

# AUROVILLE TODAY

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## ENTERING

Coming to live in Auroville means, for most people, at once the fulfilment of an inner aspiration, and a new beginning. But for each one, the process of joining is different. For some, this process began long before they physically moved here. Others are caught unawares and find themselves living in Auroville before they have even taken a conscious decision. Some feel they have been guided here by the Grace, but do not know at first in what way they are to participate. Others come with clearly defined plans on how to offer their energy and goodwill to help Auroville to grow. All bring their energy to join forces with those who have already established themselves here.

Each person, before being allowed to settle as 'Aurovilian', has to meet the community, formally represented by its Entry Group, before being admitted. The origins of this process lie in the past. Before the beginning of Auroville in 1968, and nearly until her passing in 1973, all questions of admission were settled solely by The Mother. As early as October 1967 she talked at length about the subject:

*"The requests for admission to Auroville are multiplying at an alarming rate these days—every day a packet like that—and then naturally everyone has to send his photo with his request and say why he wants to be in Auroville and what he knows how to do and what category he belongs to: the category of those who want to work to build it and the category of those who would like to come and quietly sit down in it when it's ready. But what people, my child!... In general, it is precisely all the dissatisfied ones. From time to time, there's one with a light in his eyes and the need for something which he isn't finding (so that's very good). There are those who have succeeded in nothing and who are completely*



DRAWING BY EMANUELE

*"All here shall be one day her sweetness' home". . .*

Sri Aurobindo, Savitri III, 2

*disgusted and ask themselves if they couldn't succeed there. And then the older ones who have worked hard and want to rest. There are very few young people. These few young ones are all worthwhile people. The average youth isn't interested at all. The few young people I've seen want to work: they come not to profit*

*from the work of others, but to work.<sup>1</sup>*

A few days earlier, Mother had spoken about the consciousness required to admit people to Auroville: "... the essential condition to be able to choose people is that preferences, attractions, repulsions, sympathies, antipathies, all moral rules, all that must have

## Auroville

*completely disappeared—not that one is in the process of overcoming them, it's not that: all that must have disappeared (laughing), there must be no more ego! It's not a judgement, it's not looking at people and judging if they are capable of being there or not, if they are destined to be there or not, it's not that at all—you don't 'judge'. . . The Force is put on all, equally and supreme—whatever they are and whatever their attitude, the Force is put on all equally—and it's THEY who sort themselves out; it's not that you decided that this one is here or there or there: THEY classify themselves according to his/her receptivity and the quality of that receptivity—or else by his/her refusal or incapacity."<sup>2</sup>*

In February, 1971, Mother approved of a trial period of one year—which could be made longer or shorter. Its objective was clear: to see if the newcomer fits into Auroville, both from the newcomer's as well as from Auroville's perspective. And those "who have been taken on trial and are not satisfactory, they can leave—they MUST leave<sup>3</sup>," Mother said emphatically, and she gave full authority to send them away.

After Mother's passing this policy was continued by the community. In 1983, the task of meeting newcomers was taken up by the Entry Group, a representative body of Aurovilians. In 1988, the Government of India passed the Auroville Foundation Act, which expressly states that all issues of entry into Auroville are ultimately to be settled by the Residents' Assembly—one of the few official powers of this body. The Residents' Assembly has delegated this power to the Entry Group.

1. Agenda de Mère VIII, 1967, p.359

2. *ibid.* 1967, p.351

3. Mother's Agenda XIII, 1972, p.129-136

### THE ENTRY GROUP

## "We lack the wisdom to truly see"

Joining Auroville is something which, barring a few exceptions, doesn't cause too much of a headache. The main bureaucratic barrier, if any, is the chat with the Entry Group (which processes all applications to join Auroville) about one's past and one's expectations for the future in Auroville. That talk is something of a walkover, easy going. The true test, as everybody knows, is the so-called newcomer's year. If you make it, you more or less automatically become an Aurovilian. And if you don't make it, well, then you don't. And you leave. It sounds simple.

In fact, it sounds so simple that the Entry Group closed its doors three months ago to study the possibility of new Newcomer guidelines. But intensive brainstorming sessions

notwithstanding, it appears that only limited headway has been made, leaving some members frustrated and wondering about the sense of it all. Says Tapas, one of the Entry Group members: "For us it is nearly impossible to determine the spiritual dimension of a person and if he or she fits into Auroville. All kinds of people come, some with little or no understanding of the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother or what Auroville stands for. We recommend that they read the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, but that is no condition for becoming a newcomer. We ask people if they have the money to build a house, what they want to do in Auroville, a bit of their personal lives before coming here, and if they can contribute to the existing infrastructure, and that is about it." Michael Z., another

member of the Entry Group adds: "There are many cases where everybody in the Entry Group has a feeling that the newcomer belongs in Auroville, but there are also cases where you catch yourself wondering: what is this person doing here! But that by itself is no reason to refuse to let a person become a newcomer. For unless the case is abundantly clear, which is rare, one always feels: well, what do I know! Let the thing sort itself out during the newcomer year! That means that a person is nearly always admitted as a newcomer." And that is exactly why many members of the Entry Group get frustrated. "If we accept just anybody, where then is the need for an Entry Group!" wonders Santo. "If there is no basis to qualify or disqualify people, this Entry Group process seems a waste of energy. Some

Aurovilians feel that we should be more strict, explain to the potential newcomer Auroville's ideals and make the willingness to do Sri Aurobindo's yoga a condition for joining Auroville. But if we would follow this request, we would end up being fanatics and lose contact with the reality that many people join Auroville initially because of some kind of 'outward' reason—for example, an interest in alternative energy, and only gradually open up to the other realities here. It is a bit like the stories you hear about those who joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in the past. Someone came because he heard that there was a good French restaurant in Pondicherry, and got hooked." Adds Michael: "Such a strict admis-

(Continued on page 2)



(Continued from page 1)

sion policy would, I believe, also go against what Mother has said about admission to Auroville. Actually, she has given an incredible wide range of conditions for being an Aurovilian, from goodwill and an aspiration for human unity to having discovered the psychic being! So we mostly admit a person as a newcomer in the conviction that his or her experience throughout the newcomer year will show if he/she belongs here or not. During that year the newcomer can get in touch with his or her contact person (a member of the Entry Group) when there are difficulties, but more often than not this is not necessary as a newcomer develops his or her own friendships and contacts. After one year we ask for feedback from the community about the newcomer. In cases where we get negative feedback, we always go and check. But I have noticed that we have a tendency to be much more inclined to accept rather than to judge and reject a person: for everybody is all the time aware of the fact that we lack the wisdom, the level of consciousness to truly see."

Even so, a few people have been rejected outright or during their newcomer year. Tapas: "We have had a few cases where people came for absolutely the wrong reasons, or were fleeing a court case or a difficult situation at home. We refuse those people immediately. And there have been a few cases where the entry process of a newcomer was so much fraught with problems, that we had to tell the persons to leave, as we felt that those problems were of the newcomer's doing. It shows me that the Entry Group does have a reason to exist, even if it is a minimal one."

Three months of study. Where did it bring the Entry Group? Michael: "We linked our study to that of an existing group which had already been working on redefining guidelines for admission (see page 6). One example is that we felt that the duration of the newcomer's probation period, which is at present one year, is in some cases not enough to make a decision. There is a widespread feeling in Auroville that some newcomers behave well or make themselves unobtrusive during the newcomer year, but that, once the newcomer has become an Aurovilian, s/he does not work for the collective anymore. This may be an overstatement but there is some truth in it. We would like to propose that the Entry Group can be flexible with the newcomer period and extend it, for some people up to two or perhaps even three years, to give them the possibility to fully develop a commitment. For example, there are many newcomers who return to their country every year for two or three months, to earn money or for some other motivation. That is a kind of part-time Aurovilian with one foot here, one foot there."

