrimandir Forum has been using in its recent discussions is computer simulations. So far a number of different concepts for the outside of Matrimandir have been simulated, including a plain skin using golden tiles, the original disk arrangement as shown to Mother, and a golden tile design which incorporates the disk pattern in the skin itself. The simulation shown here, which is only an approximation of the final effect, is based upon Roger's present design for the configuration and fitting of the disks.

Work on the petals (south-side of Matrimandir)



Question to the Mother:

Why do we build Matrimandir?

Answer: For the great majority of Indians, there is no need for an explanation; they know from their background. It is for the Westerners and the Americans of whom one in a million is able to feel that it is necessary.

Will the Force more specially be concentrated in Matrimandir?

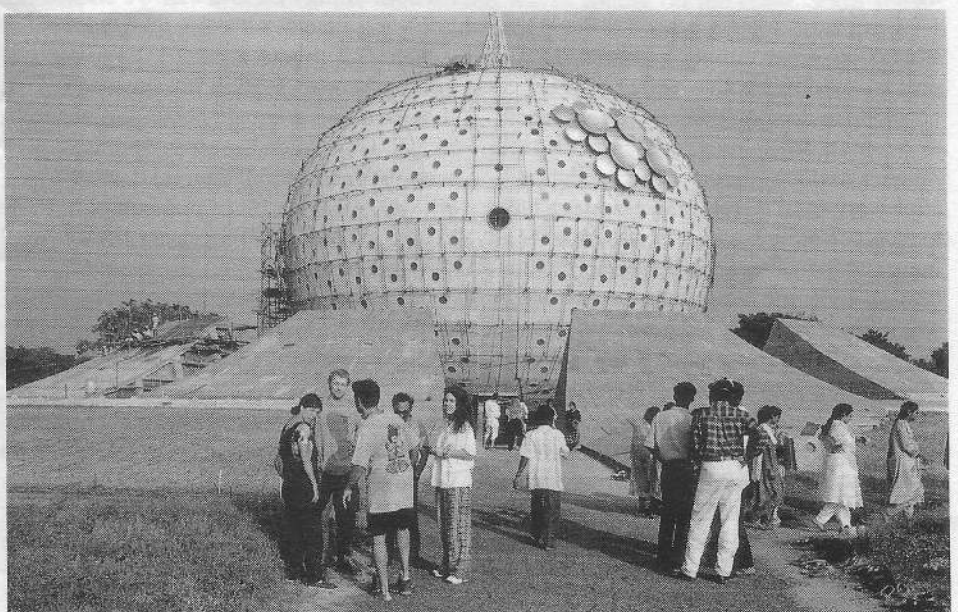
The new Force works everywhere, especially in this room. [Mother's room in the Ashram—eds.] You feel it, don't you? There is here a density capable of performing miracles, but few are able to feel it, to perceive it. Sri Aurobindo and I have concentrated this Force on the whole town; it is palpable, perceptible as a very concrete perfume which penetrates, but one must be able to feel it, to receive it.

But no miracles as people would like to see; for them to believe, they need material proofs without which they deny.

Build Matrimandir, put my symbol in place, and Sri Aurobindo's, and the globe. I take it upon myself to make it into a very strong centre. Only those who are capable will perceive it. (June 1971, noted from a conversation with Mother by the architect.)

"I believe only in that: the pressure of the Consciousness. All the rest is things that men do: they do them more or less well, and then it lives, and then it dies, and then it changes, and then it gets distorted, and then—everything they have done. It is not worth the trouble. The power of execution must come from above, like that, (gesture of descent), imperative! And for that, this (Mother points to her forehead) must keep quiet. Not to say, 'Oh, that must not be, oh! this must be, oh! we ought to do...' Peace, peace, peace, He knows better than you do what is needed." (17.1.1970)

Visitors at Matrimandir (west-side)



Warrior for Women

Mia Berden is an active member of the Auroville International Centre in the Netherlands. She has visited Auroville many times over the past twenty years. On her most recent visit, we talked to her about her life-long involvement with the women's movement, and about gender issues in Auroville.

I did not experience any form of male domination in my upbringing. However, I did experience discrimination during my education. For example, when I had an opportunity to go to the gymnasium I remember our family doctor saying to my parents, "Why should she go there? She's going to marry so she won't need this higher education." The consequence was that I was sent to a lower-grade educational institution, from where I went on later to a social academy. But since it was not possible to continue with higher education after the academy, the decision not to send me to the gymnasium actually determined my whole career.

When I went out to work in the early 1930's I immediately had to face this strange situation where men were dominant and women subservient. So from the very beginning I wanted to increase the educational possibilities for women and to promote their greater participation in society. This sometimes created difficulties for me. For example, when I joined the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs as a labour inspector, the Minister of that department was preparing a law that would forbid married women to work... and, given my seniority, I should have been on the committee to prepare the draft of this law! Fortunately at that moment the government changed and the law was shelved. But this shows how Holland, in 1938, was still far behind some other European countries in according women full rights.

I learned a lot during this period because I inspected many different factories, offices and hospitals and observed what the working conditions of women were, and how, for the same work, they were always paid less than men. And I experienced discrimination myself. When I became the first woman to be promoted to the most senior scale of labour inspector, the other labour inspectors immediately changed the statutes of their association so that I couldn't join it!

In the 1970's I was working in an academic institute in The Hague that provided postgraduate education for students from abroad. After I joined I soon discovered that only three of the sixty staff members and only 17% of the students were women. Moreover, because women tend not to speak up when they are in an almost exclusively male group, the women students had acquired the reputation of being less intelligent.

