

AUROVILLE TODAY

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EDITORIAL

"Auroville Today". O.K.: It is not the most exciting title in the world. But we felt that "New World" or "Transformation" were a little, well, premature. And "Auroville Today" does focus us on the here and now, which is always the most difficult place to be. Difficult, yes, but also challenging. Perhaps never more so than at the moment when, with the passing of the Auroville Foundation Bill, we enter a new era. Therefore it is appropriate that in our first issue we focus upon the implication of this crucial Bill.

Yet what *is* Auroville today? It's not easy to answer. Ask around and you'll get many different replies. But always, it seems, something slips away, like water through the

fingers. Auroville mercifully eludes categorization.

So, our attempt in this new magazine is not to try to define but to provide a forum, a meeting-place for different perspectives and views, and to open a window upon the diverse activities and dreams that are Auroville today. We'd like to discover the larger Auroville, not just the Auroville of meetings, of well-known personalities and publicised projects, but the 'hidden' Auroville of quiet work, of determination and unrecognised talent which help power this crazy and challenging experiment.

To succeed in this, to start filling in the blank spaces, we need your help, your participation. Wherever you live, within or outside Auroville (whatever "outside"

means!), send us your information, your views, your visions. Help us to question and to celebrate the contradictions and richness of what we are today.

One final word. We would like to produce a stimulating and satisfying magazine, but without resorting to cheapness or personal attack. Quality, in this environment, is under continual attack. If *Auroville Today* can manifest a little of that quality, then perhaps we've taken another small step towards "Auroville tomorrow"

THE AUROVILLE FOUNDATION BILL

After months of speculation and incertitude, the Auroville Foundation Bill was passed in both Houses of Parliament in early September. There is no doubt of the historic importance of this bill in terms of Auroville's growth. Many people have used the word 'miracle' to describe what occurred in those final crucial stages. But more than miracle, one has the impression of inevitability, of a Force intent on propelling us into the next stage of our growth, of our adventure as a collective. There have been many questions from both inside and outside Auroville concerning the implications and contents of the bill. Therefore we have decided to publish the Minister's introduction of the Bill to the Indian Parliament and we had an interview with three members of the Task Force (a group set up by the community to work intensively on formulating proposals for the new act and to maintain the connection between the government and Auroville) who were in Delhi during those final weeks. They share with us their understanding of the bill, its consequences and their feelings concerning its significance for themselves and for Auroville.

I. In the Parliament...

Sri Shiv Shanker, the Minister for Human Resources, introduced the Auroville Foundation Bill to the Indian Parliament as follows:

Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have affirmed that humanity is rapidly moving towards the realisation of an actual unity. They underlined the necessity of promoting internationalism so that the East and the West can meet for mutual benefit and mutual interchange. They also considered that the ideal of the Family of Man, which is central to Indian culture should become a living vibration all over the world. In order to hasten this development, it was thought necessary to establish a small experimental field, where people from different parts of the world can come together and engage themselves in cultural, educational, scientific and

other pursuits of research, aiming at human unity. It was against this background that Auroville was set up in 1968, and Mother announced its Charter which underlined the aims of unending education, and of material and spiritual researches aiming at the actualisation of human unity.

At the initiative of the Government of India, UNESCO passed Resolutions in 1966, 1968, 1970 and 1983 commending Auroville to those interested in UNESCO's ideals. They underlined the importance that Auroville had begun to receive at the international level.

Funds for the development of Auroville were received from different organisations in and outside India as also from the substantial grants received from the Central and State Governments. However, serious problems arose after the Mother left her body in 1973. In order to create necessary conditions in which smooth development of Auroville could

be ensured, the Central Government was forced to take over temporarily the management of Auroville from Sri Aurobindo Society and others under the Auroville (Emergency Provisions) Act, 1980.

Initially, this Act was valid for five years, but it had to be extended further in 1985 and 1987 as the efforts made to arrive at a solution in consultation with the residents of Auroville and Sri Aurobindo Society to provide for the permanent management of Auroville had not succeeded. Efforts were, however, continued and a broad consensus has now emerged that it would be in the interest of the further development of Auroville to establish a body corporate called the Auroville Foundation.