The other topic is the newcomer's contribution to the community. At present each newcomer is asked to contribute towards the community's infrastructure. Santo: "Increasingly we find ourselves negotiating on this point. We ask Rs 1500 (\$50) per month from newcomers from Europe and the USA, and Rs 900 per month from newcomers from India, for the duration of the newcomer period. Though these amounts are not really very substantial, all of us in the Entry Group are uncomfortable with this asking for contributions. It is not easy to ask people for money. Some people give readily, others are not ready to give as they first want to be safe, and some conceal the fact that they have money. When people find it difficult to give, most of the time we agree that the newcomer pays less than the rule." Adds Tapas: "We believe that we should stop asking for the obligatory contribution, and, at the same time, create a guideline that newcomers cannot receive maintenance during their newcomer period. In this way the newcomer would be left to rely on his or her own means. It would have the additional ad-

vantage that a newcomer would choose a work that would fit his or her abilities and not because it pays well. At present, for example, hardly any newcomer joins a service because the maintenance is so low!"

These two propositions of the Entry Group seem to be very good, at least because their acceptance will give some meaning to the term 'newcomer'. At present there are hardly any practical consequences to being a newcomer, with the exception that newcomers are not allowed to build in Auroville during the newcomer period. The reason for this prohibition is to protect the newcomer, as all immovable

assets created in Auroville belong, according to Auroville's Charter, automatically to Auroville. But this building prohibition may have to be reviewed. For finding appropriate housing is one of the most difficult problems for a newcomer. A limited number of small newcomer units are available, but have to be vacated after two years, and building times vary between one and two years. If Auroville would allow newcomers to build during the newcomer period, and consent to repay the money a newcomer has advanced for an apartment or house in case the newcomer should leave Auroville, then a lot of newcomers'

problems could be solved. If the newcomer decides to stay, the house could be ready when the newcomers period is over. If the newcomer leaves, then Auroville would have had the advantage of the newcomer's contribution to finance houses and apartments. Such a policy would give the newcomer security. For the rules of the game--that money invested in immovable assets cannot be repaid--will apply only to those who have become Aurovilian.

Carel and Bindu,  
based on an interview with Tapas, Santo  
and Michael Z.

## A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO RECEIVING NEWCOMERS

# Welcome To Auroville!

*By the time this issue falls into your mailbox, the first newcomers introduction week to Auroville organised by the newly formed 'Welcoming Group' will have happened. Over lunch in Sonja's garden, Tineke spoke to the initiators of this new group, Sonja, Shivaya and Vani. The fourth and only male member of the group, a newcomer, Ross, could not be present.*

"About a year ago I felt inspired and wrote three pages about how to change the entry procedure into Auroville," says Sonja. "I realised after talking with several newcomers that our reception of newcomers should be different." The common complaint of the newcomer is the narrow-minded behaviour and the attitude of arrogance of the members of the Entry Group and of Aurovilians in general. They do not feel welcome, but rather are met with distrust; their experience of life outside Auroville is ignored, and many get the feeling that they are supposed to start from scratch: a newcomer knows nothing and should keep his/her mouth shut during the newcomer's year.

According to Sonja, the Entry Group should not try to judge whether someone is good enough to be in Auroville. "Take away that aspect of people having to prove that they are potentially good Aurovilians. Let's assume that newcomers are serious people with goodwill. After all, they have left everything behind and come with their money to settle here, or are on their way to doing that. It is better to give them a hand and say 'welcome, we'll help you in'. At that time I proposed the creation of a Welcoming Group to the Entry Group, but there were no takers. Now that has changed."

Vani (see separate interview) joined this Welcoming Group as a continuation of the work she was doing for Auroville International France: meeting potential newcomers and giving feedback to the Entry Group in Auroville. While in France she became aware that newcomers were misinformed, sometimes on very important issues such as the cost of housing and the problem of getting an appropriate visa. "Another reason I got involved with this work is because I have come here with my partner who is a newcomer. We are living in the Djaima newcomers complex where I am confronted with typical newcomer problems," she says. "They feel quite alone. Many of them would like it if there were people to explain things, and for their contact person to be more available. Better communication is necessary. Many newcomers don't know anything about Auroville's past or about the Auroville Foun-

dation." After listening to the newcomers' complaints for some time, she encouraged them to arrange a meeting. It was held in the middle of August; the newcomers discussed practical matters such as recommendation letters for obtaining a visa and the role of the Auroville International centres, the newcomer's contribution, their initial accommodation in Auroville and areas of work, and the follow-up during the newcomer's probation year. But psychological attitudes were talked about as well, such as the need for Aurovilians to share their know-how about life in Auroville and to integrate newcomers into their work without fear. The idea of the Welcoming Group came up again. Shortly afterwards, their report was discussed with the Entry Group, which also felt that the Welcoming Group was a necessity, and that it should function for the Entry Group as well as for the Co-entry Group. Apart from giving an introduction to Auroville's history and reality on many levels, it should also provide certain facilities, such as language tuition (particularly English and Tamil), and study of the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

So far the first activity of the new Welcoming Group will be to organise an introduction week for newcomers. Thereafter a two-weekly follow-up is planned. But more has to be done, like facilitating accommodation because that is one of the major problems, not only for newcomers but also for Aurovilians. Says Sonja: "In the past, communities developed organically around one or two people who settled somewhere. When

new people came, there was always one person who had been in that community for a long time, and who knew everything. But now that is changing: housing complexes are coming up or are being planned. That brings in lots of new people at one time without a reference point, and newcomers lack support." Vani: "The complex of 11 newcomer units in the Djaima community is by itself quite all right, but it would be better if all the Aurovilians in Djaima would participate. At the moment only two Aurovilians are living there, which is not enough. Instead of a concentration of newcomer units in one place, it would be better if each community would have a newcomers house."

All three find that the main job of the Welcoming Group is to make newcomers aware that they can open their mouths. "It takes a long time for new people to speak up, to object to an existing blockage. They are afraid that this might compromise their entry into Auroville," says Sonja. Shivaya: "The Welcoming Group should stimulate the dialogue and the attempt at mutual understanding. In case there are problems arising around the integration of a newcomer, the Welcoming Group should help to find a solution which deals with the newcomer's problems, rather than taking the easy step of excluding them (and the newcomer) from Auroville. And even if we have to say to the newcomer that his or her place is not Auroville, we should say it with understanding and from the heart."

A welcome from the heart. That is essential.  
(Continued on page 3)



Looking for guidance... How does it feel to be new in Auroville?

PHOTO IRENO



Nearly six years ago, in December 1990, the community organised a seminar on Auroville village relations (see AVToday #25, January 1991). The seminar was called by the Entry Group to get a clear directive from the community on the integration of people from the surrounding villages into Auroville. "Thirty percent of the present population of Auroville is Tamil, most of them from the surrounding villages", reported the Entry Group. "They have joined Auroville for many different reasons: some have been accepted by the Mother directly, some have come drawn by the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; others have come through marriage, or followed an elderly family member, or came for economic reasons. At present we have a list of people who want to join Auroville, but whose motivations we consider not sufficient. Another hurdle is that many of the applicants have only a marginal education and that attachment to traditional religious beliefs is still strong. We need a guideline."

One of the outcomes of the seminar was to form a Co-Entry Group: a group of Tamil speaking Aurovilians who could act as the first contact for villagers who want to join. The responsibility of this group would include giving information on various aspects of Auroville, and where possible, seeing that they get education and training to prepare them for the life and work in Auroville.

The Co-Entry Group functioned for about two years before stopping its work, because, as their report stated, "it had become increasingly frustrated with its own processes."

Welcome... (Continued)

tially what the Welcoming Group is about. "Very often", says Sonja, "newcomers arrive open and with smiling faces. As far as possible, we should try to keep those faces smiling during the process of integration into Auroville." Vani: "The fact that many old-time Aurovilians had a hard time is no excuse for newcomers to also have a hard time. We should help newcomers to make their entry joyful. Together we might find out that there is a sunlit way to integrate into Auroville."