I was very angry because I realized that, as a tax-payer, my money was going to support a situation I vehemently opposed. So I decided to do something. I brought together women from Asia, Africa and Latin America for four months to discuss the problems women in developing countries have to face. It was a shocking experience for all the participants to analyse women's situation all over the world. But their energy was marvellous. They simply swept through the Institute so that some of my male colleagues began telling me, "We're amazed! They are so vocal. They have bright ideas and they know what they want!"

At the end of the workshop we asked these women what the Institute could do for them. They came up with ten points, the first of which was to create an M.A. course on

women and development. So that is what we did, inviting women from developing countries to come and teach it. It was the first such course anywhere in the world.

This initiative, which ultimately changed the attitude towards women in the Institute, showed me how good it is to involve women at all levels. Today, both in Holland and in other parts of the world, there are far more conscious women who are taking an active role in society. In Holland the old gender roles are breaking down so that often men and women both share the responsibility for caring for and bringing up their children, and the qualities that are now valued in the so-called "new man" are qualities like sensitivity, a willingness to listen, an interest in things other than football and sex, and a readiness, in professional life, to take risks rather than being career-oriented.

A shift in the balance of power between the sexes world-wide is also being encouraged by other factors. For example, a recent report in Holland predicts that women will be dominant in the corporate world in about fifteen years because the needs of the new technology are for flexibility and people-oriented management, which are strengths of women.

Yet I'm shocked to see that certain old gender patterns still persist in Auroville, a place which should be leading the world rather than falling behind it, and which, after all, was founded by the Mother who was very clear about the importance of women.

How do these old gender patterns manifest here? Well, there is a business aspect to my visits to Auroville, and when I go to commercial units or to service units, I invariably find I have to talk to men, even if there are very capable women present. Again, the new introductory video to Auroville is an example where much greater space and prominence is given to men rather than to women in the community. Another indication of gender bias is the large number and type of meetings that take place in Auroville. Although some Aurovilians have made attempts to change how meetings happen, meetings still tend to be primarily mental and therefore a typically male institution, even though evidence from around the world demonstrates that such meetings often do not result in the best decisions.

Some Aurovilians argue that Auroville is for something else and that we should not concern ourselves with matters like gender issues. But this is a pseudo-argument. If you're here to realize human unity, you have to achieve equality between the sexes as well as between the races. Spiritual development means total, integral development: you can't leave a bit of yourself behind by saying, "This is not an issue for spiritual development."

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have given us the inspiration and example. For the first time in the history of mankind, as far as we know, the male and female were one avatar, were together working for transformation. Moreover, Sri Aurobindo stated that the era of the mental is coming to an end, and this, I am sure, will result in a shift away from patriarchal structures. So Aurovilians should see that eliminating gen-



Mia (2nd from left) during an Auroville International gathering.

der bias is a crucial step forward in evolution.

It won't be easy, but I'm sure that if men and women here in Auroville can work out

gender issues by going deep within themselves and transforming deep-rooted attitudes, then the whole world can be helped.

From an interview by Alan

FROM MIA, WITH LOVE

A REMINDER TO THE EDITORS

Dear Jesse,

Picking up last Auroville Today, it felt good to see the headline "Auroville Youth speaks". Reading your first sharp interview the feeling remained. But turning the pages the feeling changed. First I wondered and looked closer, and then I got really angry. It is the old stuff again, also in Auroville!! The headline is false; it should have been: "Young Male Aurovilians speak"!

Where are the Aurovilian girls and young women? Don't you want to ask their opinion, apart from the Last School girls which of course you could not overlook? Why did you not go into that kitchen and interview Taranti to complete the picture of the Dudes? Maybe you thought it enough that she could speak as part of a young couple, where of course, the man would speak up first. Have you ever thought of the impact of your interviews upon the young Aurovilians? It teaches that boys are heroes and girls' opinions are not interesting, so they should be quiet. In view of the new world, a terrible mistake.

Good luck Jesse, I liked your interviews. But keep your eyes open. You and through you Auroville, will then grow to a true and complete vision of Mother's dream.

With best wishes, Mia.

Jesse's answer:

Whew! So this is what it's like to be a writer! Here goes:

There was, I have to admit, no strict plan or structure to the content or selection of the interviews. Looking back over the issue of Auroville Today I can see what you say is true. There are more interviews with men than women on those pages, but to suggest the message is that only men have valid things to say is madness. If I have communicated to the young women of Auroville, or any women at all, that boys are heroes and girls' opinions are not interesting, then I have veered far from my intended path and done a terrible thing.

I just walked out the door and interviewed the first people I came across. I

went to Ami and spoke to whoever was sitting in that room at the top of the stairs. If it had been full of girls instead of guys, the interview would have been with girls. Re-reading the interview with Nilauro and Taranti, I disagree with your assessment. Even ignoring the fact that it begins with Taranti's words, at no point does it appear that Nilauro is speaking up first or dominating the conversation. I did approach some young women about being interviewed but all of them refused. I did go into that kitchen and interviewed Taranti about her work on the Auroville Youth Centre (I had meant her words to balance Muni's), but in the end it was too late and the interview didn't make it on time for going to Press. I agree, the final product isn't a picture of balance, but it's my first go. I'll try to do better next time.

From Mia to the Editors

... I invite you to make a survey of pictures and interviews over the last two years and count the difference in gender. It might surprise you. You are a very important instrument to show Auroville to the world; so please do not neglect the female side of Mother's city. ...

From the Eds.:

We did the survey. We also looked at how many of the articles in the past two years' issues of Auroville Today (from Jan. '95 to Dec. '96) were signed by men, and how many by women. A bleak picture?