It may be mentioned that during the last 8 years since the take over of management of Auroville, Auroville has developed, and the residents of Auroville have taken a number of initiatives in various fields, including afforestation, soil conservation, water conservation, agriculture, integrated rural development, educational research, scientific research, cottage industries and computer technology. The residents of Auroville have also developed a self-organising system. All this needs to be encouraged and consolidated.

The Bill which is before us has certain special features. In the first place, the Bill seeks to acquire all properties relating to Auroville which are currently owned by several societies, trusts and other bodies. These assets were created by Sri Aurobindo Society and other bodies founded by the residents of Auroville substantially with the aid of donations received from different organisations and individuals in- and outside India (including Central and State Governments) for purposes and activities of Auroville, which under the proposed legislation, will become the responsibility of the Auroville Foundation. The Government, therefore, proposes to acquire these assets without payment of any compensation and vest them in the proposed Auroville Foundation whose primary objective shall be to encourage and promote ideals and programmes envisaged in the Charter of Auroville

In the second place, there shall be an International Advisory Council to advise the Central Government and the Governing Board of the Foundation on matters concerning development and management of Auroville. The existing Auroville Act has also the provision for the International Advisory Council. This International Advisory Council has played an important role in guiding the activities of Auroville throughout the last 8 years. The Council met every year and reviewed the progress of Auroville and made suitable recommendations to all concerned. Considering that Auroville aims at international collaboration and human unity, it is appropriate that the Auroville Foundation should have a high level international Advisory Council.

As far as the day-to-day activities are concerned, they will be looked after by the residents through appropriate autonomous arrangements, which will include Resident's Assembly and its Working Committee. The idea underlying this arrangement is that the residents of Auroville should have autonomy so that activities of Auroville can grow under an atmosphere conducive to harmonious growth.

In the third place, the Bill envisages

that the management of the Foundation will vest in a Governing Board, as constituted by the Government from time to time. In order to avoid all controversies getting perpetuated in the Governing Board, the Government has decided in principle that none of the existing societies or trusts will have a right of representation on the Governing Board. All nominations to this body will, therefore, be on an individual basis.

The powers and the functions of the Governing Board and the Resident's Assembly are so envisaged that the governing body would be able to ensure that Auroville actually gets the kind of management which is appropriate to the ideals of Auroville. The Governing Board also will be able to provide an impartial assessment of the progress of Auroville, not only for the benefit of those engaged in the development of Auroville, but also to the Parliament and the public at large.

Auroville is to be looked upon as a vision which has a great potentiality, and this can be of tremendous service to our country and the world. Mother had declared that the earth needs a place where the difficulties of human nature can be dealt with in the context of an arduous process of the change of human na-

ture. In such an endeavour, difficulties can be expected, but the Government is determined to help the process of development of Auroville in such a way that the aims and goals of Auroville are made more and more realizable. Research is the watch-word of Auroville and the Charter of Auroville has underlined that Auroville will be engaged in the material and spiritual researches. What has been achieved so far is perhaps a beginning and a good beginning. Educational research in Auroville has just started flourishing. Research in the Works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother has also received a good deal of encouragement. Research in the field of alternative sources of energy has also made some headway. The experiment in establishing a new ecological balance has succeeded to a very high degree. Above all, the atmosphere of Auroville has begun to vibrate with activities of youth and the ideal of unending education is being promoted in every field of activity in Auroville. This process must be encouraged and developed. The way is very long, but it is hoped that this Bill which aims at the establishment of the Auroville Foundation will be seen as an important aid in the growing development of Auroville.



Post Script

In October, 1988, in answer to a letter from Frederick, Satprem remarks: "You have put up a brave battle in Delhi".

Satprem concludes his letter with the following words: "My love to my brothers in Auroville."