Tineke

The Concerns of the Co-Entry Group

Part of this frustration was due to accusations of partiality: a possible conflict of interest when a member of the group has family members who are in the process of becoming Aurovilians. But the main part of the frustration had to do with the question of how to deal with a number of issues including illiteracy, marriage, housing problems and ownership of land within the Auroville area. Before dissolving, the Co-Entry Group reported on these issues:

"Illiteracy is a great problem as there is then little opportunity to learn or know objectively about Sri Aurobindo, The Mother and Auroville. This leads to many misconceptions about Auroville. The Co-Entry Group feels that the applicant must be able to read and write in Tamil and have a good command of spoken English. More education possibilities, study circles and forums should be organised for those who sincerely wish to join Auroville."

"The concept of marriage in India is different from that in the West. Arranged marriages are the norm in Tamil Nadu, and several Tamil Aurovilians have arranged marriages for their sons or daughters in recent years. Also, young male Tamil Aurovilians often choose partners who are not members of the community. It is assumed that the husband or wife will automatically become Aurovilian. But becoming an Aurovilian surely involves a choice and cannot simply be a by-product of marriage. For this reason people who have entered the community through marriage are asked to wait at least one year before applying for membership. The Co-Entry Group also suggests that if an

Aurovilian intends to marry someone who is not an Aurovilian, the community should be informed. Advice, counselling and support can be given to the person, so that s/he understands the responsibilities of guiding his/her future partner towards becoming an Aurovilian."

"Each newcomer is required to find a place to stay in Auroville. But for newcomers from the surrounding villagers, these places are usually in the form of a capsule or a store room in any one of about seven communities who already have a presence of Tamil Aurovilians. Auroville doesn't have the financial means to commit itself to provide proper housing for them, and as it is rare that local people applying to become Aurovilian are able or willing to contribute towards their housing needs, many Tamil newcomers and Aurovilians land up living in conditions similar to those in the villages, with no adequate water and electricity facilities and no toilets. Obviously, the priority should be to provide proper accommodation to existing Tamil Aurovilians before new applications are being considered. Young Tamil people should not be encouraged to form exclusively Tamil communities, as this often leads to isolation."

"Land ownership is another sensitive issue. The Mother said that local people joining the community could keep their gold but that they should sell their land to Auroville. Because a few Tamil Aurovilians still own land in the Auroville city and greenbelt areas it is difficult to convince those wishing to join that there is a consistent policy. Those who want to join Auroville and who own land within the city and green belt areas, should make a clear statement as to how they see their relationship to that land, present and future. If Auroville needs that land, then it should be put up for sale at the current market rate."

The concerns of the Co-Entry Group caused a guidelines study group to be created. (See article on page 6)

When this issue went to press, a new Co-Entry Group was rumoured to be starting up again. It is not yet clear to what extent the observations of the previous Co-Entry Group will serve as guidelines for the future group.

Carel

NEWCOMERS JOINING AUROVILLE (BY NATIONALITY)							
Nationality	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995 August	Total Avls August
American	0	3	3	3	3	2	45
Argentinian	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
Armenian	0	0	2	3	6	0	2
Australian	1	0	0	0	4	0	10
Australian - Canadian	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Austrian	0	0	0	2	0	0	7
Bangladeshi	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Belgian	0	1	1	1	0	0	20
Belorussian	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Brazilian	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
British	2	1	2	2	2	0	40
Canadian	1	0	1	0	0	0	18
Colombian	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Czechoslovakian	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Dutch	1	0	6	4	0	0	58
French	7	16	7	11	22	13	228
French - British	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
French - German	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
French - Irish	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
French - Spanish	0	0	0	0	0	2	4
French - Swiss	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
German	6	7	18	8	12	2	180
Indian - Local villages	1	1	3	4	6	6	231
Indian - Other	2	4	10	10	6	3	138
Irish	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Italian	0	6	4	1	3	0	47
Japanese	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Moroccan	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
New Zealander	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Norwegian	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Russian	0	0	8	2	3	4	25
Slovene	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Spanish	0	5	4	2	5	0	24
Spanish - Italian	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sri Lankan	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Swedish	0	0	0	4	0	0	17
Swiss	0	0	0	4	0	0	29
Tibetan	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Tunisian	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ukrainian	0	0	2	3	6	0	12
	23	45	73	65	79	32	1173

N.B.: While from January 1994 to August 1995 111 newcomers joined Auroville, another 14 persons became newcomers but left during their probationary period. With thanks to the Visa Service for providing the statistics and to Guy (CSR) for making the chart.

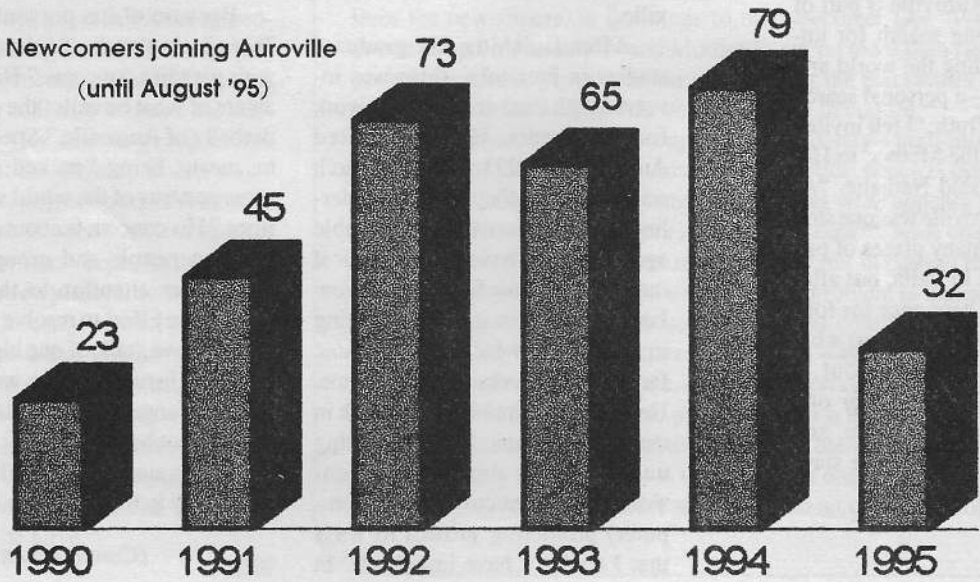
Newcomer Housing

"Three steps forward, one step backward" is how Francis, one of the Aurovilians in charge of newcomer housing, describes the process of building newcomer housing units in Auroville. "It's all due to our 'bureaucrazy' which slows things down", he says, but then admits that Auroville has, mainly with the help of the U.S. Foundation for World Education and the Dutch Stichting de Zaaier, managed to build quite a number of newcomer units in the past five years. "Today there are twenty-four newcomer units, with three more under construction. Twelve of these units are for single individuals, eight units are for couples and seven for families. Seven of the newcomer houses are free of charge for people who arrive without the necessary finances. The remaining twenty units are priced according to size and the expense of construction, varying between Rs 70,000 (US \$ 2,100) to Rs 300,000 (US \$ 9,000). Newcomers are allowed to live in these units for a maximum of two years, during which period they are supposed to

find or build themselves a house or apartment. Approximately 80% of their original contribution towards the newcomer's unit is then returned to them for the purpose of building or contributing towards that house or apartment. The remaining 20% is used for repair and maintenance of the newcomer's unit and for building new newcomer units." "Are you concentrating on low-cost housing?" I ask. "We did in the past," answers Francis, "but our experience with very low cost housing has been bad. We found that the money which was saved initially had to go back into the structure because more than the average maintenance was required, so now we concentrate on normal construction methods again."

Still, 27 units is not enough. "We are building as fast as we are able to, given the resources available," concludes Francis. "There is already a waiting list of newcomers who would like accommodation in a newcomer house. The need is great."

