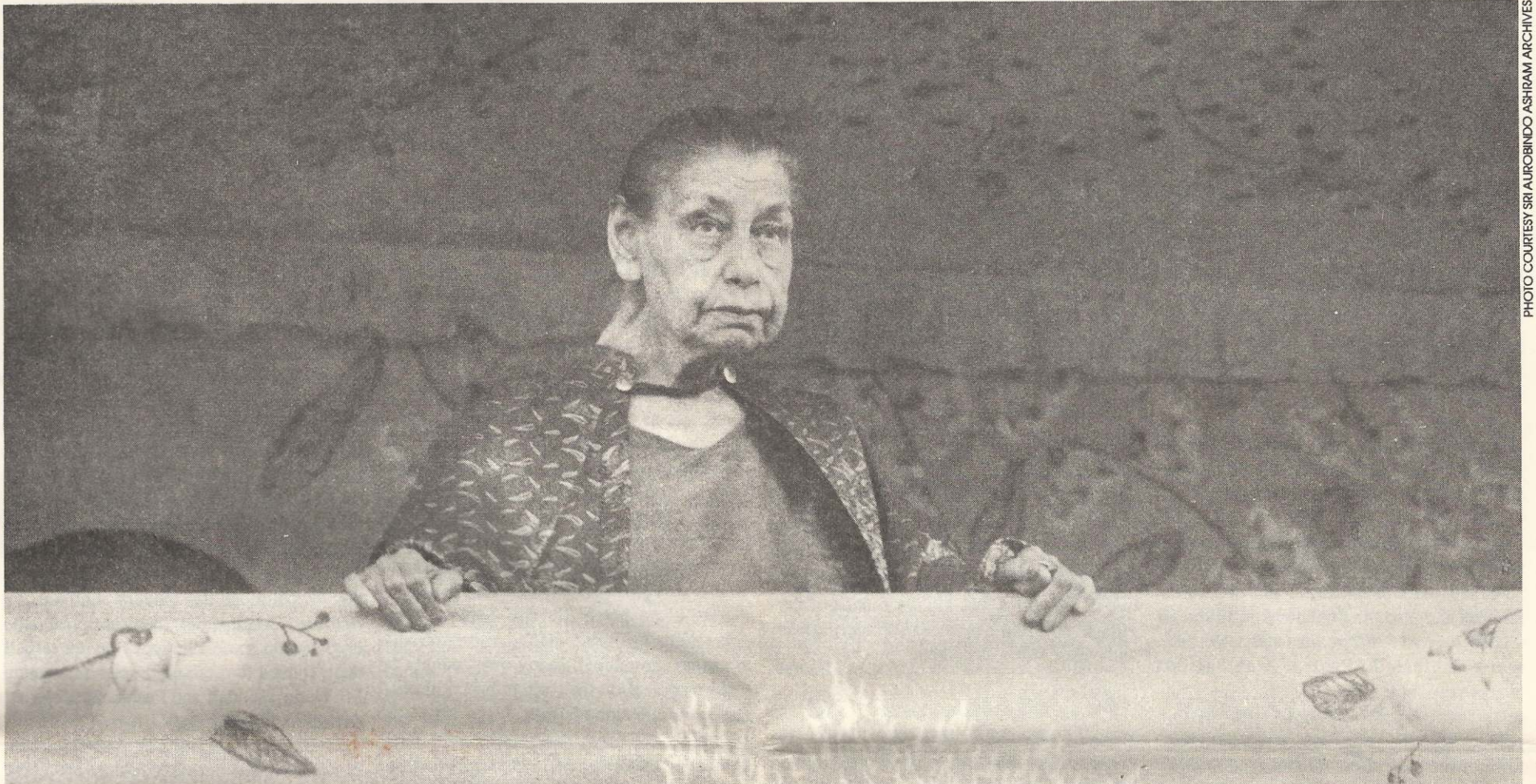


AUROVILLE TODAY

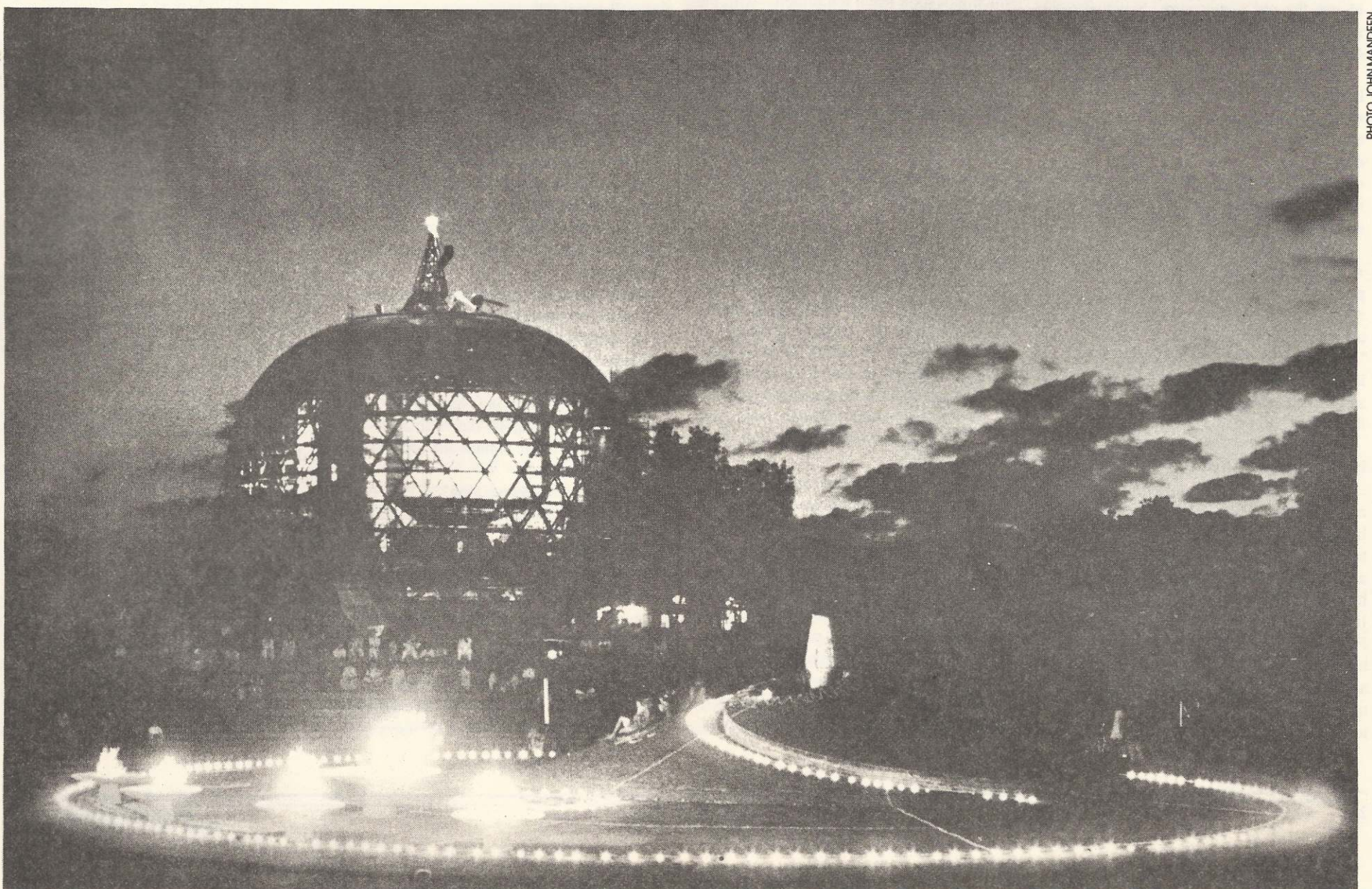
February/March 1993 Number Forty-Nine/Fifty



February 29th, 1968: The Mother giving balcony darshan, the day after Auroville's inauguration.

25

February 28th, 1993: Amphitheatre at dawn



A Changed World

Dr. Karl (Carlos) Pfauter is a long-standing friend of Auroville, and a personal friend to many who have lived here down the years. Born in 1905, his childhood years were spent during the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm II. He studied at the universities of Cologne and Frankfurt, where he obtained his doctorate in Philosophy. Following the war he was the head of the Department of Culture in Göttingen and was instrumental in the revitalizing of the Göttingen Theatre. In 1954 he was sent to India as head of the cultural section of the German Embassy in Delhi, with the mission of founding the Max Mueller Bhavan. During the next seven years in India he was to meet Nehru, Radakrishnan (president of India) and others. He first saw the Mother in 1960. From 1961 to 1966 he headed the trade and commerce section of the German Embassy in Athens, before returning for his final posting to India as Consul-General in Madras—where he served until his retirement from the Diplomatic Service in 1970. Since his retirement he has spent as many winters as possible visiting Auroville, and wrote the following article in honour of Auroville's 25th anniversary.