II. An interview with Krishna Tewari, Frederick and Alain Bernard

The Process

In November, 1987, the Auroville Act was due to expire. The community felt that it needed more time to explore possible solutions to the major problems confronting it, and consequently requested the Government to grant an extension to the Act. This was by no means a foregone conclusion as the Government had previously stated that no extension would be possible, and the extension was only granted after the Minister asserted that, "We may find the solution in months, even weeks." The extension was for one year, with the clear message that no further extensions would be forthcoming. Faced with the need to come up with something entirely new after November, 1988, the community began to reorganize its internal structure and created a "Task Force" of seven long-time Aurovilians with the specific task of formulating, with the assistance of the community, specific proposals

to solve our problem with the Sri Aurobindo Society. These proposals were to be submitted to the Government, who were eager to achieve a permanent solution.

In April, 1988, some members of the Task Force and other Aurovilians met the Minister in Madras. The Minister presented the idea of a Governing Board for Auroville, an idea which had first been mooted the previous October. The Aurovilians told the Minister that they supported the proposal but stressed that the Governing Board should consist of independent, eminent people, not representatives of the Sri Aurobindo Society, the Ashram or Auroville, as the latter scenario would be likely to perpetuate the problems of the past. Thereafter began a period of confusion and uncertainty. Rumours were rife, little information was available. As the November deadline approached, a number of Aurovilians travelled to Delhi to clarify the community's position and concerns. In the

final nerve-wracking days, a series of what one of the Auroville participants called "miracles" occurred (these included obtaining two interviews with the Prime Minister at very short notice). The Bill subsequently passed through both Houses of Parliament without opposition.

The contents of the Bill

Q: What freedom does the Residents' Assembly have under the new Bill? How much autonomy can we expect in terms of managing our affairs and dealing with internal problems?

Frederick: There is a strong feeling that the Government does not want to be involved. But they have to have an accountable, responsible body to be there to supervise. As long as we function within

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the broad outlines of Auroville and its aims and ideals, I think we have autonomy. If we stick to the ideal, I think we are free.

Q: What is the function of the Governing Body?

Alain: Ultimately, you have now a system where no one group can claim it runs Auroville. In Auroville itself, it is clear that the Residents' Assembly can enjoy as much freedom as it needs, so long as we are together. The Governing Body can hardly act independently of the Residents' Assembly if you look at the Act. The Governing Body can be seen to represent the national level of India. People of eminence will act as an interface with India at large. Then you have the international level - the International Advisory Council. So it is interesting to see that the Foundation consists of three different levels and no one level alone can claim that Auroville is their project.

Q: Does this Bill mean that the Charter of Auroville has legal recognition?

Alain: The properties of Auroville have been acquired without compensation being paid, and this in itself reinforces the first part of the Charter. It is as if the Charter of Auroville is going more into matter.

Q: What will happen if there are internal differences in the community and petitions are drawn up and sent?

Frederick: I would think that there is an expectation that a certain amount of natural justice, a kind of tolerance of the minority is practised in Auroville. I think maybe what we have experienced here in a search deep within we have sometimes acted out on a gut level. And I think a more rational approach will be expected in the future.

Q: I think that at the moment we have a possibility to clean up the old problems of Auroville before we come to a new kind of life. One of the old problems is the 'Neutrals'. Should it be the task of the Task Force to clean it up before the Act comes into force, so that we can have one common future?

Frederick: I don't think you can delegate it to one particular group. I think there is a strong pressure to clean up our mess. When the Administrator comes he may play an important role in interpreting this point. My feeling is if we allow this again to become a cause celebre which creates a lot of dust everywhere, we have lost a chance. At this stage, Auroville should really have many rooms.

Q: Will the new Act facilitate the issuing of visas to Auroville residents?

Alain: Logically, it should be easier than before, but this will have to be taken up by the Governing Board.

Krishna: The whole international community has been recognized by this Statute. Therefore you cannot deny them

visas. Therefore you can take it that it is much easier now. But it's all going to fall back on us. We have to initiate with the Governing Board to take it up.

Q: Can the Act be appealed?