Carel





# Newcomer?

For many, this word invokes the feeling of coming to a place for the first time, not knowing where to go, what to do, and then, somehow "finding one's place." It means inexperience, a bit of naivete, and at its best, a freshness and energy to begin anew. Yet, it is a word which separates, a label which one wants to get rid of as quickly as possible, for it often creates barriers—it is a hurdle one must jump.

The word especially rankles those who, before joining, have been associated with Auroville for some time, either as guests, friends—or even former Aurovilians. In fact, the newcomers we spoke with are hardly "new" to Auroville—they had all visited several times before deciding to come to live here and feel the label newcomer is a misnomer, a "put-down" which doesn't recognize their experience or respect their devotion to the ideals of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

For instance, Gioia was working in Zürich, Switzerland, and has been regularly visiting Auroville since 1981. She has known about Auroville since 1971. "I was very much touched by the thought of the Mother being here. I realised over time that the reason I wanted to be here was to join forces, to give my energy to Her Dream; and now I have finally come here to roll up my sleeves and work."

Two big questions often emerge when you talk to newcomers: the attitude of older Aurovilians towards them and the housing problem. Of course, these questions are

somehow linked—if there would be a more positive attitude on the part of older Aurovilians towards those newly arrived, perhaps there would be more concern for the quality of their reception. On the other hand, perhaps the newcomers should also try to understand better the reality of life for those who have been here many years and are still facing the question of where to live. For many are still without a home of their own and often with little resources to build.

Gilles and Vani live in a newcomers house in Djaima. Are they happy there? Yes and no. Djaima has eleven newcomer units (the highest concentration in Auroville) and a central kitchen but there are too few Aurovilians who share the experience of communal living with the newcomers. The community kitchen is used by newcomers and only one Aurovillian, and this imbalance creates problems. In many situations, the practical experience of the older Aurovilians would be useful. So the distinction between newcomer and Aurovillian is apparent, even to the workers. "Especially for the workers," says Gilles, "the distinction is clear between who is a permanent resident and who is a (transient) newcomer. One worker said to me, 'You will go, but I will stay on'." This means that the newcomers have little input in the day to day business of running Djaima. "It's a little bit like a playground for children," Gilles says, laughing, "We can play here, but we can't make any decisions." On a larger scale, the same is true for newcomers in general. "Personally I was received very well. But I feel the 'old time

Aurovilians' are a little mistrustful. It's a pity—we have a lot of things to share, but the 'old timers' don't accept what we know. Now Vani and I have started to work with the Welcome Group. (see separate article) The more Aurovilians who get involved, the better."

Neither Gioia nor Nathalie have escaped the ordeal to find accommodation. "For the time being, I am living out of my suitcase," says Gioia, smiling. "That is frustrating, not to have my own place where I can put my books and things down. It's a yoga of patience, I guess." It is also a question of how much energy you can put into looking actively for a place, and how much you can leave to Divine Grace. "Am I being forceful by going around knocking on everybody's door? Or should I just say, 'O.K., Mother, you just take me and put me where I have to be?'"

For Nathalie, there was a similar journey of criss-crossing all over Auroville, checking out whatever she came to know about and seeing what was possible. "I spent a lot of energy on that, but I trusted I would find something." Finally, she has found a newcomer unit in Grace. For both of them, the experience of visiting many communities and meeting people and finding their way around, even if stressful, has nevertheless been important.

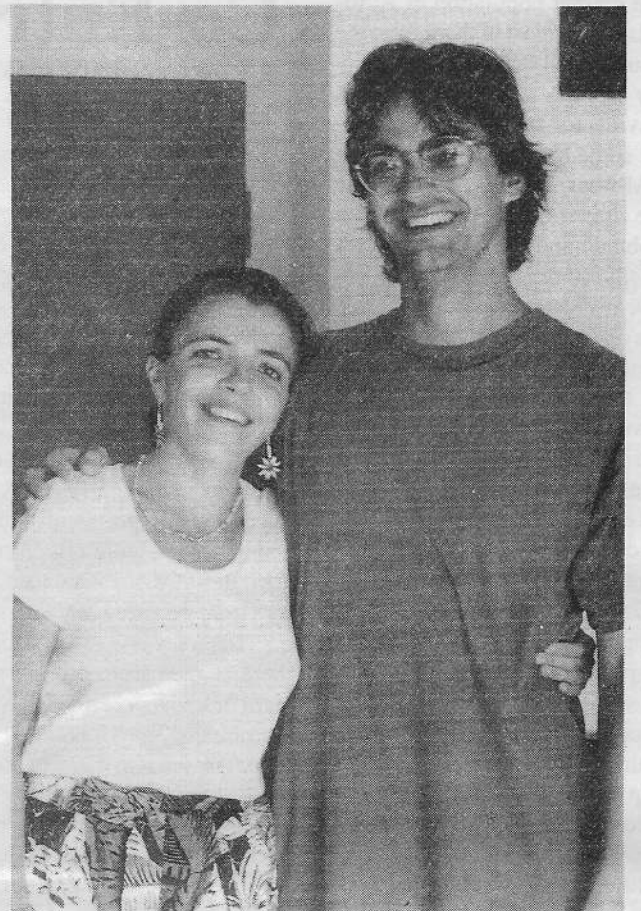
Perhaps not just understanding, but compassion is needed, on both sides. For home is not just a building, but to make Auroville our home, together, requires a sense of loving kindness towards each other and the recognition of our common situation.

Jill

## A powerful place...

GILLES BOULICOT is a young Frenchman who discovered Sri Aurobindo and The Mother 15 years ago and later learned of Auroville through his Hatha Yoga teacher. He has been an active member of Auroville International France since 1988 and in January came to live in Auroville with his partner Vani and her 14-year old daughter Auria, both of whom had already lived in Auroville for about 10 years. Presently, they are all living in a newcomer unit in Djaima.

"Auroville is a unique place, a powerful place," says Gilles. It is a place with a strong feeling of the Grace." It is this feeling he refers to often as he



Gilles and Vani

describes his relationship to Auroville. "Now it's okay, but at the beginning, physically, it was very hard," he admits. But in spite of the physical difficulties his commitment to Auroville is strong. "It's a miracle, all the time, to be here," says Gilles. "When you lose contact with the miracle, then automatically you don't understand—you wonder, 'what's going on here?'"

Newly arrived, Gilles also feels clearly the connection between Auroville and the rest of the world. "Here I feel I am in contact with the whole world. I see Auroville is a mirror that reflects the joy and peace as well as the chaos of the world. But here I feel these things as forces which play through individuals in a positive or negative way."

## In spite of the grating facts

TEJAS is friendly and personable, and would like Auroville to be more so. Though his family is from Kerala, he was born and brought up in Madras. "Thank God Auroville is in Tamil Nadu," he remarks, because his knowledge of Tamil and his fluency in English contributed to what he calls "an easy entry into Auroville."

After finishing his graduate studies in literature, Tejas was involved with rural development work for nine years. He first visited Auroville in 1991 with a research scientist when they were considering to start a journal on sustainable agriculture. "I have an ideological interest in organic farming and now I can actually live it." Tejas is living in Aurogreen which is an organic farm and he works there part time. He also does administrative work in the HERS organic food processing unit and finds this "multidimensional life (from cow shed to computer) promoting growth in ways that I couldn't have imagined." In

his leisure time, he feels that Tai Chi and music are things he always wanted to do and now can. He appreciates and values that such activities are actively pursued in Auroville because they are necessary for life. "If you are not fulfilled creatively," he says, "you are not of much use to other people."

Because of his previous visits, Tejas feels that he "did not come with paradise concepts." He is well aware of what he calls "the dark underbelly of Auroville." Specifically he means being "sucked into the same patterns of the world we come from." His concern is about disputes between people and groups. "We should pay attention to them and make more effort to resolve the conflicts." If we "talk of one big family but act as insular groups, we end up with the anger and avoidance we find everywhere."

Economics, he feels, still has too large a say in the Auroville context.