Auroville, you are celebrating the 25th anniversary of your foundation. Accept the greetings of an old friend who was present at your birth and inauguration and has often returned to visit; who thinks of you with gratitude and longing. I greet all of you who live here in admiration of your effort, your courage and your constancy.

"Orplid, Du bist mein Land, das ferner leuchtet." [Orplid, you are my land that shines afar].

In the late 1960s, youth throughout the world had become restive; these were the so-called years of unrest, as old doctrines, dogmas and also time-hallowed institutions were perceived as discredited and passé, and were contested. Protest was raised everywhere, often taking harsh forms. The restiveness led the young people to far places, into the unknown. A tide flowed towards the east, often to India, land of wisdom. In 1968, the year of Auroville's foundation, I was living and working in Madras, and my antechamber was filled daily with picturesque figures: adventurers, hippies, drop-outs, but also pilgrims, earnest seekers of a goal. A mood of quest, wherein a message was heard: "There should be a place..." Auroville should become that place. Message and openness fell together. It was *Kairos*, to use the old Greek term. Not the usual march of lapsing time; but, the fullness of time, a culmination.

A degraded surface baked stone hard, beneath which, deeply buried, lies petrified wood, bears testimony to an old and ruinous exploitation. The faint-hearted visitor was discomfited: "Here, nothing will ever come of it." But the persuasive power of friends was greater. Soon, I sat with the first settlers in a hut located on the bare tract of land.

I held, at that time, an official position, and was able to convince representatives of powerful charitable organisations to visit Auroville and to awaken their understanding and sympathy. Although the mythos 'Auroville' was a thing unknown to those institutions, they nonetheless provided initial assistance for irrigation and cultivation under the name "Tamil Fund".

New People of an Old Earth

The original community did not long remain unto itself. The cell expanded rapidly, huts and houses were quickly raised and scattered over the wide area; built with simple, available materials, created where nothing had been, the name of each community was like a promise: Forecomers, Aspiration, Fraternity, Transformation. The wonderful, happy period of the pioneer years: creation, adventure, chance. "Oh, this desire ever newly shaped in loosened clay, few were they to help the first who dared..."

by Dr. Karl (Carlos) Pfauter

For this writer, who comes from a milieu of offices and dusty files, the way a forest grew where desert had been remains a riddle and fills him with wonder.

Nature was grateful and responded to the tree planting efforts of the first pioneers. Today trees, shrubs, parks, kitchen-gardens, houses overgrown with bougainvillea and hibiscus, orchards, nurseries, and schools abound; and, in addition to being an ornithological paradise, Auroville is a refuge for endangered species of birds. When Mozart is heard evenings in Discipline, the lyrebird listens. And Ayanar, a local protective deity who makes nightly rounds of the villages on an earthen steed to protect the leas and ensure water, is content.

The turn of the century approaches, and the year 2000 awaits with stern countenance. We are entering a changed world whose surface has been rent; an empire, founded for an eternity, lies shattered. The scourges of nationalism and fundamentalism are spreading contagiously. A sombre scenario has been staged, with interacting parts: global climatic changes, the melting of the polar ice-caps and destruction of rain forests; diminishing cultivable surface, in addition to which is the exponential growth of the world population which will soon reach ten billion—with the blessings of the Pontifex Maximus; extinction of species; incurable epidemics.

"Mene Tekel Upharsin" was written by fiery hand on the palace walls in Babylon; King Belshazar was greatly terrified and called for prophets and soothsayers, one of whom interpreted for him the soon approaching end. And, the kings of our times?

In the meantime, will the tormented earth, whose primordial treasures we plunder, become restive and bring her seas to overflowing? An old voice says: "I see a time coming when God, no longer taking pleasure in it, will again destroy everything to renew creation. I am certain that everything is designed to that end, and in the distant future the time and hour are already foreseen when the period of renewal will begin." (Goethe, 1829).