Out of a total of 180 articles, 75 were authored by women, which leaves 105 having been written by men. Figuring on photos (with mention by name in the captions) were 67 women and 74 men. We held interviews with 16 women against 28 men. And we "profiled" 14 men and half as many women... Our editorial team during this period consisted of a perfectly equal number of men and women. To give the full picture: a recent count shows there are 591 female, and 649 male residents in Auroville.

Any comments from our readers?

Fighting for Life in the Pacific

CLAUDINE PARE-LESCURE led an adventurous life before coming to Auroville, sailing all over the globe with her husband and several times facing near-death experiences. In 1986 she left New Zealand with the intention of sailing single-handedly to Japan. However, in the middle of the Pacific, her yacht hit a submerged reef and sank.

Slowly the yacht turns over like an injured fish; the last moments at death's door! The mast falls even deeper into the water; it sinks, making the hull pivot, giving the appearance of the white belly of a large sea mammal. My yacht, my racer, my life's happiness all collapsed in an instant.

Hooked to my life-raft, my hands clutching the edge, I contemplate the disaster. I am lost in the immensity of the Pacific, my boat wrecked on the Roncador Reefs, away from all sea and air routes. I'm the only one to know about the wreck, so the outcome is up to me alone. Oh sure, my yacht has sunk, but I'm not going to let go! I feel a wild passion for life. I have my son, he has to know I'm alive. It's imperative that I live. For this I will fight to the end of my strength.

My raft, which I've salvaged from the wreck, can only move in the direction of the wind; it's impossible to manoeuvre it. I wonder if it will push me in a favourable direction towards the groups of islands and atolls scattered in the Pacific. It's my only chance.

The clouds thicken very quickly with nightfall, then burst with a deluge. The canopy of my raft starts to leak, the nuts and raisins I rescued from the yacht are soaked. I collect the water which is running down the canopy and drink it in great mouthfuls, greedily, filling the hole in my stomach. I also fill up the jerrycan. For the moment, water is not a problem.

When the rain stops, I try to settle myself for the night. Wedged between the jerrycan and the bowl of food, I am suddenly aware of the lack of space around me: I can't lie down without doubling myself up.

The night seems interminable. I sleep very little, more occupied with watching the spinnaker sail which I had improvised. During each rain shower, I wrap the sail around the mast so that I can close the canopy over my few provisions. I sit watching the leaks, feeling the drips splashing on my back. I shiver.

The next day I make a float for my fishing line and – foreseeing the next night will be much colder – I cut myself a large sheet and make out of it a T-shirt and large double-lined jacket which I wear over the sleeveless T-shirt I have with me. Very elegant! For the moment, I am well prepared against the cold. And on the day I touch land, my dignity will at least be protected!

In the evening the wind weakens, then drops totally. An eerie calmness, full of tension, takes over. I am gripped by fear, powerless. The clouds, ever increasing in size, suddenly burst, releasing torrents of water with every strong gust of wind, then subsiding equally as fast. It's the cauldron of the devil! I'm drowned, engulfed in a burst of thunder. I feel the lightning bolts vibrating overhead and all around me. Then the sky clears. One star blinks at me, then two. On the now calm sea I can hear the fish feeding near the surface. The sail remains flat. Soaked, cold and starving I collapse on my improvised bed and sleep.

The sun rises on a new day. I'm hungry now, I haven't eaten anything for five days. When I suffer with stomach pains, I swallow a mouthful of oil. It's very efficient; the oil lines the stomach and calms the cramps, but I have to be careful not to drink too much because of the nausea I suffer afterwards.

The heat is becoming so intense now that when the sun is at its zenith I have to dive into the water and swim round the raft. What a relief. When I return to the raft, my depression has lifted. I will do it! I mustn't let myself become idle, I must keep active. I massage myself and do limbering exercises and, as evening comes, I take down the mast and start paddling. But I fatigue quickly and feel weak.

I fish as much as I can, and decide to keep my catches alive in the spinnaker bag, which I submerge. Not a good move! Next day, the base of the raft is struck by something. Then again. Two enormous sharks are ready to attack! I quickly pull in the improvised fish tank, but it's the raft they're interested in. Attracted by the blood, these two voracious predators mistake me for a huge injured fish. After circling, they head directly towards me, their fins slicing through the water. At the last moment, not knowing what else to do, I scream as loud as I can. This seems to impress them because they suddenly veer away. But then they come back! I have to find a solution before they bite the raft and it explodes. I take the torch and hit the jerrycan as hard as I can. They are scared, uncertain. Finally they go away...

I've been drifting for ten days. I am thinner, much weaker. There's nothing in sight, only a vast expanse of nothingness. It's really impressive. I feel I am on another planet. I dream of greenery, smells, human beings around me. My solitude is becoming hard to endure. Underfed, my vision is blurred and I have more and more difficulty reading the charts.

That evening, as I contemplate the sunset, the mast of a fishing boat suddenly appears on the horizon. My heart jumps with joy. I hastily reach for the flares, send one, then another, also activating the button on the distress beacon. I wave a large piece of spinnaker – but the boat heads away, while I am left thinking only black thoughts. Later on, I am woken suddenly by an explosion followed by a "psssh". It's a dreadful sensation. I feel I am sinking as the base of the raft gives way underneath me. The fish, which have been feeding on the shells attached to the underside of the raft, have pierced the rubber with their sharp dorsal fins. In a few seconds my raft becomes a hundred times less comfortable. I no longer have any insulation beneath me and I can feel the sea through the material. It's cold, and this night I sleep very badly.