(Continued on page 5)



NATHALIE is from Belgium. She was studying Tibetan Buddhism in Delhi and took the opportunity to visit Auroville many times before joining Auroville recently.

For Nathalie, the aspiration to join Auroville is part of a life-long search for understanding the world and herself—a personal search for the Truth. "I felt invited here by the Mother, to Her place," said Nathalie. "At first Auroville was one stop among many places of pilgrimage in India, but after I stayed here once for four months, I discovered what Auroville was about. I could have left after one week, but I stayed on, and afterwards Auroville stayed in my mind."



# "Joining the hidden brother- and sisterhood"

DEVAKI AND SUBHASISH

Devaki is 24, her husband Subhasish is 29. They came from Calcutta to Auroville a year ago, and were recently accepted as Aurovilians. Subhasish gave up a good career (he was working for Mitsubishi), while Devaki was working as a primary school teacher, an occupation she continues in Auroville at Transition school. Subhasish has joined Auro-mode as factory manager. Was it a difficult transition? "Yes", he says "for two reasons. One is that I miss my career. Financially and status wise, I lost. But in all other ways, I gained. The second reason has to do with my mother. I lost my father when I was very young, after which we had a very hard life. In the morning we had food, but we were not so sure if we would get it again by the evening. My mother worked hard day and night producing her own handiwork, which made it possible for me to continue my education. At 18 I started giving private tuition and working in various small organisations in daytime to earn money to complete my educational courses in night colleges. When I finally went to Auroville it made her very upset. I am trying now to convince her to come and stay here." For Devaki it was different: "We all grew up to come here," she says, "I knew Mother from shortly after I was born. My parents presented my two brothers and me to Mother, and we received her blessings. And in this way, Mother has been with me from the very beginning, as my own mother. I knew that I had to come here—the Ashram or Auroville. Subhasish and I inquired about the possibilities to settle in the

Ashram—we used to come for a visit every year—but those who were in charge were negative as we were married and we would not consent to live separately. So then we decided for Auroville and we are still very happy that we made that decision!" And she adds: "I do feel that the Ashram is stimulating a lot of hypocrisy, by the way!"

Their experience in the first year was basically a smooth one, with only some minor problems in the very beginning. "I had to get used to Auroville", says Devaki. "I had some ideas that Auroville was actually further developed instead of being in the process of formation. But I enjoy this phase a lot, it is a kind of adventurous life. I also had to adjust to the mentality of some Aurovilians. I was often wondering why so many of them behaved rude and closed up. It took some time before I could accept that everybody is different."

Subhasish adds: "It is perhaps because most Aurovilians have not experienced much of India or have many contacts with cultured and educated Indians. If your only contacts are on the level on the village workers, a certain type of behaviour might develop." Devaki: "But when they started knowing me, they started to become friendly. It took some people lots of time before they started talking to me really properly."

Do Devaki and Subhasish feel that there are too few non-Tamil Indians in Auroville? "Yes", is the unanimous answer. "The reason is that the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and Auroville are virtually unknown. Ninety percent

of our friends know nothing about Auroville. And that is not because they lack a spiritual urge—all Indians are brought up with a sense of the spiritual, it is part of our cultural heritage. People who actively look for the Divine go either to the Ramakrishna mission or to any spiritual organisation of the same kind, some of which are headed by a Guru, or remain at home because they do not want to participate in the worship of any God or Goddess, but do not turn to Sri

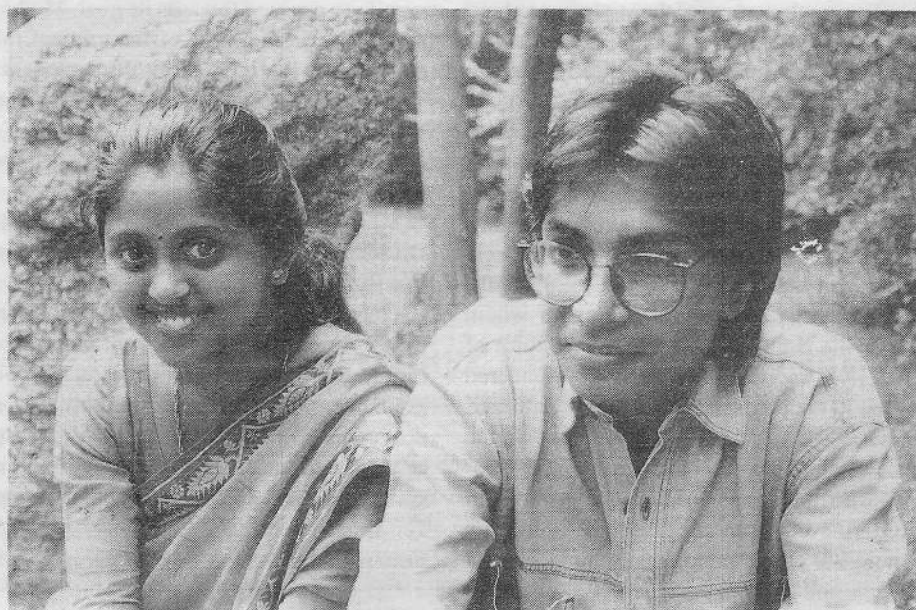
Aurobindo. This is probably also due to the fact that the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are not much known and some people have an idea that it has been turned into a religion, a sect, so people are not interested. Auroville has had the additional disadvantage that the Government has 'taken over'. That kind of thing happens normally only to institutions where many bad things happen, so in the minds of the average Indian, Auroville is one of those 'bad' institutions, and consequently, is doomed, or will be turned into a tourist attraction. It is badly necessary that more awareness on Auroville is spread all over India."

Many people have a problem coming to Auroville because of ma-

terial conditions. How do they see their future here? Devaki: "Our integration has worked out as a miracle. All our material needs were taken care of. We can maintain ourselves with the maintenance we get." Subhasish: "I leave everything to Mother. Whenever I need something, she gives me. Take the house for example. I started working for Auromode and got from them a temporary house. When I was asked when I would move out, I got two

house?" I ask. Devaki: "My family is well established and might consent. But Subhasish does not agree to ask. He feels it is like asking for a dowry!" Subhasish: "A solution will come in its own time."

Are there any things that really touched them during their first year? "Well", says Subhasish, "I am a bit concerned about the older Auroville youth. My hard past may colour my perceptions, but I cannot escape the impression that a few of our young



offers on the same day!" Devaki: "I totally give myself up to Mother. I learned that if I push and really want something, it never happens. But if I have a problem and leave it to her, the problem is solved. I am not a hypocrite, Mother knows what I am and what I need. So I am not worrying in the least." "Would you be willing to ask financial help from your family, for example to build a

Aurovilians do not like to work. Perhaps the system which supplies them with an easy maintenance should be reviewed." Devaki: "We have made a first step, learning very hard to join this hidden brother- and sisterhood of Aurovilians. There is something very beautiful here, and we are happy we've joined."

Carel

## Tejas (contd.)

"Money, it comes back to that, and proprietary patterns—guarding what we created." Looking for a solution, he suggests that if Aurovilians "remind themselves of why they came here that might help. They shouldn't lose that vision."

Housing is another problem that is not faced collectively. According to Tejas, "many new people are really distressed over the situation, but some Aurovilians do not have an attitude of openness in admitting people or sharing facilities. The physical infrastructure of Auroville needs a central authority to create the eco-friendly city that is being talked about but not developed that way."

"The spiritual roots of Auroville tend to be all words unless there is an honest life." Tejas further notes that "honesty towards one's self leads to honesty toward your community, and that touches on everything. We don't come to Auroville because we can't live anywhere else." In spite of the "grating facts", Tejas feels that "each day in Auroville is a great one—you feel good to be alive."

Bill

Why is the entry process into Auroville sometimes fraught with anxiety, tension and frustration, not only for newcomers, or potential newcomers, but also for members of the Entry Group? There are many possible explanations, including wrong expectations on the part of those who have given up so much to come here, the projecting onto newcomers of the personal frustrations and fears of certain Aurovilians, and the 'weightiness' attached to the process by those who see it as a kind of life test or evaluation of the soul.

