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India's true role

August 15, 1998 marks the end of the 50th year of India's Independence and of the 125th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo. In this issue of Auroville Today we look at the influence of Sri Aurobindo's thought in India today in the light of the recent events in the Indian subcontinent involving the testing of nuclear devices, and Auroville's role.

INTRODUCTION

In his message for the day of India's independence Sri Aurobindo wrote against the division of the body of Mother India into India and Pakistan:

"India today is free but she has not achieved unity, only a fissured and broken freedom... The old communal division into Hindus and Muslims seems now to have hardened into a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped that this settled fact will not be accepted as settled for ever or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled; civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. India's internal development and prosperity may be impeded, her position among the nations weakened, her destiny impaired or even frustrated. This must not be; the partition must go. Let us hope that that may come about naturally, by an increasing recognition of the necessity not only of peace and concord but of common action and the creation of means for that purpose. In this way unity may finally come about under whatever form—the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, in whatever way, the division must go. Unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future."

If the leaders of the Congress had listened to Sri Aurobindo in 1942, the division of India would most probably never have happened. In March of that year, Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Lord Privy Seal and a member of Churchill's war cabinet, came to India to offer the country "dominion status" in what is known as the Cripps Offer. Sri Aurobindo sent a message to Gandhi, Nehru, Rajagopalachari and the other members of the Congress leadership to accept the offer. As reported by Nirodbaran in his book *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, the Mother said,

"Behind this offer there is the Divine Grace directly present. The Grace is now at the door of India, ready to give its help. In the history of a nation such opportunities do not come often. The Grace presents itself at rare moments, after centuries of preparation of that nation. If it is accepted, the nation will survive and get a new birth in the Divine's consciousness. But if it is rejected the Grace will withdraw and then the nation will suffer terribly, calamity will overtake it."

When the Cripps Offer had been rejected by the national leaders, she added, "Now calamity will befall India."

Later, in 1968, Mother wrote, "India has become the symbolic representation of all the difficulties of modern mankind," and she added that, "India will be the land of its resurrection—the resurrection to a



PHOTO COURTESY SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM ARCHIVES

The Mother seated at the Ashram Playground in front of the spiritual map of India

higher and truer life."

Today, the re-unification of India and her resurrection to a higher life seem to be far away. The nations appear to be poised on the brink of a new calamity. Or is there still a silver lining behind the clouds that loom over the subcontinent?

INTERVIEW

Manoj Das, a teacher at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre for Education, a senior Ashramite who has served as a Trustee of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and a nationally renowned writer, assessed for Auroville Today the situation in India in the light of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's views of a "spiritual India."

AVT: Given the ideological differences between Hinduism and Islam, a spiritual unification of the sub-continent seems inconceivable. The Mother's map of India as displayed in the Ashram playground includes Pakistan, Nepal,

Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, and She said that this is the map of the true India. What did Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have in mind when they spoke of the spiritually unified Mother India?

Manoj Das: This question needs an elaborate answer. But one thing is certain, that Sri Aurobindo can never be associated with anything that is religious or sectarian in nature. Sri Aurobindo, the visionary and the Mahayogi, envisions man as an evolving being. The whole of humanity is his concern.

"Hindu" is a relatively modern word. The *sanatana dharma** of the Bhagavad Gita that Sri Aurobindo upholds is "pre-Hindu." The Bhagavad Gita is often thought of as the religious book of the Hindus, but in reality the terms "Hindu" and "Hinduism" did not exist when the Gita was composed. The Gita is essentially a work of philosophy that examines the human condition, human destiny, man's relationship to God and man's action in the world. Of all the Indian

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

scriptures, Sri Aurobindo emphasises the Gita because it is closest to his view of an integral concept of yoga as opposed to, say, the ascetic tradition of renouncing the world to unite with God that was prevalent in those days.

It may be added here, that Sri Aurobindo's views on the Gita and Hinduism have often been misunderstood or misquoted to suit sectarian needs. It should be remembered that Sri Aurobindo was beyond the narrow dogmas of religion. He speaks highly of Islam and holds Prophet Mohammed in great esteem.

Now, if one studies Sri Aurobindo's *magnum opus* on Indian tradition, culture and heritage, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, one finds that what Sri Aurobindo refers to are the higher inspirations that mould a culture. You see, mankind is governed by two calendars—one is the chronological calendar that marks the passage of time, the other is something that can be described as the timeless calendar of consciousness. It could be that a great Truth descended into the mind of a seer five thousand years ago but it is yet to find realisation in our collective and average consciousness. For such inspired truths are not bound by the chronological passage of time. The consciousness that dwells in eternity tries to express its truths in chronological time. So Sri Aurobindo explains, through a discussion of Indian art, literature and spirituality how sometimes these truths have descended into the consciousness of the makers of the Indian tradition. It is neither Hindu nor Islam, neither Shaivism nor Vaishnavism, but the creative quality of consciousness that has moulded Indian culture and tradition.

So when Sri Aurobindo spoke of a united India, he envisioned a united consciousness striving for the realisation of the future of mankind. His concept of India, as we know, was governed by India's spirituality. You see, everything that exists in the subtle sphere has a correlated physical symbol here on earth. There is a certain spiritual destiny of man which upon the physical earth is symbolised by the spiritual pursuit of India throughout the ages. The development of India's spiritual quest which has taken place over thousands of years in a systematic and continued fashion is not to be found, in that degree of continuity, anywhere else in the world. It is this that has formed the Indian consciousness. And this consciousness on the physical plane is represented by a certain geographical area. Sri Aurobindo believed that anything which gets disrupted at any one aspect of its totality, also gets disrupted in other aspects. So he perceived the division of India as a hostile strategy to sabotage the future realisation of a great spiritual consciousness. And that is why he opposed the division. Bound as he was by the constraints of time and society, he had to frame his message in words that could be understood by the people in that period of time.

This partition of India into the separate nations of India and Pakistan which now seems to have hardened into irreconcilable differences is indeed unfortunate. It stands as an example of how the Divine Will can be thwarted by the hostile forces. But such is the Force of Her Will that things that have been uttered or conceived are bound to happen sooner

What must be done to pull the country out of its difficulty? Sri Aurobindo has foreseen all the troubles and he has given the solution... we must give the country its true position, that is, the position of relying on the Divine. Naturally, this is at the other end of what people try to believe... And this is above politics. It is to organise the country beyond politics. In politics it is always fight and ugly fight—ugly. The best way to go beyond politics is to spread the message of Sri Aurobindo... Politics is always limited by party, by ideas, by duties also—unless we prepare a government that has no party, a government that admits all ideas because it is above parties. Of course, if there were some people who had the courage to be in the government without a party—"We represent no party! We represent India"—that would be magnificent. Pull the consciousness up, above party.

Tomorrow it will be like that. All this turmoil is because the country must take the lead, must go above all these old political habits. Government without party. Oh! It would be magnificent.