As dawn breaks into a beautiful morning, there appear to the north-east three islands, three low-lying islands surrounded by a coral reef. One of them is so close I can see the forms of the coconut trees, but it's already passing by. It seems really not possible. There is life on this island, an idyllic gem of greenery and peace with human habitation, nearly within my reach. A feverish enthusiasm takes hold of me. I drop the sail and dismantle the mast to stop me drifting past, but the islands are already disappearing. They slide away.

What a long day. I feel that everything will shortly be finished. It is my fifteenth day drifting. I eat the last of my nuts and raisins, now rotted by the rain. I don't even suffer from constant hunger any more. I think about all the people for whom eating is the outcome of a constant fight for survival. This helps me.

The sun rises on my eighteenth day adrift. I shelter myself from the rain and, whilst looking at the clouds more carefully, I think I see... an island? Or is it a mirage? I rub my eyes. Yes, there it is. The clouds are hiding part of it, but as they draw aside they reveal a second one, then three, four, five. Five real little blue spots far away to the south. It's not my route – the wind is still blowing westerly – but I take the mast down and begin to paddle, suddenly full of energy. This is a ridiculous idea. The blue of the islands tells me that they are at least forty miles away, and already a light wind is pushing

me away from them.

Suddenly, to my port side, north-westerly, another island appears, this time in the direction I have been following for days. Quietly, quietly, all day I drift towards it. The island grows imperceptibly, and starts to show its mountainous regions. But it's still so far away. Then another stretch of land appears behind it. I check my chart. This can only be New Ireland, off New Guinea. If I drift past these islands, I will be lost, as after them there is only the vast emptiness of the ocean for thousands of miles before the Philippines.

By afternoon, the nearer island seems very close. The wind has dropped completely, the sea is like a mirror. I don't hesitate: I drop the mast again and begin to paddle. I estimate the island is sixteen miles away. Tomorrow morning I should reach it! This gives me incredible strength. I start eating the survival biscuits which are highly concentrated with vitamins and minerals. Super energetic! I can feel the effect immediately.

I don't allow myself to stop when dusk falls, trying to get as close as possible before night. With every stroke of the paddle I get soaked, but I don't mind. My hands are getting red. I wrap them in the spinnaker fabric to protect them. My knees are also beginning to suffer as I can only paddle in the kneeling position. Every stroke of the paddle advances me twenty centimetres...

After several hours, I force myself to rest. Everything on board is swimming in water and I have to bail it out before lying down. When I wake up, I'm aching all over and my knees are hurting terribly. I return to paddling. It's hard! The rhythm comes back slowly and mechanically.

At first light, the horizon is shrouded in clouds. Suddenly, the island emerges. It's closer than yesterday, but there's a current which is pulling me north. I must paddle against this. I can't find the energy of yesterday. My limbs are very heavy, I lose the rhythm and have to stop often. The hours pass by, one stroke after another. I try to tell myself stories to distract my thoughts, but the impression I have is that I'm going backwards, not forwards.

But, by the evening, the island really is much closer. I have a great desire to speak with someone, to feel people around me, to forget my loneliness. Night falls. I continue to paddle, but more sensibly now. My body is weakening. My hands are swollen and with every stroke a stabbing pain shoots through my elbows and I have to keep stopping to massage them.

Now the island is so close I can hear the waves rolling on the coast. Soon after I can make out the light of a fire. I smell sweet potatoes being cooked on an open fire. God, it's so good. But my arms won't move any more: they've reached their limit. I give up and lie down. But then an enormous black cloud appears behind the island, and a breeze starts up which begins to push me away from the island.

Hours go by, the wind gets stronger and stronger. Where is the island? By daylight it is still raining and windy, and impossible to distinguish anything. Feeling lost, I fall asleep again. When I wake up, the wind has shifted again. I look around, and the island is very close. I cry with joy. Impatiently I try to paddle, but my swollen hands can't grip the oars. All I can do is let the wind push me towards a little cove.

Another hour passes. I see houses and,

(continued on p. 6)



Sports in Certitude has been running for many years. Bringing together the young and not-so-young, it also functions as a meeting place and general gossip shop. We asked Jesse to try and catch the unique atmosphere...

I arrive at Certitude at 4 p.m. and sit down on one of a row of boulders. In front of me I can see Certitude road stretched out between two rows of eucalyptus. On my left is the basketball court and playground. On my right is the practice tennis wall and football field where Stefano and Chaitanya pace out the long jump while an audience of compatriots sits on the concrete slide voicing their support: "Come on Chai, five metres" shouts a supporter as Chai counts his steps. A red tractor chugs up Certitude road like some enormous toy; an image the driver does nothing to dispel, looking like some big kid with a newly-unwrapped Christmas present. A lone basketballer sits forlornly on his scooter waiting for a team to materi-

CERTITUDE 4 P.M.

By Jesse

alise on the empty court. Yves begins a race, "On your marks. . ." Ira breaks formation and runs over to me: "Hey, what are you writing?" she asks. "Come back," calls Stefano.

"Go back, go back, you can see later," I say, keen to observe not disturb.

Saverio, Italy's most recent contribution to Certitude basketball, walks over and asks: "What are you writing? News?"

In the playground a single parent watches four-year olds happily disentangle themselves from rope lattices.

"Tonight Yuval will be operated on," offers Saverio. Anandamayi runs over: "Are you familiar with Shakespeare's Julius Caesar?" she asks.

"Uh, I've seen the movie," I reply.



athletes. The only one keen to do his obstacle-course/triple jump training is Bowser, the six month-old Great Dane pup, lolloping around already as big as a small horse.