But more than all of this, I think the anxiety stems from the fact that nobody really understands what is going on when somebody wants to come and live in Auroville. And that all the discussions about guidelines for newcomers, or questions to the newcomer like "What have you read by Sri Aurobindo and Mother?", are no more than rather desperate attempts to paper over our ignorance of the real factors at work, and to give us the feeling that we are actually in control.

In this sense, the Entry Group process is merely a high-profile version of one of the dominant human characteristics, which is the attempt to order the unordered, to bund and channel what appears to be an unruly force into a safe network of canals. Of course, what else can we do? We are continually forced to act, to commit ourselves in matter, and this requires some kind of structure. The problem is that since few of us, presumably, even begin to approach the consciousness Mother expected of us, we tend to fall back on the old ways—decision-making by committee, referenda etc.etc.—which are products of the mind.

It seems like a classic case of Catch-22: we use the old forms because we're not ready for something new, but the old forms ensure that we're not ready for the new... Is there any way out? One possibility lies in us being as open and honest as possible about our predicament, and

to keep reminding ourselves that any forms we come up with are no better than makeshift.

In the case of entry into Auroville, this might translate into something like this. We might begin by imposing a long-term moratorium on the word 'Aurovillian' since, by Mother's definition, it seems unlikely that any true Aurovilians exist at present. The term would be replaced by something like 'resident of Auroville'. This, at the very

least, would scale down the apocalyptic overtones of the entry process, and make it clear that it's merely about joining a particular community at a particular stage in its development.

Secondly, since we are incapable of knowing what's really going on, and we assume that Mother does, we should give the maximum opportunity for the process to be worked out without, for example, curtailing it through over-rigid guidelines. The widespread acceptance that it is the 'process' of Auroville, the contact of an individual's consciousness with the consciousness of this place, which is the true entry process would have a number of consequences. It would mean, for example, a reevaluation of the role of the Entry Group: a shift from an attempt to control the boundaries of Auroville to one of trying to assist the newcomer in contacting the consciousness, the true 'force field' of this place. The rest would be left up to the unfolding of the process.

This sounds ambitious. To the ears of bureaucrats and legislators, perhaps, even irresponsible. But the shift from control to trust in a guiding consciousness, from judgement to exploration, and from exclusion to inclusion seems such an essential movement, so much a part of what we are trying to live here, that it's surely worth making the attempt.

Alan

## Commentary



# Do We Need Guidelines?

For more than one year, members of the Entry group and the Co-Entry Group have been coming together in a study group to work on guidelines for Auroville residents. The term 'guideline' as opposed to 'rule' or 'regulation' has been adopted in the early '80s as a recognition of the fact that Aurovilians generally lack the means to enforce any rules, and that Auroville's society is an evolving one and there are fears that (rigid) rules might stifle rather than help the process of its development, or be misused.

During the course of the study, something akin to a sociological map of Auroville emerged. The study group realised that there are many different types of people in Auroville with all kinds of different relationships to Auroville. In order to create some differentiation, the concept of circles was introduced, each representing certain degrees of commitment to Auroville's ideals. The inner circle would consist of those who are totally dedicated to the ideals of Auroville, for whom Auroville is the absolute and final choice of their lives and who have already surrendered or are in the process of surrendering all their material life to Auroville. The other extreme would be the outer circle, consisting of people who have a genuine connection with Auroville but who say "No, this is not my whole life at this point, I am going to come and go, and I am not going to put all my mate-

rial possessions into Auroville!" The category 'Friends of Auroville' might fit into this group.

Though the 'circle' concept was considered interesting, it soon appeared that it could not be used as a basis for guidelines. Consequently, the group came to concentrate on guidelines which would apply across all the circles.

Parallel with the study group, another study group called "The Mother's Guidelines Study Circle", came into existence. This group's endeavour was to formulate proposals and guidelines which will allow the community to proceed towards its goal: Mother's Auroville, on the basis of the original rules approved by Her in 1971, the discussions with The Mother documented in the early years, and other sources.

Both groups met in order to present a comprehensive joint proposal to the community called "Guidelines for Auroville Residents." On October 16th, this proposal was discussed in a Residents' Assembly.

Interestingly, the discussion in the Residents' Assembly centred almost immediately on the usefulness of guidelines at all. Were guidelines not the invention of those who endeavoured to manage Auroville after Mother's passing in 1973? Should Auroville not go beyond guidelines? Had Mother not spoken about a divine anarchy? Why have guidelines if you lack the power to enforce them? These were some of the arguments raised by

people who consider that Auroville can do very well without guidelines of any sort. Others stressed that it was Mother herself who had created rules and, when asked why, had answered that "perhaps Aurovilians have not yet attained the level of consciousness expected of them."<sup>1</sup> The fact that there are so many different types of people living in Auroville was used as an argument in favour of guidelines. While for some people guidelines appear to be superfluous, for others they seem to be a necessity. One concluding remark was made on the quality of some of the rules laid down by The Mother: These are not suggestions, not guidelines, but *injunctions*.

"We cannot ask newcomers to do what we, Aurovilians, do not do. How can we expect newcomers to have continuous good faith if they are always being slapped in the face by the attitude of Aurovilians?" said one member of the Entry Group in answer to a question why the Entry Group and Co-Entry Group members had made a guideline which refers to "all Aurovilians" instead of to newcomers only. "It is remarkable that we have no kind of Exit Group," said someone else. "At present, being an Aurovillian is better than having a government job: unless you engage in criminal activities, you cannot be kicked out. It would be better if the Entry Group would change its name and mandate, so that it would relate not only to newcomers, but to all Aurovilians."

Guidelines. They will be self-evident for those who have fulfilled The Mother's first essential condition to be a true Aurovillian: the inner discovery. "The first necessity is the inner discovery to find out what one really is behind the social, moral, cultural, racial, hereditary appearances. At the centre there is a being free, vast, aware, all-knowing, who awaits our discovery and who must become the effective centre of our being and our life in Auroville."<sup>2</sup>

Guidelines. They are testing tools for those who sincerely endeavour to become true Aurovilians. And they are tools to protect Auroville from those who lack the required level of awareness. When The Mother mentioned 'divine anarchy' as a desirable form for Auroville's political organisation, she stressed that for that to happen, "one must be in contact with one's psychic being, one must be guided by it and the ego's authority and influence must disappear."<sup>3</sup> Who in Auroville is that far? The discussions on guidelines for Auroville Residents will continue at future Residents' Assemblies. But it seems that the need for guidelines cannot be ignored. And certainly not for those made by The Mother!

Carel

1. March 4, 1971
2. June 3, 1970, *Agenda de Mère XI*
3. December 28, 1972

## AN AUROVILLE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Development Group is a broad-based coordination and planning group that tries to ensure that the development of Auroville is in accordance with the master plan. It defines collective priorities for development, determines necessary projects and surveys, develops the strategy and sets priorities for the purchase, sale and leasing of land, approves building projects and monitors grants received for Auroville development schemes. The members of the Development Group are representatives of various working groups in Auroville.

The present Development Group, the third one so far, has been functioning since February 1995. In August it submitted a report to the Governing Board where it declared that it is "working out a sustainable means of development and regards Auroville as a place where no contradictions exist between environment and development". Here are more extracts from the interim report:

### Land

All the lands comprising the City and the Green Belt area (circles of diameter 3 km and 5 km respectively) need to be bought now and secured for Auroville.

In recent times, it has been observed that most of the lands purchased had been used for cash crops and already have a speculative element. Most sellers are using the money received to buy agricultural lands elsewhere.

Rampant growth of Pondicherry's economy is another telling factor in the speculative pressure on the Auroville area as it is particularly attractive to outsiders due to the green environment.