It is both tempting and simple to portray the end. The apocalyptic catalogue is sufficiently voluminous. But, Auroville dare not join in; it is bound to the future. "The march into the unknown has to be traced step by step." When we turn the Janus-faced future, we see another, brighter side.

A resonant "What now?" rings out, clearly and insistently. Ardent search in ancient books of wisdom, and a new gnosticism announces itself, "...a knowledge of man which leads to perfection, to rediscovery of a buried

self". These words uttered two thousand years ago sound familiar in the context of Auroville. Are we experiencing a new *kairos*? Will we recognize and take advantage of it? We would then have a long expanse of human history before us.

A Bientôt

When some years ago our Dutch friend Ruud left us, Edzard of Discipline wrote, "Our friend has checked in his coat". In the meantime, my own coat is quite worn and shabby, due to be checked in. What then?

I have received more in Auroville than I have been able to give. At an advanced age and after long, winding years of life and work, I was given a new youth, for there is in Auroville no harsh division between the generations, no discriminating separation between young and old. In my own country, I would have sat on the waiting-bench of old age, in anticipation of death.

Only a brief rest is granted us on this threshold, a retrospect in joy and gratitude, for reflection and self-criticism, because "Auroville will be the place..."

Let me appear among you within an appropriate time, not more than twenty years, and be supple for the yoga, more concentrated in meditation—but better still, as a child, to be taught in New Creation and Last School. In whatever form, I hope to be mercifully accepted by the Entry Group and to find a decent work.

The Matrimandir will have been finished and its light will shine far beyond Tamil Nadu; the Inner Chamber will have had its effect. Conciliation, peace and harmony will rule. The reunification with the Ashram will have long taken place, to the mutual well-being. Heresies and schisms are forgotten; old friends will have returned. A new generation remembers with gratitude the founders. A world-wide alliance with like spirited organisations exists to which the politicians must listen.

Do not be troubled by reproaches of utopia. Man has never been without utopias and has always replaced the destroyed anew. But, we no longer have time for further utopias, for ideal designs of a distant future. We must remain on earth, and bring change.

We live according to the "Principle of Hope". Let Auroville remain our hope!

A bientôt, good-bye, so long!

Au Revoir, Carlos

As we were going to Press, we were saddened to hear that our old friend Carlos, 87 years of age, had passed away in Munich on the night of the full moon in March (8.3.93). He will be missed, and remembered fondly, by many of us.

—Eds.



THE BIRTHDAY WEEK:

From Desert to Cornucopia

Some years ago, our cultural correspondent Yanne described Auroville as a 'cultural desert'. Since then, Pitanga Hall has been completed, and a group has formed to organize and promote cultural activities in the community. But the image of a desert with scattered cultural oases persisted.

Last week, the week of Auroville's 25th birthday, all this changed, changed utterly, as we were bombarded with exhibitions, dance performances, recitals and happenings of all descriptions. And what was astonishing was not just the sheer volume of events, but also their range and quality, which made for something of a force field of creativity and inventiveness.

For example, within a few hundred metres of each other, Tibetan monks could be seen working concentratedly on butter sculptures, the Auroville workers and units displayed their products and skills in the organized chaos of Bharat Nivas restaurant, while, in a transformed Centre for Indian Culture, Pierre, Anu and Holger were creating a multimedia event of sculpture, poetry and music called 'Resonances'. At the same time, way down Aspiration side, Mayaura's extraordinarily evocative paintings, illustrating Satprem's book *On the Way to Superhumanhood*, were being displayed in the clear ambience of The House of Mother's Agenda. Meanwhile, 'Pitanga' was hosting an exhibition of paintings and pottery sculpture by Kristine, Zabeth and Christine during the day; and on some evenings, the dance hall there echoed to the limpid voices of Young Mi, Nuria, Gundalf and Pushkar performing duettos and quartettos.

Later, in the cultural climax to the week, Auroville dancers and children presented one of their most inventive programmes ever—conceptually, technically and spatially—when they danced to the choreography of the visiting Peter Morin.

But there was more to the week than cultural presentations. On Monday, 22nd, for example, there was a one day seminar—which may mark something of a watershed in our collective life—at which over 100 Aurovilians came together to share something of their inner journey and relationship to Auroville's ideals. And on Wednesday, 25th, some of us managed to catch our breath at a breathing workshop before plunging back into attending functions, laying foundation stones and preparing for the visit of the International Advisory Council and the Governing Board. Their final meeting with the Auroville residents on the stage of the Bharat Nivas auditorium was notably more relaxed this year than last, perhaps marking a new level of mutual trust and appreciation between them and the community.