Sukhamuni has a shocking back-ache. "But triple jump is the best thing for back-ache," attempts Stefano.

Rhonda arrives in her favourite tangerine dress with her almost one-year-old baby, Zarissa. She plonks herself down on a nearby boulder with the slightly exasperated air of a mother.

"Hi Rhonda."

"Hi Jesse. Hi Jyotis."

"Hey, we dropped in yesterday but you weren't there."

"Yeah I know, I got your message"

"Do you want to come to Jyotis?" Jyotis asks Zarissa.

"Yeah, sure," says Rhonda with tangible relief in her voice.

Alokh waves peacefully from his perch on a nearby granite pillar.

On the football field I can see Ira, Theresa, Chris, Chandra and others learning shot-put with what look like tennis-balls. Matteo and Sanjay rock up.

Matteo comes over to say hello to Zarissa and us.

"Matteo, will you dance for us?" Jyotis asks.

"Yeah," says Rhonda, "Zarissa always loves it when you dance."

I begin to sing some broken melody whilst slapping my knee for rhythm but Matteo isn't inspired. "Hey look," says Jyotis. She's been holding not-yet-walking Zarissa's hands for balance, but suddenly Zarissa

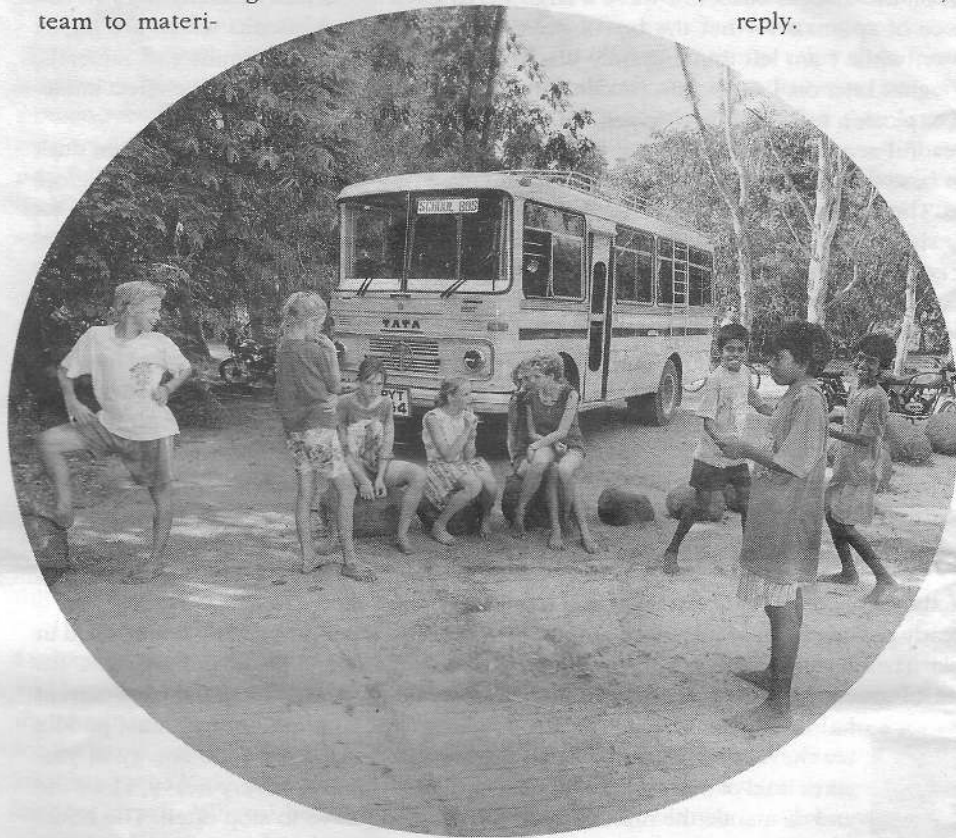
is standing unaided and, what's more, now she's dancing.

The school bus arrives, yellow and reversing to its inbuilt tune of some synthesised South American film song. Muni and I move some motorbikes out of the way so it can get through. By now the basketballers have begun to arrive. The bus slowly fills up with sporty school-goers. I move from my rock to the basketball court, where two to three balls are being randomly tossed towards a single hoop in a vain attempt to get some shooting practice. But in the end most of the balls arrive simultaneously and knock each other out of the ring. At least it serves as a warm-up. As soon as ten people arrive on the court, someone shouts impatiently: "Shall we start? There's enough people." Then amidst much mumbling and wandering, two teams of five appear, one at each end of the court. The team with the ball, my team, takes advantage of the absence of extraneous balls and continue making practice shots. The other team proceeds to complain loudly that, "We haven't got all day, it'll be dark soon, do we want to play this week?" Eventually someone with the ball resists the urge to have one last practice shot and the game begins.

Everyone in the game has a position to play in relation to the basket. My position is centre, which is, unsurprisingly, in the centre, beneath the net. It is my job to: 1) stop the offensive (opposite) team from getting close to the basket, 2) jump and catch all balls that don't make it into the net and 3) elbow, scratch, bite, push and generally intimidate the opposition away from scoring. The other team, meanwhile, is using similar tactics. After about five minutes of play my middle finger is sprained and I've jumped in the air and landed on Muni. My left eye had made solid contact with Larry's elbow but we're one point ahead. It's all been worthwhile.

By the time it gets dark, I've managed to play two games and have a slight limp. Now all I have to do is select a nice watch from the variety left on the benches near the court and head for Paul's tea-shop, where I find a mixed bag of passers-by: young kids in the dust, and older youth leaning a little too casually against tree trunks making smooth chat.