For this purpose, 351 acres in the city area need to be acquired along with over 59 acres of "peramboke" (Government) lands (valued at today's prices at Rs. 5 crores or approx. 1.6

million dollars). For the Green Belt, some 2,000 plus acres along with "peramboke" (government) lands outside the villages are worth another Rs. 25 crores or approximately 8 million dollars. The Government of India has been approached to help in the purchase of the 3000 acres of needed land at a total cost of 41 crores (13 million dollars).

### Water

Auroville has no large and convenient source of fresh water nearby, but receives more than one meter of rainfall per year. As Auroville depends exclusively on ground water there is a grave danger of this resource being severely depleted leading to increasing salt-water intrusion. So far, no policy or control on water extraction is being enforced in this area.

It is evident that to promote any kind of development for the future city, the water resources have to be studied and managed in a way that takes into account the requirements of the residents of Auroville, the villages and industries. For this purpose, a Water Board has recently been set up to do a detailed study to estimate ground water reserves and to advise on sustainable ways of sharing the water. The study is estimated at Rs. 10 lakhs or \$ 32,250 for 6 months' field work and efforts are being made to raise funds.

The Development Group has initiated the setting up of a grid system for sharing water both in the Industrial Zone and in the Residential Zone. In an effort to conserve water, all new housing projects are incorporating waste-water recycling systems and, wherever possible, have facilities for harvesting rain water from the roofs. Appropriate irrigation methods that reduce wastage of water are also being promoted in Auroville farms. Efforts will also be made to eliminate surface water run-off from all Auroville lands.

### Roads

In a sense the road network is the key to Auroville's master plan as it defines areas and allows access to them. Roads also determine a basic infrastructure network. Once the roads are marked, water pipes and telecom cables can be laid underground along the roads. However, roads have always been instruments of environmental degradation and we are proceeding cautiously with creating this infrastructure. We have begun to mark the crown road and remove top soil from a 3 m-wide band. It is proposed to plant avenue trees 6 m from the center line on each side.

Traffic of all kinds has increased in Auroville, and some practical alternatives need to be worked out. A traffic census is being done in order to know better what the most effective priorities should be. Regulating traffic poses problems especially in the International and Industrial Zones due to the presence of ravines in "peramboke" (government) land with the villagers having traditional right of way. There also needs to be a progressive reduction of traffic in the central areas. A form of convenient public transport within Auroville is a priority. There are plans to acquire some light machinery to facilitate road repair and construction. An experiment to try building a stabilized earth road should happen after the rains early next year. A network of cycle paths exists already and is being enlarged.

### Energy

Auroville consumes about 1,500 MW of electricity each year. Studies are being done to assess the possibility of realigning the fairly arbitrary grids to our new road network and to replace the lines laid by the Government Electricity Board with our own overhead insulated lines as these allow trees near the lines.

At present, it is not possible to quantify

the total power requirements of the future city, which would be necessary to plan an underground grid. But with overhead lines already in the right place, this will be much easier to accomplish at a later stage. Based on a detailed study we will progressively realize the overhead grid.

Auroville is regarded as a trend-setter in the use of non-conventional energy in India. A major project of a collective solar kitchen that will feed 1,000 people per day is underway. To our installed capacity of 25 KW, a special government scheme has allowed us to add 115 KW capacity of subsidized solar photovoltaic cells for water pumping.

### Telecommunications

Auroville has recently received a modern exchange system that greatly facilitates telephone communication. The Government's Department of Telecommunication has made a huge investment to create an underground network of telecommunication cables. Auroville in turn has paid for and laid smaller cables to all our telephones. The telecom system will soon be further improved with the installation of a 30 m high microwave tower installed at the exchange to facilitate links with Pondicherry. AuroNet!, a computer Bulletin Board System, has come into place for rapid electronic communications within the community as well as CSRNet which offers e-mail facilities. At the end of this year Auroville will have its own satellite connection which would enable it to easily access electronic computer networks worldwide.

### Waste

Within Auroville, most organic wastes generated by residents and activities are composted at each site. The inorganic waste

(Continued on page 7)



# LETTERS

## Gender prejudice

Your readers may like to know that on April 23, 1969 Mother told Ms. Nandini Satpathy to tell Mrs. Indira Gandhi that "it is the women only who know how to use the Power that comes from the service of Truth". (Agenda de Mère, X, p. 154) Many Aurovilians have used this quote to say that women should play a greater role in Auroville.

One can also conclude that for Mother's India to be better off, it would be necessary that women head its Government(s). Interestingly, already the governments of Pakistan, Bangla Desh, Sri Lanka, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are headed by women; and Burma too would be headed by a woman if its military dictators had allowed it. No region of the world has so many women at the head of its affairs. Unfortunately, there is plenty of evidence to show that though it may be necessary, it is not sufficient.

Gilles G., Auroville

## Auroville International Affairs in Spain, Italy and Austria

In your pleasant reportage of the Auroville International meeting of this year, some error has slipped in which needs to be rectified. Even though Auroville International Spain was not represented in the meeting, neither by some members nor by some sort of a report, it most definitely does exist!

Although active long beforehand, Auroville International Spain was officially registered in 1990 and a small but energetic group has been continually instrumental for Auroville by regularly showing slides and videos, disseminating information, translating and publishing various books of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, the Auroville brochure and the Auroville Development Perspectives etc., and recently by composing extensive study papers on Sri Aurobindo's "Ideal of Human Unity". Presently they are also undertaking a study of the history of Spain so as to explore in depth the psychic qualities of the nations, this in the context of a possible cultural pavilion of Spain in Auroville's International Zone. They have always participated in the annual Auroville International Meetings, but could not afford the journey to the USA.

They have generally financed all their activities themselves, but recently their local and city governments have allotted through them substantial grants for the Auroville Health Centre in the context of its work in the villages.

In Italy there is no Auroville International Centre as such, but various active groups are spread throughout the country. Efforts to centralise are ongoing.

I would like to use this opportunity to inform you and your readers about the possible beginning of a new Auroville International centre in Austria. Information can be obtained from Sylvia Körbler, Wolfsberg 22, A-3533 Friedersbach, Austria.

Mauna (Auroville International representative in Auroville)

## Harmonizing Governing Board and Working Committee

After the meeting of the new Governing Board on 11-12th August, you asked me what were my first impressions. My answer was that I felt a sincere wish for a collaboration and a shared desire for harmonisation from all participants.

Today I feel that it might be useful to share with you some reflections I have had since then, which could perhaps confirm and accelerate this process of opening.

First of all, it appears that the main issue for the Aurovilians is to obtain from the Governing Board the recognition that it is for the Aurovilians to organise and manage their development according to original methods that would derive from the research that is inherent to the Auroville experiment.

This request must be understood not as a claim but as a recognition of the role of the Working Committee, given that, according to my understanding, the role of the Governing Board is to "watch over and guide the principal activities of Auroville". Your declaration to the effect that the new Governing Board holds the hope of a better understanding after its four-year apprenticeship has already created an opening for the possibility of such a sharing of roles.

If the time has come for the Aurovilians to want to exercise their rights, they must also recognise their duties in the context of the freedom they cherish, a freedom which must be

accompanied by structures that can set the necessary safeguards to prevent those excesses which would render impossible any attempt at organisation.

In order to move in this direction and to create the necessary conditions which would allow this new relationship to develop, it is indispensable that the Working Committee be an indisputable representative that would allow it to take on the responsibilities it claims to shoulder.

Therefore it appears necessary that the Governing Board should request that a research group be constituted from among the Aurovilians so that it may present to the next Governing Board meeting in February 1996 proposals that could lead to an agreement.

These proposals should define the principles for the appointment of the Working Committee as well as for a time-bound action program with the aim of giving to the Charter a more living presence in the life of Auroville.

For its part, the Governing Board could envisage giving to one or more of its members the charge of supporting and following up, with the concerned administrations and ministries, the initiatives of Aurovillian working groups towards action that is indispensable for the development of Auroville.