The Mother, May 25, 1970
(CWTM vol. 15., p. 426)

or later. I am always reminded of the interview with the Mother by the eminent journalist Chamanlal in 1947. When asked about the possibility of unification, the Mother said something to the effect



Manoj Das

that if both nations want it, they can be united in ten years. It was somehow erroneously reported, in perhaps a typical journalistic fashion, that the Mother predicts the unification of the country in ten years. Yet such was the effect of these words, that exactly ten years later, in 1957, General Ayub Khan of Pakistan proposed a joint defence system for India and Pakistan. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, however was not enthusiastic about the proposal for his own reasons. But I am convinced that the unification will take place at some time, even if today we cannot see how it would take place. The Divine Will cannot be thwarted forever. Do you remember how suddenly, for no immediate and apparent reason, all the communist countries in eastern Europe became free?

Do you visualise the countries represented by the Mother's map of spiritual India being unified on lines similar to that of the European Union?

No, I do not think that the union would come from the economic sphere. I think it will come from a deeper plane, from a philosophy of co-existence and a shared cultural tradition.

The Mother's spiritual map of India includes not just India and Pakistan but some other South Asian countries as well. But She did not imply that all these

countries were to be under a single administrative unit. The "spiritual India" need not be a political entity. The very concept of a "spiritual India," as espoused by Sri Aurobindo and the

Mother, is much greater than the narrow stipulations that are demanded by an administrative or political unit. Before the British rule, the Indian sub-continent was divided into not two but many warring political units or kingdoms. Yet these kingdoms were unified by a single consciousness and a single social and literary tradition. I believe that whatever the appearance today, that spiritual consciousness remains embedded in this entire geographical area. Not only in the Indian sub-continent but also in Myanmar, in the Indonesian archipelago etc., there is this spiritual vision lying dormant. And, despite the differing religious beliefs and commitments, it may not be difficult that a resurgence of this spiritual consciousness takes place in the whole of this area. At present, our common heritage is belied by the time-bound differences of the modern era. For example, beneath the trappings of young communist China lie the related traditions of Buddha and Confucius which for centuries have shaped the Chinese mind. So, in short, I believe that a time will come when a spiritually revived culture will bring about a federation of these nations.

But don't you think that the fundamentalism that has crept in today into the great religious traditions of Hinduism and Islam is detrimental to such a spiritual resurgence?

It is true that the religious beliefs of the people in this region have taken a fundamentalist turn. But this will exhaust itself. The religious fundamentalism that is to be found today in both Pakistan and India and which was not there half a century back is the last thrust of the dying, destructive forces. "Before dying, falsehood rises in full swing," said the Mother. There is an evolutionary drive working behind every human idea or philosophy no matter how tyrannical or orthodox it be, and this evolutionary consciousness allows all these forces that are opposed to the manifestation of the truth "a long rope" so to say, to hang themselves. These forces, no matter how powerful they may appear today, cannot survive the ultimate push of the evolutionary drive.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother said that, from the spiritual point of view, India is the foremost country in the world, and that her mission is to give the example of spirituality to the world. The Mother cautioned that India should never exercise its nuclear option (see separate article). In the light of these words, how would you assess India's ability to still play this role? Has India thwarted the Divine mission that was expected of her?

In my opinion, despite all these unfortunate events, there is an immensely great compensation in that Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's vision is spreading. This is the only progress that I can see in India now. More and more people are turning to the Force that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother represent and this is the only beacon of light that shines in the gloom that has engulfed India now. India is not conscious of this movement yet, but very, very slowly, everywhere this faith is spreading. People, according to their nature, are responding to or accepting the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in different ways. For example, the so-called Hindu fundamentalists are quoting Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to suit their own ends, but this means that somewhere in the depths of their consciousness, burns the light of the Truth.

Just as the Mother said, upon meeting Sri Aurobindo for the first time,

"It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance, He whom we saw yesterday is on Earth; his presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon Earth,"

similarly, now that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have given us the assurance of the future of mankind, we know that these things that obstruct the Divine Mission are temporary. They cannot last much longer, especially after the great occult battles that the Mother has won for the Truth. So the world climate is no longer the same that it was at the time of the Cripps Offer. But the positive signs of the final death of Falsehood are not yet visible. Yet, what I personally believe in is that the Supramental Consciousness that is manifesting on the earth is still in its infancy. It is less than fifty years since Sri Aurobindo left the body and merely twenty-five years since the Mother left the body. This span of time is too short to see the complete fulfilment of their vision. What I find most heartening is that more and more people are accepting the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and thereby helping in its manifestation. I am sure that a time will come, a decade will come when the change towards the Truth that is descending will be much faster than it has been so far. Undoubtedly, we are passing through an unfortunate phase, but the work of the Supreme Force for a more sensible future for mankind will not go in vain. I do not think that these present forces of ill-will can prevail against the power of goodwill which Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have created, and our duty is to realise that and cultivate deeper and deeper faith.

Given Auroville's role as a "city dedicated to world peace and human unity", what role should Auroville play to hasten the advent of the Truth?

Auroville undoubtedly was created as a check to the possibilities of a world war and of a nuclear proliferation. Mother

THE MOTHER ON NUCLEAR TESTS

has said that India represents all the terrestrial human difficulties, and that it is in India that there will be the cure, and that it was for this that She had been made to start Auroville. It is therefore logical that Auroville represents the present state of humanity with all its weaknesses and failings.

But what Auroville has and the world does not is this profound vision that has shaped Auroville, this inner urge that keeps people together in Auroville, despite all their struggles and differences, this constant striving of the Aurovilians towards the truth.

Auroville is still in its infancy but even now I can tell you in many international gatherings, whenever Auroville is mentioned, there is a new vibration that is created, instantly, tangibly, despite whatever struggles or falsehood Auroville is facing. And it is not that people are not aware of the failings and weaknesses of Aurovilians, but even the very word, "Auroville", like a mantra, creates or invokes an atmosphere that proves that the Truth is behind Auroville.

There are enough contradictions, enough criticisms in the world. Anything that is done, there is always someone to challenge it. But these, while they may have their pragmatic and social justification, have not helped humanity in the long run.

An idea has been proposed in Auroville that, in an attempt to usher peace into the region, youth from the subcontinent be invited to come to Auroville for some kind of common activity such as the planting of trees. Would such an action have any value?

Yes. Definitely so. This is a symbolic gesture or a token ritual towards peace. And no matter how token the ritual, there stands behind it the aspiration for the manifestation of peace, and this force needs to find expression. The physical enactment of a ritual signifies the wish embedded in matter to offer itself to or express the Truth. For example, when one bows down to the Lord, it is the physical consciousness of the body that wants to offer itself to the Divine and receive its blessing. The actual act is perhaps not that important. The actual planting of trees is not as important as the Truth that stands behind that act.

Auroville should always take such positive steps towards the future, rather than trying to fight the negative forces of the world. First, it has to build itself up as a great example of an alternative lifestyle, an alternative vision. Every iota of Auroville's energy must be spent towards this. Auroville has to show the world a new way. Auroville should aspire to be such that if say the Prime Minister of India or a delegation from Pakistan should come to visit, the very thought of arming themselves with nuclear weapons would vanish from their minds just by the contact with the vibration or atmosphere of Auroville. They should be able to feel that there is a new world in the offing. Auroville has to quietly and steadily build up its strength. And that strength is the strength of a Truth which immediately disarms falsehood and inspires a certain faith in all who come in touch with it.