There in the half-light of the eucalyptus trees, lit by the burning orange sunset, is Paul, the smoothest chatterer of them all, the enthusiastic messiah of tea surrounded by devotees...



Fighting for Life... (contd. from p.5)

through the coconut plantations, a church. There's movement on the beach. People are running and canoes are hastily being pushed into the water. Hands are waving and black faces beaming with huge smiles! Fishermen throw themselves into the water, grasp the raft and guide it through the reef. The beach is a mass of people, the whole village is there.

How GOOD it is to see all these welcoming arms and sparkling smiles. I cry!

(Claudine had landed on Tanga, a small island off New Guinea, but she was close to-death. Her body temperature had fallen to 35 degrees, her saturated skin hung in wrinkles all over her body, and she was so weak she collapsed immediately on trying to walk. She was taken to a nearby dispensary and given intravenous drip: it was three weeks before she had more or less recovered. Then she returned to Paris. Later that year, she arrived in India to make a cycle tour of the South. She visited Auroville but, "unable to catch it", left after two weeks. Later she returned and became aware in herself of a growing interest in Sri Aurobindo's yoga: outer adventure seemed no longer as important as the pursuit of an inner 'adventure of consciousness'. She has been here ever since.)

"Could you come and do some theatre workshops next Tuesday?"

"Sure, okay."

Further away, I see another group, maybe 14 or 15-year olds, doing what looks like gymnastics. Most, as far as I can tell are milling about chatting with each other—social gymnastics. Jyotis joins me. Olga and Juan walk towards us away from the social gymnasts. Islan on his mountain-bike pedals furiously past in a gear that moves him forward at a crawl.

Stefano, infuriated, battles with reluctant



Auroville Impressions, 1996

This is the title of the new introductory video made by Giles Herdman and the Auroville Video team. Commissioned by the Auroville International Centres, *Auroville Impressions* covers a lot of ground in its 30 minutes. There are references to Auroville education, the reforestation programme, experiments in self-sufficiency, village outreach, the town plan, to Pour Tous and the Auroville economy. There are also brief glimpses of various business and cultural activities, of sports in Certitude and hands-on education at Johnny's, of Auroville architecture, Kuilapalayam village, and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram (including archival shots of a balcony darshan). And, as a dominant visual motif throughout, there is Matrimandir. At dawn, at dusk. At the centre.

The film-makers have concentrated upon communicating a certain atmosphere rather than weighing down the video with explanations and factual information. Consequently there is no running commentary, only snatches of interviews which serve to link one set of images to another. Generally, this works well although there are times—for example, when images of Matrimandir or the inner chamber flash up—when explanation is definitely required.

Two main reservations about this video need to be expressed. Firstly, there is a tendency, as

VIDEO REVIEW

in many other Auroville videos, to over-emphasise the upbeat side of the Auroville experience: references to the difficulties and challenges are crammed into a few brief minutes towards the end. No doubt it is difficult to communicate the individual deepening which can result from struggling with the 'grit' of our situation here—the difficulties of making ends meet, of finding accommodation, of coping with inadequate infrastructure etc.—but it is one of the most profound learning experiences of Auroville, and one which would be of far greater interest to many viewers than shots of surfers at Repos beach. The suspicion, in fact, is that aesthetics, the desire to present something with a particular atmosphere, form and flow, has been allowed by the film-makers to triumph over material which, superficially, may be more 'jagged', hard-edged, less photogenic. As a result there is a danger that, once again, Auroville may be viewed as a kind of spiritual Club Med.

The other reservation relates to another impression about Auroville that is widely held in India and elsewhere. For many visitors see Auroville as a predominantly Westernised community where the local people merely serve as

labour in a neo-colonial scene dominated by white-skinned people and attitudes. Unfortunately, the new video does nothing to change this perception. There is a preponderance of middle-aged Western 'talking heads', and there is no reference to those Aurovilians who were born in the local villages and who could speak movingly and deeply about Auroville's relationship with its neighbours.

Finally, of course, anybody trying to make an introductory video about Auroville is up against enormous difficulties. There is something about the essence of this experience which is extremely difficult to convey. And each video is, inescapably, a reflection of the perceptions and understanding of its makers. In this sense, "Auroville Impressions 1996" is the right term for it makes clear that this is far from being a definitive depiction of Auroville life, and more the perceptions of a few people at a particular stage of development at a particular time.

And yet, because of the enormous work and artistry that went into the making of this video—its striking images, beautiful soundtrack and skilful intercutting make it by far the most polished Auroville video so far—there's a sense that this was a chance missed. For while nobody was paying sufficient attention, the real Auroville slipped quietly away...

Alan

MUSICAL AVALANCHE

It has become a kind of tradition that in the months of January and February musicians take the limelight. Cultural events abound to such an extent that one often wonders why they cannot be spread more evenly throughout the year. As it is impossible to review them all, and as it will do injustice to some if we only review the work of others, we only give here a summary of all that happened. Our general feeling: much of it was 3-star or even 4-star!

Aurovillian musicians (Western classical music):

Songs from Händel, Mozart and Fauré performed by Young-Mi. At the piano: Carel.

Songs from 19th and 20th century composers—Brahms, Kodály, Britten Jetter et al., performed by the Auroville Children's Choir.

Songs from 16th - 20th century composers—Mozart, Brahms, Hindemith and Saint-Saëns et al., by the Auroville Adults' Choir.

Aurovillian musicians (Rock):

"Notes on the way" by Kersten, Andrea, Véronique (vocals), Tineke (vocals and violin), Holger (guitar and violin), Shivaya (violin), Ellen (cello), Rolf (drums), Wazo (guitar), Martin (guitar) and Lucas (keyboard).