These proposals are only suggestions which need to be elaborated, but which could, nevertheless, provide a first step towards a joint effort which seems to be essential for the growth of Mother's Auroville. I deeply hope that you may understand what motivates my proposals and that this letter may receive from you the kind attention it requires.

Roger Anger, Governing Board member  
to Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman, Governing Board, in a letter dated 22nd August, 1995, a copy of which he subsequently submitted to Auroville Today for publishing.



Chandralekha

PHOTO: JOHN MANDEEN

## INVOKING TIME

The internationally acclaimed dancer and choreographer, Chandralekha, presented her latest work "Mahakal" (meaning "invoking time") at the end of September in the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium in Bharat Nivas. Her dance troupe of nine, accompanied by four musicians, sought to "invoke time" by drawing freely from the various traditions of South Indian dance and martial arts. With provocative drama, her talented troupe strove 'for timelessness' in a dance of time, but often the moments were too long, intense, or repetitive. More was expected of Chandralekha. What we saw were the themes of much of modern dance in Indian dance styles, but without the charm, the joy, and the lightness that the classical traditions always include, leaving the play of cosmic time unbalanced.

# Development Report

(Continued from page 6)

is presently collected by the Auroville Eco-Service, which runs on funds generated by the sale of recyclable waste. The service needs to be further strengthened.

The problem of garbage that is being brought into Auroville from Pondicherry is a more serious one, posing a potential health hazard. The Health Centre has begun a small project to compost this garbage in a hygienic manner. But it is clear that, in the absence of political will to deal with this problem, the situation remains unresolved despite Auroville's best efforts.

## Afforestation

Auroville is visualized as a city that will be more than 50% green. Over the years, Auroville greenworkers have acquired considerable knowledge about afforestation. The greenworkers have developed indigenous plantations with a large genetic diversity. There is a dynamic collaboration in the field of afforestation and wasteland reclamation with the local population and with national and international research institutes.

Recently it has been decided that the Development Group look after the planting of trees in the city area so as to allow the Forest Group to focus on creating new green areas.

## Village and local population

No development within Auroville is meaningful if it does not address the local populace. There are 5 villages within Auroville and many more in the surrounding areas. Between 5,000 and 7,000 local villagers are employed in Auroville at present.

It has been decided that a comprehensive Bio-Regional Plan in consultation with the Village Elders be developed which takes into account the requirements of the villagers in regard to development, focussing on their needs, especially for fuel, food, water and other issues that the Government would want to promote, such as employment, education, empowerment of women and health care.

A detailed socio-economic survey of five villages has also been started.

A community register concerning the local bio-resources, skills and technologies is being documented and encouraged through Auroville's Village Action programmes. We expect to identify trends of development through these, and hopefully we can target Auroville employees as the first ones to participate in village development.

## Subscription rates

To cover our costs, the suggested new 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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# AUROVILLE TODAY

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Tamil Nadu, India

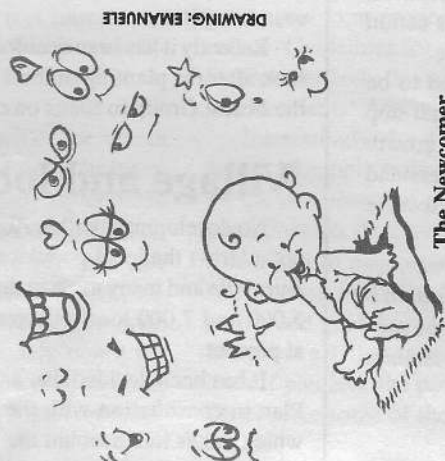
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November 1995  
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IN THIS ISSUE:  
ADMISSION TO AUROVILLE; DEVELOPMENT UPDATE; QUESTIONNAIRE

## Auroville is a spiritual endeavour.

Although there is no doctrine and no dogma as such, the aim of integral transformation as conceived by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother is the unifying ideal underlying all activities and research in Auroville.

To join Auroville there can be no fixed period of probation. It is rather a gradual process of learning, of maturing one's choice, through time and experience. It is mainly you yourself who determines whether you are called to contribute to the multi-level, collective adventure called Auroville. There will be, however, times of assessment where you will meet the response your presence evokes in the community. It is a matter of your conscious choice and progressive commitment expressing itself through involvement, work and harmonious integration in the community at large. Above all, you will need a strong and steady will to use all your energies to foster the growth of Auroville, and to materially give to, rather than benefit from, Auroville.

Please accept Auroville's present state of development, even though it is still very far from perfect. Come and study and get familiar with Auroville's present ways of being, and from there onwards consciously participate and evolve with it, individually and collectively.

If you can, do not burden the community by coming with empty hands. You should be able to maintain yourself financially for the first year, be it in cash terms or through a skill required by Auroville. In most cases, it is wiser to first come and experience Auroville for some time before attempting to come for good. This way one is less likely to be disillusioned.

It is understood that anyone who feels called to this spiritual adventure should have left behind such addictions as alcohol and drugs.

You are invited to approach Auroville in the light of its Charter, in a spirit of goodwill and openness and plasticity on all levels, of consciously chosen service, self-discipline and an ever growing awareness.

Welcome to Auroville.

Text drafted by Mauna to serve as an Introduction for newcomers

## A FEW MINUTES OF YOUR TIME, PLEASE!

Dear Reader,

AUROVILLE TODAY is turning seven this month. During these seven years we have tried to keep you informed about most of the developments in Auroville. In 1988, we started out with a team of dilettantes who acted as journalists, editors, lay-out persons and basically "jacks of all trades" who somehow managed each month to put together an 8-page paper. Today, we look back at our early efforts with a smile. For, though we have not always been able to ensure a consistent quality of paper and printing, we feel we have progressed.

Or have we really? At the Auroville International Meeting held in USA this year, our efforts were applauded, but the question was raised: "How is it that such a compelling vehicle for communicating Auroville has a circulation of only 500 subscribers world-wide when it should have 5,000?"

This observation mirrors our concern. We need to broaden our subscription base. So we ask you, dear reader, to help by giving us some feedback on our magazine. Please fill out the questionnaire below (you may photocopy it in case you do not want to spoil this issue) and mail it to us at AUROVILLE TODAY, CSR, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, India. Alternatively you can fax your answer to 00.91-413-62274 or e-mail to: avtoday@ilauro.frilht.ernet.in.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### Presentation

1. Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of the presentation of the magazine in terms of:
  - Size (e.g., is a magazine format preferable; do you want more pages? )
  - Lay-out
  - Photographs (e.g. preference for black and white or colour)
  - Readability
  - Frequency (once a month or more?)

### Contents

2. Do you have any suggestions for improving the contents of the magazine in terms of:
  - Length of articles: We often spend 3 to 5 pages highlighting a single theme. Do you find that our reporting is generally too extensive? Would you prefer to read more articles of shorter length?
  - Coverage of issues: Are you satisfied with the present coverage?
3. Do you want just information about Auroville or would you prefer to have more (critical) views and commentaries on developments in Auroville?
4. Do you feel AUROVILLE TODAY is too introspective? Would you like to relate Auroville more to developments elsewhere in the world?
5. Any comments on the quality of the articles? Feel free to comment on the style of individual writers.
6. What kind of articles do you most enjoy?
7. Are there any issues that you feel are under-represented in AUROVILLE TODAY?

### Miscellaneous

8. Would you be interested if AUROVILLE TODAY were to compile articles, for example in a yearbook?
9. How do you feel about the subscription rate of AUROVILLE TODAY?
10. How many people read your copy of AUROVILLE TODAY?
11. If you are not a regular subscriber, where did you find this issue of AUROVILLE TODAY?
12. Do you have you any suggestions as to how we could improve our subscription base?
13. Could you give us the names and addresses of people who you think would be interested in AUROVILLE TODAY?
14. Any other comments?

THANK YOU FOR HELPING US TO OFFER YOU A GOOD MAGAZINE ON AUROVILLE!!