Alain: The act can always be challenged, but I think that the grounds for challenge are very flimsy.

Q: Why did the Government decide not to make us an Institute of National Importance?

Krishna: This was a small legal objection from the Law Ministry. When you create a new Institution or Foundation, you cannot in the same Act recognize it as an Institute of National Importance, since it has to have existed for some time to justify this. It could easily have been explained that we were not trying to recognize the Auroville Foundation as an Institute of National Importance, but Auroville itself, which has existed for twenty years. But it was not explained.

Q: Which Ministry are we now dependent upon?

Frederick: The Ministry for Human Resource Development is the coordinating Ministry for Auroville in the Foundation Bill.

"It is as if the Charter of Auroville is going more into matter."

Q: Will the Foundation be the official channel through which other Governments will be able to participate in Auroville's development?

Krishna: Yes.

Alain: The fact that this status has been given should open a whole range of possibilities that have not existed so far.

Personal impressions

Q: What does it mean to each of you personally to have been involved in this process, and what do you feel the Auroville Foundation Bill represents in the evolution of Auroville?

Alain: What is always moving when it happens, and it happened very powerfully this time, is when you see the Force operating. The sense of miracle that Krishna spoke about is not always easy to get across. But for us, there was always the feeling of a powerful concentrated thing, using all kinds of ways, but so precise. I had the feeling, as Mother said, that the future is calling us. Sometimes we have the feeling that we are trying to push something like Sisyphus' rock. Maybe we don't realize enough that it is also driven. This time the feeling was particularly compact. You feel that if there is such a power behind, then everything is possible.

So for the future of Auroville, we are given now a new possibility. Things are open again for a new phase. The ball is truly in our court.

Frederick: What I sense is that Auroville has suddenly been propelled onto a totally different scale, something which only reminds me of the Inauguration because that was really a wide, broad scale that Mother put up there. For the last few years, I found Auroville was getting smaller and smaller and smaller and suffocating. What I felt in the Rajya Sabha when the Charter was read out was as if suddenly there was again that big scale. You have to understand that the Auroville Foundation is not Auroville. Auroville is one of the three parts. It's a local field station where we are trying out our laboratory. But Auroville also has a national and an international level. The two other bodies are not there just to serve us. It is a total mutuality. It was such an abrupt breaking of an old cocoon, of a shell and there was suddenly such a vastness, that there was a reaction. Suddenly something we were accustomed to has gone.

Krishna: Having seen the process in Auroville unfold over the last eight years or so, this was the most intense experience in the sense that we were tossed about from day to day with unexpected situations, and yet always something would click. It kept moving. I talked about these series of miracles. It was really every day that it was happening. So the experience was intense from the point of view of us truly being the puppets as She called us. And to me that's an endorsement. So let's now believe that She is acting. I would like to share with every Aurovilian, as many times as I can, that let us now believe She is acting, and let us now go along with that process. We have been given independence. Let's deserve it now. The whole world is looking at us now.

Frederick: I'd like to convey when we address ourselves to Auroville International, that there should not be a feeling that it's happening here and we are giving you a bit of information about what's happening in the core. We should understand that in effect Auroville is happening all over the place. Mother once said that there was a moment in the beginning of Auroville, when it wasn't quite clear whether Auroville was going to be located at one place or, because there was not enough receptivity in that locality, it would spread out and come up in small pieces all over the world. I think for the first twenty years it has rooted itself here, but that other action, which is not exclusive, I think is becoming very strong.

(Interview by: Alan, Carel, Roger, Yanne)

CITY OF PEACE

*City of peace and god's unguarded light
City of silence and the rich unfolding word,
City of love and a laughter of the Gods,
City of man his labour born of dream.
City of harvest born of canyon soil,
City of rich acres sown with strong-eyed toil.
City whose song the hidden soul shall sing,
City of lost boundaries-province once of kings
City whose deep calm at sunset does recall
Ages when the earth stood golden-heaven tall.
City on night's borderline outpost of dawn's light
City born of promise and a conqueror's delight.*

Roger

La Ventura: A night to remember

Evening. Cutlery gleams on burgundy tablecloths. White-shirted waiters glide in and out, taking orders and delivering dishes with quiet panache. The lighting is subdued, the atmosphere intimate. Crepes filled with shrimp appear before me as if by magic...