Interview by Bindu and Carel

**sanatana dharma*: the Indian religious and spiritual tradition

In the wake of the nuclear test explosions carried out recently by India and Pakistan, many people have asked what The Mother had to say on the topic of nuclear energy and nuclear tests.

Below are two references to the topic made by The Mother. They have been published in the Collected Works of The Mother, Centenary Edition, Vol. 15, p. 48 and in Mother's Agenda, Vol. 5, pp. 281-283. We also add a personal account of what Mother said by Udar Pinto, who was one of Mother's secretaries.

The atomic bomb is in itself the most wonderful achievement and the sign of the growing power of man over material nature. But what is to be regretted is that this material progress and mastery is not the result of and in keeping with a spiritual progress and mastery which alone has the power to contradict and counteract the terrible danger coming from these discoveries. We cannot and must not stop progress, but we must achieve it in an equilibrium between the inside and the outside.' (30th August, 1945)

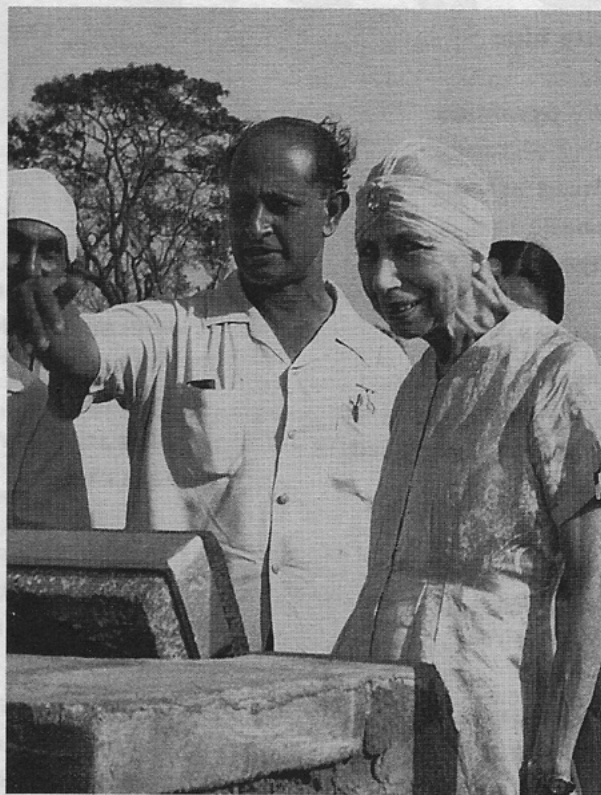
Recently, one day, I suddenly... I am extremely sensitive to the composition of the air, from my earliest childhood: "airs," if I may say so, they each had their own taste, their own colour and quality, and I would recognize them to such a point that sometimes I would say, "Oh, the air of..." (I was a child, of course), "the air of this country or the air of that place has come here." It was like that. I was extremely sensitive to the quality of pure air, that is, without the elements that come from the decomposition of life and especially from the places where people are crowded together. It was like that to an extremely sharp degree: for instance, if I was moved from one place to another, I could be suddenly cured of an illness by the change of air. When I met Theon, it became conscious, an object of study, and... it still goes on. Perhaps a few days ago (I can't say, time has no meaning, but not very long ago) I said, "There's something new in the air." And something very unpleasant, extremely pernicious; I felt that that something (I didn't say anything to anyone, naturally) had a peculiar, extremely subtle odor, not a physical one, and had the power to separate vital vibrations from physical vibrations—that is to say, an extremely noxious element.

Immediately I set to work (it lasted for hours), and the night was spent counteracting it: I tried to find which higher vibration could counteract it, until I succeeded in clarifying the atmosphere. But the memory remained very precise. And very recently (maybe a day or two ago), they told me that the Chinese had chosen an Indian territory, in the north, to test a certain kind of atomic bomb, and that they had exploded a certain bomb there. When they told me this, the memory of my odour abruptly came back.

Which means that those vibrations travel very far—the physical vibrations

stop at a certain distance (although they go much farther than is believed), but the vital vibrations that are behind (the "nervous" vibrations, if one can say so) must extend tremendously far.

You know, when there was that volcanic eruption in Martinique (it's some-



Udar with the Mother (1959)

thing much more material), the volcanic dust was picked up after some time in Marseilles—which is far away. Exactly the same dust, carried by the wind. So a bomb of that kind must have considerable effects.

But the vibrations you're speaking of don't emanate from human beings but from a bomb, you mean?

From the bomb.

Can a bomb have a nonphysical action, a vital or subtle action?

It acts only because it has a subtle action—nothing would move, everything would be inert if it didn't have a subtle action.

It's the vital contained in Matter—it's like the phenomenon of radiation. It's a violent liberation of something contained in Matter. Like radiation. And it spreads out. They have indeed noticed it, but they don't want to know; when they exploded the bomb in Japan, the consequences went much, much farther than they expected, they were infinitely more serious and long-lasting than expected, because the sudden liberation of those forces... They only perceive a certain quantity, but there is all that is behind, which spreads out and has its action. You see, they observe, for instance, that cows are poisoned and their milk isn't drinkable for a certain time (it happened in England), but that's the most crude and outer phenomenon—there is another, deeper one, which is FAR more serious...

(silence)

Very well, we will see. I always say, "We will see," because... in reality, I am not worried, not worried at all, I am very sure, very sure. I have such an absolute certitude that the Wisdom that acts in the

world is infinitely superior to all that we can imagine. We are like ignorant and stupid children in front of "something" that acts with a CERTITUDE and so luminous, so luminous. With a superharmony that turns into harmony the things that seem to us the most discordant.

So when I see the anxious human thoughts trying to know... (Mother smiles) Don't worry, we will see. And when I say "We will see," I have the joy of a certitude that what we will see will be a thousand times more beautiful than anything we can imagine.' (Nov. 14, 1964)

UDAR'S RECOLLECTIONS

Recently Udar Pinto, senior Ashramite and secretary to The Mother, circulated a note in the Ashram containing his recollections on the topic. He sent a copy of it to Auroville Today for publication. Here is a shortened version:

When the first use of nuclear energy was made public after the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, The Mother told me that this nuclear fission energy was an Asuric force. It comes out of the destruction of the nucleus of matter and hence its whole character was destructive. So this destructive energy must not be used at all for any purpose. "If we can use fusion energy," She said, "that would be a divine force as it comes from union."