Visiting musicians (Indian Classical music):

Ustad Rashid Hussein Khan, vocal
Santra Lakshmi, regular bhajan, vocal
Uwe Neumann, sitar, with Pinto Debashish Dass, tabla
Gerhardt Kissel, sitar, with Pinto Debashish Dass, tabla
Deviprasad, sarod, with Manosh, tabla.

Visiting musicians (Western classical music):

Alexandre Eghikian, piano, with music from Bach, Chopin, Debussy and Ravel.

Joint performances by visiting musicians and Aurovilians:

(Western Classical)
Works from Bach, Debussy, Schönberg and Webern; two sonatas for piano and violin from Mozart. Frank Gutschmidt, piano, with Holger, violin.

"The Joyously Singing Body": Orfeas and Dorothy with members of the Auroville choir performing mainly medieval and renaissance music (repeated in the Ashram)

(Experimental improvisation)
Uwe Neumann, Pinto Debashish Dass, Reinhardt Birri, Wolfgang and Holger.

BRIEF NEWS

Auroville International meeting

The next meeting of the Auroville International centres will be held in "Le Kleeback" in the Elsass/Alsace on June 24-29, 1997. Those interested to join please contact the Auroville International Centre in your country (for addresses see subscription box) or write to Mauna, Auroville International, Bharat Nivas, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, India. E-mail: mauna@auroville.org.in

Homeopathic Seminar at Quiet

"Quiet is a healing project situated on the beach front on which Mother sometimes walked. It has a special energy and it was she who gave it its name. She wanted this land to be reserved for a healing sanctuary where people could come into harmony with themselves and their world."

These words were part of a welcoming address which started off Quiet's inaugural Homeopathic Seminar on Jan. 31st. It took place in the now completed buildings of the Quiet project, ten years after the laying of the foundation stone during an international seminar on health and healing in Auroville. During the ten days following the inauguration ceremony—of the Quiet project as well as of its first seminar—several internationally renowned homeopaths gave seminars on the latest developments within homeopathy. We hope to run a more extensive report in a subsequent issue.

Correction

The date on the address page of last month's issue of Auroville Today should read February 1997 and not 1996. The error is regretted.



"NOTES ON THE WAY"

BEYOND ASLEEP OR AWAKE

Children's Opera on CD

It is perhaps remarkable that such a sophisticated product can come out of Auroville. But the double Compact Disk of the children's opera "Beyond Asleep and Awake" proves that Auroville's music culture has matured to the point of being proudly presentable to the "outside world", though it has not exactly been an easy process...

"There have been moments when I didn't know whether to laugh or cry," sighs Holger, the composer of the children's opera "Beyond Asleep and Awake". The problems associated with putting the opera on CD seemed endless, justifying the dictum that if anything can go wrong, it will go wrong. "It started with the borrowed 8-track recorder: it had to be returned just when it was most needed. To say it was awkward is an understatement. Imagine how the children felt who had worked so hard and were so keen on making the recording! But then the Grace intervened: someone donated new equipment, which was purchased on a six-day trip to Singapore. The next problem came up during the weeks it took to receive the clearance for importing the equipment duty-free: my four-

teen-year-old son, Marco, who had one of the main roles, was showing alarming signs that his voice was on the point of breaking. It became a race against time...which we won with probably less than a week's respite. Thereafter I learned how exhilarating it is to record in a not-soundproofed studio in the tropics. Have you ever realised how much noise the outside world makes? The children's choir was continuously accompanied by uninvited guests: at 4.30 p.m. sharp, which seemed to me a prime-time for recording, the birds started their concert. As soon as the birds had been chased away, the crickets began. Around 8 o'clock the frogs would join in. All of them managed to get recorded, which was not part of the original composition. But through countless repetitions and some ingenious cuts, Didier managed to exorcise the stowaways and make a recording that is as clean as a whistle."

"The manufacture of the CD's was done in Bombay, the 4-colour printing of the booklet in Madras. Here too my endurance and equanimity have been seriously tested. All 2000 of the recorded discs vanished between Bombay and Madras;

and when finally the CD booklet was ready to be printed, some of the drawings had disappeared..."

But now the double CD is ready, with a great sound quality. The booklet, beautifully illustrated by Emanuele, is a joy to read or leaf through. The double CD set can be ordered through the Auroville International centres or directly from Auroville by sending a cheque for US \$35 or DM 50 (with German translation DM 55) to Auroville Fund (ref. 'opera'), Aspiration, Auroville 605101. All profits will be used to

Subscriptions to Auroville Today:

Subscription rates for 12 issues of Auroville Today are the following: for India Rs 250; for other countries Rs 1250, Can \$51, FF 195, DM 56, It. Lira 61,000, D.Gl. 63, US \$38, UK £25. This includes the postage by airmail. Please send your contribution (or your supporting contribution of double the amount) either to the Auroville International centre in your country (add 10% for admin. and bank charges) or directly to Auroville Today, CSR Office, Auroville 605101. **Cheques should be made payable to Auroville Fund, specifying: 'Contribution for Auroville Today'.** You will receive the issues directly from Auroville. Personal cheques are preferred to bank cheques. Please do not send postal money orders. Subscribers will receive a reminder when their subscription is about to expire.

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Number Ninety-Eight

Matrimandir

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 - CERTITUDE AT 4 P.M.
 - A LETTER HOME



Adhara (left) and Luca on the scaffolding at Matrimandir (1980's)

PHOTO COURTESY AUROVILLE ARCHIVES

A letter home

Jill writes a letter to her friend about life in Auroville.