Paris? London? New York? Wrong. This is Bharat Nivas, Auroville. 'La Ventura' (The Adventure) is Auroville's first high-class restaurant in twenty years. And it's been worth waiting for. Among the other items on the menu this evening are chicken liver pate, roast beef, vegetable lasagna and Meringue Swiss, truly a feast for jaded taste buds.

So what happened? Sacha is the moving force behind this gastronomic phenomenon. After training in Stockholm as a chef and working in restaurants there, he returned to Auroville a few years

ago to see what he could achieve here. Maison d'Auroville, the Auroville restaurant in Pondicherry, had just closed down, so his first idea was to open another one in town. But... rents in Pondicherry are expensive and he had little money. And anyway, nothing suitable was available.

Then somebody made a revolutionary proposal. Why not start a restaurant in Auroville? Sacha gulped, then agreed. Why not? And so began the battle. Money was the first problem. How to raise it? A friend suggested he raise finance by issuing loan cards - the famous 'Golden Cards' - which allowed the donor to draw up to a certain number of free meals from the new restaurant which in turn agreed to buy the card back at cost price after one year. High finance, Auroville style! But it worked.

But then... Sacha fell ill. "I goofed", he admitted later. "Every time I felt a bit better, I'd go to sports. Then people would see me and wonder 'why isn't he getting on with this restaurant?' They didn't know that next day I'd be ill again. I should really have explained to people what was happening. It was a difficult time."

When he began to recover, the question remained, where? After some typical frustrations and dead ends, he began to work at Bharat Nivas kitchen, helping with the lunches. Eventually the management agreed. He could use the facilities to start a restaurant on condition that he only opened in the evenings.

Fine... but Sacha had never managed a restaurant before, and who was going to help him? After all, even a tiny restaurant requires a small army of helpers. And in Auroville everybody is so busy. "I decided", he said, "to make it a fun thing to get the young people involved." Once more, it worked. He is happy with his team. "They are giving a big push. There's a serious feeling. They'd rather buy a new table for the restaurant than take anything for themselves". But he also knows that it's still early days. "Generally, Aurovilians are so laid-back. They would rather do five different things in their own time than stick at something. It's important that in the future everybody in the team should take up responsibilities so it's not all on my head."

And for the future, as for now, the key word is quality. "One of the reasons it took me so long to get it together", he said, "is that everybody had such high expectations of me. I couldn't afford to get it wrong." But to maintain quality in this environment is, to put it mildly, quite a challenge. It's not just having to get people to commit themselves, it's also the problem of inadequate equipment, of unreliable transport and of the irregular availability of certain foods. "In the west, you plan your menu, and then pick up the telephone. Within half an hour you have everything you need. Here, you never know what to expect, and frequently we have to improvise because one or two key ingredients are not available." And on top of all this, he is well aware that many people are expecting him to fail, just as have so many promising projects in the past. Quite a formation to deal with!

But for the moment, the birth was healthy and La Ventura is alive and kicking. Opening three nights a week, it is already averaging fifty customers a night, and the Sunday buffet lunch is attracting more and more people.

The meal ends with coffee. I step out into the cool night air, savouring the taste of Meringue Swiss and the touch of quality and class that La Ventura has brought to Auroville. May La Ventura, may all the promising Auroville adventures continue!

Alan



Making the cap

Many months of work in the merciless sun led up to two all-night concreting this summer on the cap of the Matrimandir. The cap is a protective platform that crowns the top of the structure. This article describes the second concreting.