Then The Mother went on to speak about the four Yugas and of how we are now at the end of the Kali Yuga which, by destiny, has to end the present creation by a *pralaya*. The instrument for this destruction is the nuclear bomb. But Sri Aurobindo and The Mother do not want that this creation should pass through such a destructive process and so They are doing Their best to prevent it by stopping the use of the nuclear bomb. This is very difficult as it is such a powerful weapon that it is very attractive to the world powers, as they love to have such a weapon in their hands. It is only India that can stop this as India has a spiritual base which, though not very apparent, is still very powerful. Hence, The Mother told me in 1973 to go to Indira Gandhi, who was then our Prime Minister, and tell her that whatever any other country might do, India should refuse to have a nuclear test explosion. (Udar went to see Indira Gandhi but was unable to persuade her—eds.)

The Mother, long back, had a vision at night of a large area covered by panels on which the sun was shining and electricity being produced. She asked me to explain this vision to her. I told Her what I knew of photo-voltaics and the solar energy from this, which comes from light and not just from heat. The Mother was very interested and She said that this is the future energy for the world and as the sun is the sign of the Supramental, it is a Supramental Energy.'

North Wind

Today the sky seems ominously blue
—violet, like Cleopatra's eyes
and the sun brooding on puny pyramids
which cannot be seen from any distance
beyond the stratosphere without assistance;
enfiend, hypnotic, a golden challenge,
like a discus thrown by Apollyon
and Eros routed at the apex,
inexorably, down love's velvet curve
as if ever burned within its fervour
night forever—extinguished, other stars,
all within its blaze consumed but one rejigged
upon which to gaze by its light regnant.

Until dawn bursts the bubble of the dream
revealing day with its mackerel sky—
eternal grey day emptied of blue-birds
replaced by the impassive devices
of courage, such as a jigger of booze.
But only in dreams is it safe to shout
and scream, there the North Wind cannot hear.

L. Kenneth Fator

Rembrandt: Self-Portrait at the age of 63

The rest is done now:
portraits with plumes,
sober-suited staalmeesters
(ambered in self-importance),
the hundred-guilder Christ.

Nothing but you now,
old,
bulb-nosed,
bankrupt.

You don't look away.
Hewing to heart-wood
you stare at us still,
puckered, resigned,
infinitely sad.

Hands wrapped in rags
your brush doesn't falter.

At last, you are free.

Alan

Building

I kept myself
a whole wall of air
—because I like air

Another wall
is for stilled movement
—art's locked universe

I set windows
—absence within frames—
to the use of light

Redefined space
on too keen an edge
to fool around with

A labyrinth
of one room only
—then I put flowers

Lloyd

A letter

*(Substance of a letter written by Sri Aurobindo in
February 1919 from Pondicherry to his father-in-
law soon after the passing away of his wife
Mrinalini Devi.)*

You have written:
"She who belonged to both of us
is no more."
Physically, of course.
But in love we are one,
still much closer.

Whatever Mrinalini would have
wished
should be done.
If her mother would have the ban-
gles,
auspicious things Mrinalini had worn,
well, let her have them.
What I have of her
are a few letters
and a photograph.

And I should like to have
two or three books she had used
in which she would have written her
name.

Would you send them to me?

Meenakshi

Still dreaming...

The song of sunrise
wakes the blue waves at dawn
and the palmyras that waited
for a hundred years,
watching the canyon
from where they saw them all
arriving.

Arrogant, crazy, full of good will
hoping to build a new world.
The frogs in the red ditch
saw them pass,
and said, "Look at those
fancy little hearts.
Tight as jackfruit,
how about some elasticity?
Watch those brains working
overtime, on surplus!"
Just then a mongoose
flashed up in a streak,
"I'm telling you
they are hopelessly lazy.
They'll talk about change,
but end up counting money,
we'll have to do something about it."
"You are cynical," said the frogs,
"look how they plant trees,
raise wind-mills, work in Matrimandir.
They have schools, business meetings
and solar cells,
they work hard
and disagree on every detail."
"Don't waste my time,"
said the mongoose unimpressed,

"please go and talk to someone else."
And so, thirty pairs of frog-eyes slowly turned
and waited impatiently for the Dawn.
She came at last, rising softly,
Queen of the Splendid Morning,
"let it shift now," she said,
"ten degrees within..."
Change has many latitudes
of influence in the being."
"But," said the sun-bird
who had just woken up
"what about unity, what about trust?"
Then the Dawn laughed
through the banyan leaves,
"Real unity without change
is a bit unrealistic—
the dream shifts, ten degrees within."
So saying She sang out Her golden song
and the morning awoke
with a hundred tea-pots...
and a faint memory of thirty little frogs
still staring ardently at the sun.

Anu

A CAPTIVE OF HER LOVE

Letters and Paintings of Janina Stroka
Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram,
1998. 100 pp., Rs 175

It is rare to find amongst the publications from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram a collection of letters of a sadhika to a friend outside the Ashram. Recently one such was published entitled *A Captive of her Love*. It contains early letters, poems and reproductions of some paintings from a Polish woman called Janina Stroka, who joined the Ashram in 1957 and passed away in 1964. The letters are striking in their expressions of dedication, love and aspiration for the Divine embodied as The Mother. Their simplicity speaks directly to the heart, and reading and re-reading them is a moving experience that strengthens one's aspiration to the Divine.

"Yesterday I grasped what She wanted from me. For two days already I felt from time to time as if a mountain or huge waves were coming on me and pushing me back. She wants me to step back this time, as completely as I can - and to make room for Her. And I feel how foolish it is to push oneself into a place which God wants to occupy."

"It is like being flooded. She pours and pours in and spreads herself to all the corners, holes and caves of the being. And it is a continuous fever of self-giving and a continuous imploring and calling Her to come. The self-giving seems to be so insufficient and so poor when it faces the Grace. And when She comes, She becomes so near that I at last begin to feel free with Her, to talk to and adore Her in Her manifested Body as She is here. I did not yet do it and this is also wonderful how every tiny movement of life is being harmoniously arranged.... Here we are all captives of Her love."

"I cannot grasp it all, but it does not matter. It is all so simple and natural. She really accepted me as Her child, coming home, with all the load of ego and ignorance still on me. She, the Highest and Purest, has done it. Now I feel at last why self-giving destroys all barriers and limits. This Higher Purity purifies almost automatically - if I may say so - all that consciously gives itself to Her completely. And so the impure becomes Purity too. This is the Grace."

"She is in me, She really is. I feel her present in my heart. So these are not only changes of consciousness but something is happening in my inner heart. Or has it always been so, and now She allows me at last to discover Her? And there are vibrations of such great happiness going through my body. I could just prostrate myself before Her and remain so."

Janina was essentially an artist. Art became another means for her of offering herself to the Mother apart from being a visual expression of her aspiration, devotion and love. Gradually she developed a very distinctive style, depicting human figures with graceful flowing lines that bequeath a sense of harmony,

grace and elasticity. On the very day that Janina passed away, the Mother had a vision of Janina and her art. In a talk on August 11, 1964, She said,

"I saw some of these forms of hers, which she had conceived - a little like these beings who don't have a body like us, but who have hands and feet when they want, and a head when they want, and luminous clothes when they want - things like that. I saw that and I remember I congratulated her. I told her, 'You have had a partial, but partially very clear perception of one of the forms the new Manifestation will take.' And she was very happy. I told her, 'You see, you have worked fully for the future.' Then all at once I saw a sapphire-blue light, pale, very luminous, shaped like a flame (with a rather broad base), and it made a kind of flash, pfft! and then it was gone... And she was no longer there. I thought: 'Well, that's odd!' An hour later (I saw this around six in the morning; all the rest had lasted about two hours), they told me she was dead. That is, she spent the last moments of her life with me and then, from me, pfft! went off towards... a life elsewhere."