My dear friend

I'm happy finally to hear from you. Living in south India can sometimes feel a bit like living at the end of the world—though at other times you think, yeah, this is where it's really happening. Although sometimes I miss all that's new in Western art, music, theater, cinema, except for what visitors and traveling Aurovilians bring back with them—but so what, except that I would dearly like to see some theater. My last trip out was three and a half years ago when I did my whirlwind tour of Europe and wound up in Scotland for three months. I'm not complaining, just reflecting on how little I miss the barrage of noise from America.

My next birthday is the Big 5-0! Unbelievable! Okay, so my joints hurt a bit (I drink lots of water) and my hair is kinda gray, but I'm also much more focused and concentrated in my work and have enormous amounts of energy (when I'm not sick). So we just finished another show in December. This time I worked with music and dance and actors from the local village and children dancing and ten new actors from Auroville and—we performed during a monsoon! One week of incredibly heavy rain and everything turned to red mud and it rained day and night and yet 500 people came (it could have been more, but that's almost half of Auroville, so I can't complain).

You ask about Sri Aurobindo and Mother and the yoga—and I tell you about my daily life because “All life is yoga” says Sri Aurobindo. The Integral Yoga is a yoga where our contact with the Divine, the Supreme (not a religion, a belief in the Divine within, without, everywhere, in everything), needs to be lived every day through our daily life, through the quality of our work, our relationships, our dreams, our sincerity.

The Auroville Charter was written by Mother at the inauguration of Auroville. The Charter states very simply and clearly the ideals upon which Auroville is founded. Practically, each point in the Charter directly affects how we live here. No private property. A willingness to give your work as an offering to the Divine. A chance to learn and keep learning at every moment. Research, experiment, try what's new, be inspired, act on your intuition, don't judge, accept; and surrender whenever necessary. Don't hold on to old ideas or opinions, or hold too dearly to people or things. Practice non-attachment. You own nothing—neither people nor houses—you simply help them to manifest, in spirit and matter. Be a witness to the life of others. Be conscious in your work. Be alive. Trust. Love. Be curious, ask questions. Be quiet. Listen. Take responsibility for your failures. Don't worry—it's a waste of energy. Keep connected. Get in the flow. Know when to rest. Keep faith with the future. Collaborate with your own evolution. Just be.

All the above, and more, are aspects of our spiritual life here, but also grounded very much in Matter. So, the infrastructure of the project is guided by the ideal. Because Truth cannot be formulated, it cannot be defined, but it can be LIVED. We try to live this truth through our daily life, when we run to Pour Tous, or the Bakery, or teaching, designing a house, planning a road, building a solar kitchen, performing a play, painting a picture, tending the sick, protecting trees, planting a garden, planning a city, washing clothes, watching a sunset. “Each of us is like a specific mental filter of

Thoughts and Aphorisms. This is the only way that a true peace, a “concrete human unity”, can be realized among us in Auroville first of all; when we realize, recognize at last that we are all complementary, and that we all need each other, with all our differences, for a fuller manifestation of the ONE Truth we all manifest partly.”

The appeal is to make a better world regardless if you're a Buddhist housewife from Sausalito or a Tibetan teenager from Dharamsala—a French architect, a German computer programmer, a Spanish musician, a Hungarian actress, a Belgian midwife, a Russian teacher of Sanskrit, a Gujarati culture lover, a Tamil doctor, or a Swedish manager of a food processing company—we're all here to do it together, beyond nationalities, our own insecurities and limitations, but we are given every opportunity to be free, to create freely, to act and live from our highest aspirations—to work, long and hard for the realization of community through the self and through our connection to others.

And we are all very, very human and we make mistakes and fail, and get sick and mess up—and go on. And our friends are incredibly patient and supportive and encouraging and slowly, slowly, we see some progress—a building here, a road there, a life lived sincerely, without lies or defenses, no one to blame, no guilt—do your very best and then let it go. Let go of your anger, your frustrations, your blaming, your bitterness, your mistrust. Look for the light. Go towards the light. Realize yourself. Have good friends and few enemies, forgive constantly—daily—no one's perfect and tomorrow is truly another day, for everyone. To be given the chance to live this way is truly a gift that I am thankful for every day. In spite of all the hassles and disappointments and shocks and unkind words, sometimes, oh, it's great fun to be here and once you live like this, how could you ever live any other way? “From far and wide they will come and build a garden here, beautiful to behold.” So says the Yogi in “The Legend of Kaliveli Siddha”, the show we performed in December.

Although we want to be a cashless society, many things still need to be paid for in cash. We have to build our theater sets with wood and nails and glue and paint, and it all costs money. At the beginning I was paying for it out of my own pocket, but since last year, my pockets are almost empty and I live pretty much on my maintenance allowance. And I've also been helping Thanajayan, and fixing my teeth (not free), and going to a doctor in Pondy for my eczema problems. At least I don't have to buy clothes—they're free at the free store. I also use my bicycle, when I can and when time, weather and energy permit; taxis are expensive, still a luxury for me, and when I splurge, it's on a fish dinner in Pondy once a month or a present for a friend's birthday.

So the ideals are there as a guide and a goal and the collective keeps you in check when you stray—and gives you a lot of leeway to find your own way. Some people are “high profile”—working on many committees, writing reports, going to workshops, others just are—raising their kids, weeding the garden, giving you a smile when you pass them on the road. The oldest is in her 90's, the youngest is waiting to be born. What I can't explain in words, you can catch when you're here. Hope this helps a bit to understand Auroville. Love and hugs for '97.