Villagers are rushing homeward on all sides, outracing the long-expected, prayed-for rains (the sound of drums, chants, prayers and fireworks have punctuated the night for the last week or so) as I bicycle towards Matrimandir at 4.30 in the afternoon on the 8th of August. The sky is piled black with clouds, looming like mountains above the freshly ploughed and planted red and green fields. The concreting scheduled to start at 3 begins an hour late due to a brake burn-out on the crane. "The last of the crane and wheelbarrow concretings", Larry remarks. A phase that began more than six years ago, with the raising and placing of the first of the 1200 beams, has now reached its close. The rain falls on all sides and can be seen in sheets in the distance, and yet only sprinkles the roof of the structure, circling it. The mood is relaxed and joyous on top, amongst the twenty or thirty of us gathered there, and the work is more shared than at the previous concreting of the first section of the cap. As night falls, the village lights in the distance come on like fishing boats across a bay of darkness as the Matrimandir, lit-up, seems like a strange ship under construction, ark of some new and dawning age.

A dance performance followed by a gift distribution occurs under the Banyan tree below us in honour of the auspiciousness of the 8th. Someone who comes up afterwards remarks that the recording of The Mother's reading from Savitri combined aptly with the sound of whistling and shouts from the structure, the humming of the vibrators (echoing through the inner chamber like the low chanting of Buddhist monks) and the churning of the concrete mixer.

The work proceeds steadily but slowly as it takes fifteen minutes for each wheelbarrow of cement to be hauled up to the

top of the structure. Lowered into position on wooden planks, each load is tilted and emptied onto the grid of steel shuttering where it is then vibrated into place. A team of masons follows to smooth out each completed section of the half-circle. I recognize one of them as an old Forecomers' worker who has learnt a new trade. Piero is in a relaxed mood, we joke about it being his last concreting. Groups of people converse leaning on the railings and a band of children are camped out for the night on a platform to the side. (Last concreting they swore they saw an UFO) Concreting remains one of the few genuine collective happenings occurring these days. I break with Andy and Francois for an hour and a half's fitful sleep at 3 a.m. and we return to relieve Gopal and Selvam's team at 5. Slowly, night gives way to a blue-grey darkness, and then, above the sea, the first trails of pink streak the sky stabbed white with the cloud-veiled shimmers of a late moon-rise. Day breaks to reveal many activities and scenes, like a later-day Breughel painting: farmers ploughing their fields below us, the blue grey hills of Gingee etched in limpid clarity to the northwest, windmills turning, dominating the green belt like spires, a trio of freighters anchored off Pondy.

The cement mixer keeps churning, the vibrators humming - Andy and Patrick are now working them, settling the cement. New people show up, there is little sense of drag. Caught in the rhythm of work time's sense fades, encapsulates itself as if we were carried, cradled by a refreshing inner wind. The crew of masons from the nearby village carry on rounding, evening out the dome-like surface and by the time the concreting comes to an end, slightly after 1 p.m., they will have worked for more than 21 hours. Slowly, people come down from the structure as small teams hose the chettis, the cement mixer, the tools, and buoyant, tired and happy they scatter to the four corners of Auroville, the children on horseback, the others on foot, motorbike, bicycle or car.

Roger

Du côté de la peinture et de la poterie

Tripura Pavillon, le centre culturel indien, accueille depuis plusieurs semaines une très intéressante exposition de poteries et de "terre cuite" réalisées par Angad, Patrick et Michel, ainsi que des peintures et des miniatures de Anna-Maria.

Le travail de Anna-Maria qui s'apparente à l'impressionisme est très riche en couleur et a déjà remporté un vif succès lors de l'exposition organisée à Madras par 'le Centre Américain'.

"Après avoir traversé une phase de grands espaces (les grandes toiles) j'aime maintenant le travail minutieux à la loupe qu'exige la miniature. J'ai dû faire de longues recherches sur les matériaux pour obtenir mes couleurs. C'est le zinc qui donne cette impression d'email. Les pierres sur lesquelles je peins sont vivantes,

elles m'inspirent. C'est une subtile relation."

Ce que nous ne savions pas c'est que Anna-Maria était poète avant de venir à Auroville et avait remporté le prix Goldoni pour ses oeuvres.