From a talk of 11 August 1964
(translated from the French)

The book is beautifully printed, and will surely be a source of inspiration for the practitioners of the Integral Yoga.

Carel

PARALLEL JOURNEYS

by Anu Majumdar
Published by Magus Books
Distributed by Full Circle,
18-19, Dilshad Garden,
G.T.Road, Delhi 110095

Mainstream Western notions, ideas and images of India and Indian tradition are often dismissive, or romantically inaccurate. They have a tendency to be conveniently outdated and cliché-ridden, and beg for some serious revision. The dynamism and cultural fermentation of today's India with its burgeoning urban middle class, is producing, to say the least, an interesting, if not exciting fusion of the modern and traditional in many walks of life.

Anu Majumdar—a dancer, choreographer and writer from West Bengal living in Auroville—provides a brisk, fresh outlook on both modern and ancient India in her recent short novel *Parallel Journeys*. The subject of her story concerns the rediscovery of ancient Vedic truths in a modern context and she happily manages to avoid the trite and soporific that afflicts so much so-called new-age prose. Slightly impudent when it comes to the mere trappings and motions of tradition, she is never, however, irreverent.

Parallel Journeys recounts the story of a young Indian dancer, Maitreyi Sen and a French architect Yves Boca who, independently of each other, pick up the thread and become obsessed with the story and journey of Rishi Vajnavalkya as told in the Brihadarankya Upanishad. In this version of the story, however, he is followed into the Himalayas by his schol-

arly wife Maitreyi who turns her back on her settled life in pursuit of an ultimate truth; the short chapters of the novel alternate between the present in India or France, and the Vedic past.

The author casts a refreshing glance at modern India but all too frequently only touches upon scenes or situations in a summary fashion, as if she feared that loitering or lingering on mere incidents would distract from the main message or credo that threads in and out of the book. This is a pity as her descriptions can be delightful, and entertaining.

The message is however a deep one and as Mark Tully writes in the introduction: "What is not just important but essential, is that we return to the search for eternal wisdom, and for ways of describing that wisdom which are relevant for modern times."

Parallel Journeys attempts just that with both conviction and poetic insight, reads easily and should spark an interest in the reader in the sources that have inspired it.

Roger

ANOTHER JOURNEY

(MARU PAYANAM)

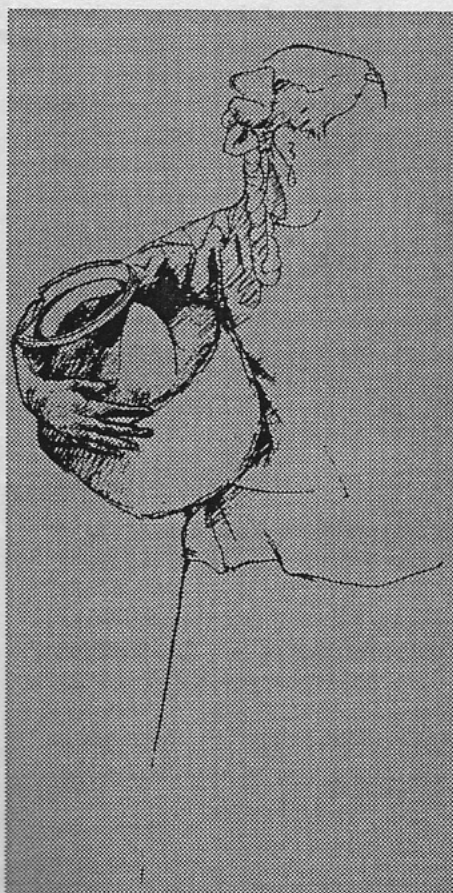
POEMS BY MEENAKSHI

Shanta Books, 1998.
Auroville 605 101.
pp.68, Rs. 60

*I am walking with a water pot,
the words of a poet
and paint brushes of an artist
following me from behind
with folded hands.*

Meenakshi through her poems and Vahula through his sketches reveal an understanding of life in South India so deep that it borders on reverence, as is epitomized by the above words and the sketch of a young girl balancing a water pot on her hips that together form the back cover of *Another Journey*.

Another Journey is a collection of Meenakshi's poems in Tamil, with translations, or rather adaptations, in English by Professor M. L. Thangappa and Marti,



and illustrations by Vahula.

Meenakshi is a Tamil poet of national stature whose work has often been translated and anthologized. This is the first time though that her work has been published in a single, bilingual edition. Vahula, also Tamil, is of Sri Lankan origin, and is well known in Auroville for his delicate sketches that exquisitely capture scenes of life in rural Tamil Nadu.

In India, a poet, "Kavi," is regarded as a visionary. Meenakshi's best works have something of that visionary quality that sees beyond the material trappings of daily existence, opening for the reader new perspectives on things mundane. For example, "Space Everywhere" (*Engum Veli*) gives a sense of the cosmic energy that connects us all:

*Merged in the larger space
is my house, a smaller space.*

*Inside my house is my body.
There too is space,
where light dances
in ecstasy*

Boundless.

Meenakshi draws her inspiration from the land she lives on, the red laterite earth of this region, the trees, the blossoming flowers that perfume the air, the people, especially the rural women who go through their daily chores, burdened by the joys and sorrows of their lot. Her deep sensitivity of nature is perhaps best seen in "Stone" where she feels the throb of life in a carved granite pillar that has been hewn from the black rocks of Tiruvakarai hills.

Vahula's drawings, scattered through the book, dance in accompaniment to the music of Meenakshi's words, aptly capturing the nuances of the life she describes. But this dance, this partnership between a poet and an artist, is at its best in that section of the book that can be described as the "Water-pot Series."

"The water pot," explains an editorial comment "is a symbol of fertility, abundance, consistent flow, energy. One of a girl's first gifts during puberty is a water pot. The meaning of the gift is that she is handed down not only happiness but responsibility. Metal water pots are often handed down through generations of women from grandmothers to mothers to daughters." For both Meenakshi and Vahula (who had earlier independently exhibited a series of drawings of women carrying water-pots), the pot and the woman bearing it merge into each other. As in:

*Beat the mud pot and cry
on the surface of the water
Cry till your tears dry up.*

*But if you hit the pot hard
on the bank,
fragments will scatter everywhere.*

Nothing will be left for you.

All in all, says the editor Marti, this work by an Aurovilian poet and an Aurovilian artist "make a unique South Indian offering" that does Auroville proud. *Another Journey* is produced by Shanta Books, a small non-profit publishing house that seeks to promote Auroville writers.