"A cette époque j'étais inspecteur général du travail pour la protection des mineurs; j'étouffais tellement dans cette vie que la poésie était la seule véritable lumière", ajoute-t-elle avec beaucoup d'émotion. Anna-Maria est venue à Auroville comme un certain nombre d'entre nous grâce à une succession de hasards qui n'en sont pas. Après une recherche spirituelle tout azimut, une émission de télévision de David Montemurri lui révèle l'essentiel. Ensuite c'est 'L'Aventure de la Conscience' de Satprem. Puis, comme elle me l'avoue avec

beaucoup d'humour et d'humilité: "Jamais je n'aurai eu le courage de venir à Auroville malgré mon envie! Alors, tout a été pris en main. Encore le bon Hasard!"

Les huit années que j'ai passées au Matrimandir ont été huit années de bonheur malgré les conflits incessants. Et puis, à force de travailler la matière, la peinture s'est imposée à moi, comme la poésie auparavant."

Ce qu'Anna-Maria ne nous dit pas, c'est qu'elle donne aussi des cours de peinture aux enfants de New Creation.

"Ils ont une sensibilité particulière, j'aime beaucoup travailler avec eux" dit elle avec pudeur comme s'il ne fallait pas trop s'approcher de son jardin secret.

Et la poésie Anna-Maria?

La poesia! Sempre, sempre! Toujours, toujours!

Yanne

LETTER PAGE

Esteemed Sir,

I feel obliged to inform you that last night, while perambulating around the periphery of Matrimandir Gardens, I happened to see a Pterodactyl Indica, a large prehistoric bird of rather unpleasant habits, grazing daintily off a Hibiscus flower. On espying me, it flapped off into the sunset, taking the bush with it. What does this mean? Is Auroville going backwards rather than forwards in time? Are we attracting the right kind of visitor to Matrimandir? Should we petition Delhi to make Auroville a Pterodactyl Preservation Zone? Is the Entry Group open to considering prehistoric leftovers as potential newcomers? Is it time to change the menu at Center Kitchen? I eagerly await the responses of your readers to these weighty and pertinent questions.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

L.T.C. Smytthe-Buckfast (Greenworker retd.)

To our dear readers

Well, this is not exactly what we are expecting in terms of style or content. But we would like a vigorous letter page to be a regular feature of this magazine. So, if you have concerns or observations, or need clarifications, or would like to practise your handwriting, write to us here at:

CSR Office, Auroshilpam (opp.Revelation)

The editors.

INDIA

The wonder of this country is

Return:

Always, it seems,

The same sun,

Winking off leaves and mud,

The same boys,

Splay-toed,

Chanting after dusty cows.

And always, somehow,

That twitch at the curtain -

Find me! Find me! -

Before the setting sun

Bloods

The dying earth.

- Alan

I DREAM'D IN A DREAM

I dream'd in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth,

I dream'd that was the new city of Friends,

Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love, it led the rest,

It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city,

And in all their looks and words.

Walt Whitman
(1860)