Bindu and Tineke

DRAWING BY VAHULA

A KARMA YOGA WORKSHOP

This is just an experiment," announced Bhavana, "for people who always say they have no time for a workshop, because they can't take time off from their work." Auroville was set up by Mother through what, in the Indian tradition, is called Karma Yoga which simply means you do whatever is your work, and consecrate that work to the Divine. Most Aurovilians get up in the morning and go to "work" like almost everybody else on the planet. Some meditate first and do some exercises like more and more people around the globe. They feel, more or less consciously, that they are offering their work to the Divine in whatever form that has personal meaning for them.

Still, our intentions can be accelerated and renewed by the focus and intensity that conscious group work brings. Bhavana, whose work is in Village Action, looked for a way to do this that would not keep her from her meetings and responsibilities that always seem pressing and urgent. For her and many others, the usual method of withdrawal from work for a 'retreat' from the normal life is often not practical or possible. In addition, that method of retreat actually tends to reinforce the artificial divisions between work, life and Spirit that we are attempting to overcome. So why not continue with the normal work pattern, but build into the in-between times, like meals and mornings and evenings, a flexible programme that would bring the needed moments for reflection and concentration? The effects of this endeavour would naturally and spontaneously carry over into the normal daily work to help transform it.

Thus, for one week, a group experimented, using Verite community as their base of operations. There were teachers from four different schools in Auroville,

some residents of Verite and a few others. Each day started with a collective early morning meditation followed by a short reading, an exercise break and then chanting or singing or other personal options. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were taken in silence. After breakfast each one went off to work with an intention to "consecrate" his work. One short reading was held after lunch. After dinner there was a sharing in which each one could express how the day went and how the process was going for them personally. This kind of sharing requires active listening from the group but normally no discussion, comments or judgments. The readings were mostly from The Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's work with an emphasis on surrender, offering and consecration. There is a full chapter in Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga* on self-consecration. Interestingly, there were some other readings from T. Natarajan, a South Indian who came to Mother and Sri Aurobindo more than forty years ago. Consecration is the main theme of his work, and he elaborates simple, practical ways to consecrate the whole life to the Divine according to the system of Integral Yoga.

The results of the first workshop experiment were positive, according to the comments of the participants. About a month later a follow-up evening was held in Verite which drew together some of the participants for a renewal session and included "Musing on the Mother" workshop participants [see accompanying article].

Mother had sent this message to Auroville on her birthday in 1972:

"Let Auroville be the symbol of a progressive Unity and the best way to realize it is a unity of aspiration towards the Divine Perfection in work and feeling, in a consecration of the entire life."

B

"MUSINGS ON THE MOTHER"

Sri Aurobindo wrote an essay which he called "The Mother" as an explanation about who Mirra Alfassa, the French woman who came to be his co-worker, truly was. In this little booklet is packed an entire exposition of the universal Mother in all her aspects.

A two-day seminar on this book was conducted by Dr. Ananda Reddy and held in Verite. Dr. Reddy, son of the late Prof. Madhusudan Reddy, is organizing the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research in Pondicherry. He and his wife, Deepshika, lived for seven years in Auroville in the early years and have a deep connection to the place.

About thirty people participated in the informal workshop held in the new Verite Hall. Sessions began with invocations in Sanskrit by Deepshika who is a very talented singer. Ananda shared his scholarly expertise as well as the personal experiences that he had with the Mother in Pondicherry as he grew up and went to school in the Ashram, telling about how the Mother had carried on an extensive personal correspondence with him to guide his life. The seminar included discussions, small group work and even written homework.

There has been little organized study on the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in Auroville in the last twenty-

five years. Old Aurovilians will recall how the late M.P. Pandit used to come to the meditation room of the Matrimandir Workers' Camp to lecture and one could open the flaps of the room as the audience expanded into the outside garden. Now, under the trees on the site of the Savitri Bhavan each Sunday morning, people gather to study Savitri. It was here that Dr. Reddy first came back to Auroville after all these years and from the few talks he gave there, the idea of this seminar was born.

Perhaps this was another auspicious beginning as Auroville continues to evolve into that "site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity."

B

Auroville telephone numbers change

Please note that all Auroville telephones now have a SIX-digit number: 62xxx becomes 622xxx.

Pondicherry numbers are also six-digit now: 3xxxx becomes 33xxxx; 46xxx becomes 346xxx

QUIET HEALING RETREAT

By Judith

Between 6 and 7 p.m. on Thursday 2nd July, eleven Aurovilians converged on Quiet with bags packed to last a week, and moved into the guest-house. These were the participants of the first Quiet Healing Centre Retreat for Aurovilians. The theme of the retreat was "relaxation and letting go of stress, tension and fatigue in body, heart and mind", and on that sunny, sultry evening all the participants certainly looked as though they qualified to be there. They were welcomed by a team of twelve therapists, all Aurovilians, who through this one-week programme were offering their healing skills, knowledge and experience to their fellow Aurovilians.

The daily programme was intense and varied. Each day started at 5 a.m. with Zazen meditation, focalised by Marco with Albert acting as human alarm clock going round from room to room waking up all those who wanted to attend. By 6.30 a.m., the kitchen staff had tea ready and meditators and sleepy-heads alike gathered for a reviving cuppa before reporting for Hatha Yoga with Dodo. After a stimulating hour of simple asanas with a relaxation exercise at the end, the participants tramped off for a breakfast. One of the features of the week was the lavish quantities of wonderful vegetarian food provided three times a day by a team headed by Giri and Xavier.

Two periods, from 8.30 to 10 a.m. and 2 to 3.30 p.m. were set aside for individual therapies of which a veritable smorgasbord was on offer. There was Polarity Therapy with Mikael and Pranik Healing with Martha. Rita, Andrey, Gustaaf, Sonja, Umberto and Albert offered a whole range of massage from ayurvedic, under water, reflexology, and deep tissue to hot mudpacks with Reiki. One could have one's joints and back manipulated by Bob, one's aura read by Sonja and Umberto and a reincarnation therapy session with Jean. There were two homeopaths, Michael Z. and Dr. Prasad who offered individual consultations and Dr Prasad gave everyone a basic medical to check pulse, blood-pressure, weight etc.

The hours between 10.30 to 12 noon

and 4 to 5.30 p.m. were dedicated to group sessions, alternately conducted by Martha, Bhaga and Mikael, where everyone joined in to learn about relaxation and self healing through pranic healing exercises, cellular consciousness, and through breathing and body movements in harmony with the five elements. At 6 p.m., the really dedicated turned up for another hour of Hatha Yoga with Dodo, happily tying themselves in knots with the aid of belts, bolsters and blocks.

The evening programmes were varied and entertaining. At the beginning and the end of the week, Sonja led the group in a modified version of the Transformation Game, which enabled everyone to identify and share their goals for the week and assess their progress before going home. One evening was spent voice tuning with Aurelio and another in South American dancing with Martha. Wednesday evening was given over to a bonfire at which the participants entertained their therapists with a taste of their own medicine and lots of laughter.

The afternoon of Friday 10th July, found everyone gathered in Harmony Hall to evaluate the experiences of the week. All participants expressed their experience of deep relaxation and release of tension, and a renewed sense of well being in body, mind and heart. Everybody was very impressed by the wide range of natural healing therapies and the way they all complement each other and very thankful that Quiet provides all these facilities for Aurovilians in Auroville itself. "Thank you" cards with a flower were given to all therapists as an expression of gratefulness for their skilful support, dedication and loving care given during this week. It was a joy to have Maggie, who has been so instrumental in bringing the Quiet Healing Centre into existence, come and join that very moving occasion. The overwhelming feeling was one of heartfelt gratitude from both participants and therapists to each other and to the inner Force of Auroville that had made this week such a wonderful and unforgettable experience for everyone involved.

AV Exhibition in Paris

An exhibition celebrating the first 30 years of Auroville was held at UNESCO in Paris between June 17th and 19th. The opening ceremony was held on the evening of the 18th, and was attended by some 200 people. Croquette of AVI France gave an inspiring introduction followed by speeches by Mr. Chiranjiv Singh, Ambassador of the Indian delegation to UNESCO and by Dr. Federico Mayor, Director General of UNESCO who referred to Auroville as "a necessary utopia."

The exhibition contained text panels on Auroville, illustrated by colour photos of Dominique Darr as well as recent black and white photos of Auroville taken by Vincent Riquier.

Over the three days videos on afforestation and education work in Auroville as well as a slide show on Sri Aurobindo were shown, there was a brisk sale of books, and a workshop-

conference on Auroville was facilitated by Croquette.

Order your CD-ROM now!

Cynergy, a unit of the Centre for Scientific Research (CSR), releases a CD-ROM on Auroville this month. This CD-ROM captures the complexity of the growing township of Auroville through sounds, visuals and text on a 650 MB Compact Disk. The CD-ROM can be ordered directly from Cynergy at CSR, Auroville 605101. Ph. +91-413-622059, Fax: +91-413-622057. E-mail: cynergy@auroville.org.in.

People in the USA can obtain the CD-ROM from the Auroville Information Office, PO Box 676, Woodstock NY 12498, Ph. 914-679-2926. E-mail: AVInfo@aol.com Credit Card orders: 800-815-1969

The possibilities of making it available through the Auroville International Centres are being explored.

Each year, members of the Auroville International (AVI) Centres meet together with Aurovilians and friends to discuss what has been happening in the past year, to receive news from Auroville, and to recharge and rededicate themselves to the ideal. This year the meeting was held in Italy where some 60 participants came together during the last week of June in a quiet auberge located in the hills surrounding Siena. Here we publish extracts from daily e-mail postings that were sent out during the course of the meeting.

WEDNESDAY

We began this morning with a presentation by Shivaya on the Land fund raising situation, followed by Luigi's presentation on development planning in Auroville. This was followed by a presentation by Eckhard Karnasch, German engineer and raconteur, about development of an electric car for Auroville. People at his engineering company are working on a simple design for a 2 seat vehicle based on currently available and affordable technology. The design plans should be ready by early December. Estimated cost is 5,000 DM.

After lunch, there were annual progress reports from the AVI Centres. Wolfgang of AVI Germany discussed the court case. Things are still not decided, and may not be for several months. Fund raising is greatly reduced as a result of withdrawal of tax exemption, but individual membership is up. The Expo 2000 committee has not yet decided on accepting an AVI presence.

After this, Pino, Italian architect, and Sheril, an architect from Mumbai, gave a presentation on the Unity Pavilion, which is planned for a location near Bharat Nivas. The idea is to use it as a springboard for the other pavilions.

(Larry)

THURSDAY

Another full day has passed by and

The Auroville International annual meeting

it's late. We usually start our morning session with the reading of one of Sri Aurobindo's *Last Poems*, in English as well as in Italian, after which we easily slide into a good meditation. Sometimes we listen to Sunil's music.

Today a lively morning session followed with Harald Kraft, who step by step explained to us his creative vision of a possible new system for Auroville's water management, after which Hans Loidl shared with us his studies and observations regarding the Matrimandir Gardens. People were interested, questions were asked and answers given, slides shown.

After the break, Martin Littlewood of AVI U.K. shared with us the Centre's new developments and discoveries in the world of funding of AV projects by the European Community. This turned out to be a sort of learning-the-trade session, whereby co-funding by the Centres was discussed.

In the afternoon we went for the outing-of-the week to nearby Siena, where we walked through this jewel of an ancient town, skilfully guided by Mariëka Poppovitch who lives there. Somewhat overwhelmed and awed, we rode back by car or bus, silently absorbing the gentle beauty of the ever rolling hills silhouetted by ancient structures on their tops, while the setting sun caressed the mel-low colours all around us.

After dinner most of us huddled together in a fairly small room to watch, on a fairly small video screen, the latest video on Matrimandir—and another day had come to an end.

(Mauna)

FRIDAY

The first meeting topic was from AVI-USA which reported that one of the main focuses for the year of 1997 has been land purchase. There has recently been an upgrade of the USA mailing list with good response to appeals for land fund. The work of the office will soon be taken

up by Taranti of AV who is now living in Santa Cruz and will be working out of an office set up by Constance at his place of business.

AVI France gave a report of the work in the Paris centre as well as in the AVI France "antenna" in Alsace, Mulhouse. An exhibition has been held at the UNESCO office in Paris last week. (See accompanying short news.) AVI-Netherlands members have an idea that visitors to AV could fill out a card for their respective country's AVI centre so they could be contacted in the future and continue to get info on AV if interested, i.e.: *Auroville Today*. The idea of Auroville "ambassadors"—people who could tour various countries and able to speak on a wide range of subjects concerning Auroville—was discussed and it was felt that right now each Centre would follow up as they see fit.

Italy does not have an official AVI centre but for a very long time there have been many Italians in AV as well as many in the Ashram. There is a flow between these people that is not based on an organization. At this time there is a movement in the Italian Government to set up a tax exempt status. When that happens it will be worthwhile to get an official Italy AVI centre.

At this point a great shift occurred because one of our members expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with the meeting process. This opened up a deep and varied discussion on how we spend this precious time together. A need for more heart to heart sharing and a time to hear from all the people in the circle was expressed.

In the afternoon, based on the morning request to work more from the heart, we started with a circle and chant. Then there was a presentation of the efforts of Auroville youth to create a gathering at the end of 1999 of those young people born in Auroville or those who have a strong connection with Auroville. The main organizer of this 'Auroville 2000'

idea (see article on the back page) is Angiras who is now in AV. People are requested to send names of youth to Angiras again as there has been a computer accident that lost the list. This moved us quite naturally into a discussion about the Youth Centre in AV. There was a request presented for funds for a well (for drinking water) and to start a bicycle and motorbike repair shop there. The group responded positively and wished to show support. In a few short hours, close to \$500 US was collected and will be carried to AV by Mauna to support this project.