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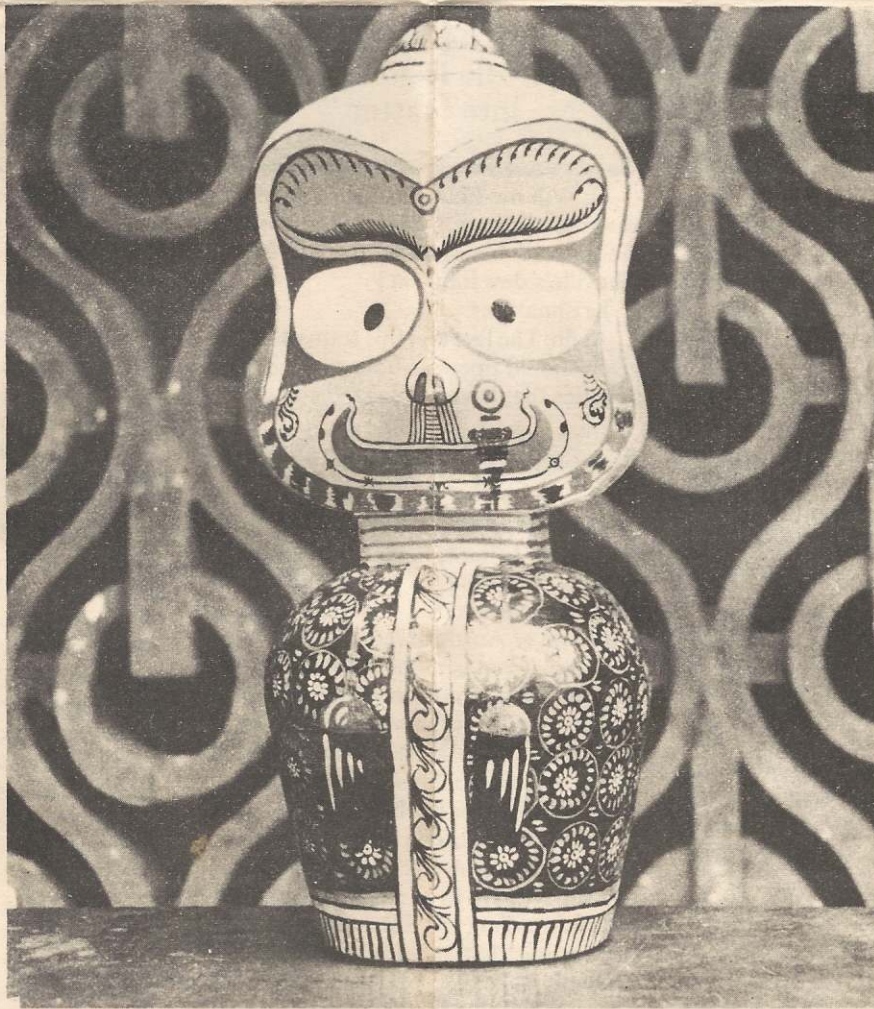
NOVEMBER '88



CSR Office - Auroshilpam - Auroville
Kottakuppam 605104 - Tamil Nadu - India

AUROVILLE
TODAY

Arjun / Deepak



A specimen of Indian folk art to be seen at the Center of Indian Culture

India and Spirituality

These are extracts from an interview with the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, by Francois Gautier on the 24th of February, 1988.

Do you agree that Hinduism is what made India great?

No, not at all. What made India great was its ability to be diverse, to absorb all kind of influences, to synthesize them, to indianize them. I would even say that the India of today is a sort of a model for a mini-world, where you find everything: different religions, different races, different everything. You name it and you've got it!

But it's got a tendency to pull apart, from Kashmir to Assam, from Punjab to Gorhhaland. What is the binding solution to all this?

In India the binding solution is much deeper: it is the spiritual link. Inner spirituality is our strength. It kept - and it WILL keep - India...India.

Is India still a socialist country?

Oh yes! Yes, very much so. But it is socialism "à l'Indienne", socialism based on human beings, on a different value system. If you look at the Western world today, materialistic values are predominant and it's only in recent years that some questioning has started. Perhaps France is the only country which is slightly different. And if you also look at communist countries, again they're immersed more and more in a materialistic outlook, and we feel it is not good.

Do you think there is a decline in the West?

Difficult to say. I think you're referring to that book which has just come out, *The Fall of the Great Empires*. Well, every civilization goes up and down, we feel that the East has a certain inner strength, which the West has not been able to develop or preserve.

Sri Aurobindo, the great Sage and philosopher once wrote that India will be the spiritual leader of the world. What do you have to say?

Well, the West MUST acquire spirituality and I am sure it will. I feel that one of the things that give us that inner strength is TIME. The East in terms of civilization has, say, a 2000 years advantage. That does make a difference, it gives you resilience, a certain wisdom. Whether India can give this to the world, that is another question. I hope it can, and I'll do my best for it.

Is that spiritual element really important to you?

It's very important to me.

And to the world?

And to the world also.

(Interview:
François Gautier)

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