(Paula Murphy)

SATURDAY

On the last day of our meeting, the participants sat outside in the greenery, something we got used to during the last days. The AVI Board members informed the participants about their decisions—sliding-scale membership contributions, letters to be written, statements to be made, and the fact that next year's AVI meeting (which will be called "General Assembly of AVI Associations") will be in the U.K.

Next year's meeting's main theme will be "Youth", and we hope that quite a few youth who are studying in the U.K. could be available at the time. Simultaneously, it was agreed that efforts will be undertaken to conceive of a different formula or mode of meeting and communicating, through which more opening and space will be given to real person-to-person communications.

It seems that during each meeting we come a wee bit closer to real *meeting* to allow this inner recognition that each year produces so much abundant warmth and togetherness and love. It was perhaps the emotional warmth of this beautiful country, combined with its somewhat chaotic creativity, that made us realise this. Thank you, Italy.

(Mauna)

FINALLY AN OFFICE?

Auroville Today is nearly ten years old. During this period we have endeavoured to inform the world about Auroville's aspirations, its hopes and its failures. The list of the topics covered is vast, as we have tried and continue to try to cover the evolution of the Auroville experiment as widely as possible.

You may have noticed that *Auroville Today* carries no advertisements. We rely on our subscribers for our income. *Auroville Today* had no office of its own so far and could not acquire from its regular income any equipment or furniture. A table, a few cupboards and about one computer and a half as well as a printer were donated by a few well-wishers. We are happy to inform you that this situation may change. It is possible for Auroville Today to acquire an office space. A Dutch Foundation, Stichting Aurofonds, has donated Rs 2 lakhs (US \$ 5,000) for the construction and Rs 1 lakh (US \$ 2,500) for equipment. However, this is not enough. Another 3 lakhs are necessary.

We would like to appeal to each of you: Are you able to make a donation to Auroville Today so that, after ten years, it can finally have its own office?

The Auroville Today Team

Donations made by donors in India are 100% tax exempted under section 35 (1) (iii) of the Income Tax Act. Donations should be made by cheque/draft in favour of the Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research and sent to the Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research, Bharat Nivas, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, with a covering letter specifying "for Auroville Today."

Donations made by foreign donors should be made by cheque/draft in favour of Auroville Fund, Aspiration, Auroville, 605101 with a covering letter specifying "for Auroville Today," or to the Auroville International Centre in your country in order to get tax exemption.

Subscription Information

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 60, It. Lira 61,000, D.Gl. 65, 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 or cash. Subscribers will receive a reminder when their subscription is about to expire.

Auroville International (AVI) Centres

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Auroville Today provides information about Auroville, an international township in South-India, on a monthly basis and is distributed to Aurovilians and friends of Auroville in India and abroad. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the community as a whole.

Editorial team: Tineke, Roger, Jill, Carel, Bindu, B, Annemarie, Alan. All photos, unless otherwise attributed: John Mandeem. Layout & DTP: Annemarie. Proofreading: Barbara. Printed at All India Press.

Reliving the adventure...

I don't know if other Aurovilians have the same feeling, but there are times when I wonder if anything I do in Auroville—with the exception of something like tree-planting—has very much use in the longer-term. Take journalism—or whatever you call our work on *Auroville Today*—for example. Isn't this a particularly ephemeral activity, dealing, as it so often seems to do, with the mere shadow of events and an insubstantial froth of opinions about everything under the sun?

Well, recently I read through the final draft of *The Auroville Adventure*, a compilation of articles from ten years of *Auroville Today* which is soon to be published, and it was something of a revelation. Not just about Auroville, but also about our work on *Auroville Today*. Because I realized that this compilation is not so much ephemera as a unique documentation of what has been happening—or tried to happen—in Auroville over the past ten years. *The Auroville Adventure*, like Auroville itself, can be read or interpreted in many different ways. For example, it's a fact file about different projects and attitudes current in the community. But it also gives an insight into the energy and clarity invested by the community in different activities at present, as well as revealing something about what interests and motivates us on the Auroville Today team.

The Auroville Adventure has something of the texture, the "feel" of Auroville itself. There's a kind of subtle rhythm or movement: you move from seemingly intractable matter to the ideal and then back again, and each time the distinction tends to become thinner. Because of the diversity of the material, and because it is not over-organized, you can wander in it at will, making your own connections, despairing at stupidities or happening upon valuable insights. Interestingly, for me the latter were often provided by visitors and friends of Auroville. I think, for example, of Edith Schnapper's comment that the collective yoga may have a completely different dynamic from the individual one, causing individual progress to be delayed until the community "catches up", or Ram Dass's perception that the present Aurovilians will have to seek their "joy in transition" as the "real" Auroville may not begin to manifest for a few more generations.

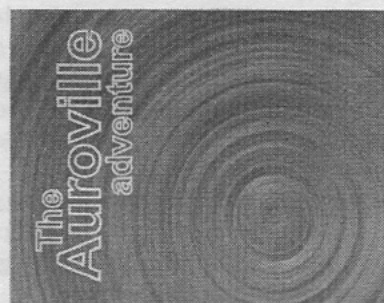
For the past six months I've been trying, with limited success, to find a new way to write a brochure on Auroville. Reading through *The Auroville Adventure* I realized that this is what I'd wanted to do all along. To present Auroville in all its richness and diversity without too many direction markers... and so to allow readers to find their own doorway into this unique experience.

Alan

BY AIRMAIL
BOOK POST

**AUROVILLE
TODAY**

CSR Office
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AUROVILLE ARCHIVES
C/O KRISHNA T.
BHARAT NIVAS
AUROVILLE

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AT THE PRESS:

"THE AUROVILLE ADVENTURE"

We are happy to announce the forthcoming publication of *The Auroville Adventure*, a selection of articles that have appeared in Auroville Today during the last ten years. As its name suggests, this compilation provides an unique and in-depth look at the "adventure" of Auroville that continues to unfold itself. The book, 22 x 28 cms., is richly illustrated with black and white photographs, drawings and cartoons, and has approximately 175 pages. It consists of eleven chapters, each containing selections each of which highlights a particular activity or aspect of Auroville life.

The Auroville Adventure will feature the following aspects of Auroville:

Chapter 1	The Environment: Restoring the physical base
Chapter 2	Villages: Evolving with our neighbours
Chapter 3	The Spiritual Dimension
Chapter 4	Economy: Serving the Dream
Chapter 5	Education: Opening the Way of the Future
Chapter 6	Matrimandir: The Soul of Auroville
Chapter 7	Town planning and Architecture: Building the City of Dawn
Chapter 8	Organisation: Towards Divine Anarchy
Chapter 9	Arts: The Dancer is the Dance
Chapter 10	Visitors' Perspectives: The World Looks at Auroville
Chapter 11	Life in Auroville: Through Aurovilians' Eyes

The book is priced at Rs 250 (India) and US \$ 15 (all other countries). The price includes packing and mailing (by airmail to all foreign countries)

If you would like to order a copy of *The Auroville Adventure*, and/or wish to send a gift-copy to a friend, please send us a letter with your instructions and an accompanying cheque made payable to Auroville Fund specified "Auroville Today".

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The Auroville adventure

coming out soon!