Finally, there was the early morning concentration in the Amphitheatre. At 5 a.m., five fires representing the five Vedic elements were lit by Auroville youth with flaming torches. Around 2000 people—many from Pondicherry and the Ashram—listened in deep silence to organ music played by the Mother and the reading of the Auroville Charter in the four languages, French, English, Sanskrit and Tamil. People then ascended to the Chamber to file silently round the crystal which, a few days earlier, had been repositioned on its new symbol stand. As the fires died down, and the visitors left in clouds of dust, something of that other, spontaneous Auroville reasserted itself as a few intrepid Aurovilians, hitching a lift in Mr. Tata's departing helicopter, showered Matrimandir with 'Protection' flowers.

International Advisory Council meets in Auroville

On February 27th, the recently constituted International Advisory Council of the Auroville Foundation met for the first time. The five members of the I.A.C. are: Dr Ervin Laszlo, Director, World Future; Snr Federico Mayor, Director-General, UNESCO; Mr Bertrand Schneider, Secretary-General, Club of Rome; Mr Maurice Strong, Environmentalist and businessman; Mr J R D Tata, Industrialist.

Of these, only Dr Laszlo and Mr Tata were able to attend the first meeting; Snr. Mayor's deputy at UNESCO, Mr. Sharma, attended in his place.

AUROVILLE TODAY took the opportunity to interview all three attendees to fill in their background and elicit their views on Auroville.

MR J.R.D. TATA, eminent Indian industrialist, pioneer aviator and long-term friend of Auroville, was a member of the first Auroville International Advisory Council. AUROVILLE TODAY interviewed him on 26th February and, later the same day, he gave an informal speech to a small group of Aurovilians at a tea party. Here are some extracts from the interview and the impromptu talk:

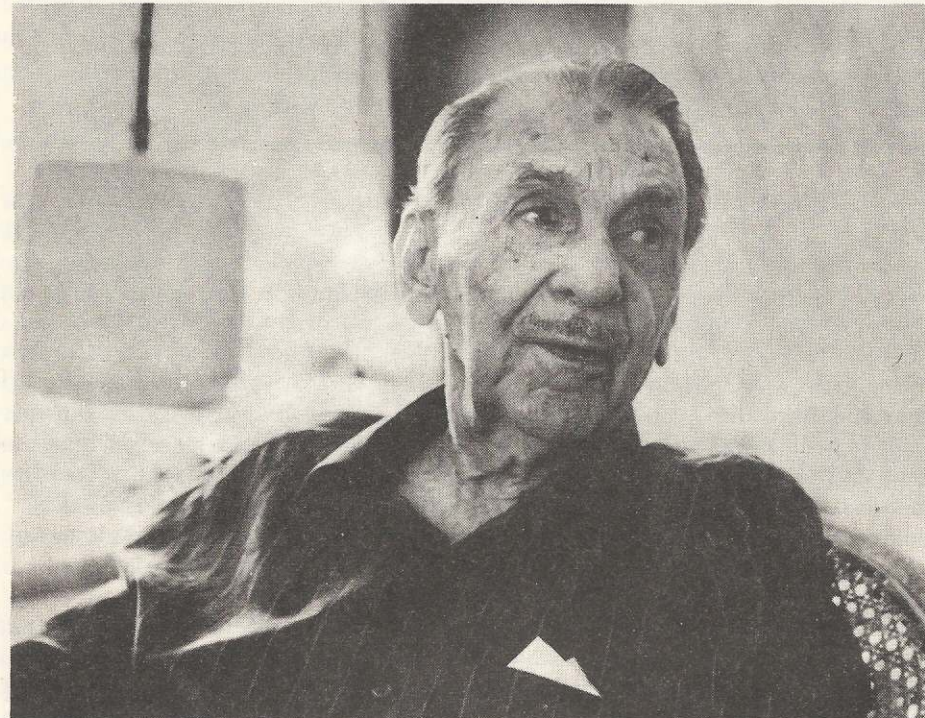
"I first heard about Auroville in 1969 when I attended an exhibition of Auroville handicrafts in Bombay. There I met some Aurovilians, including Frederick, and learned about this concept of a city that belonged to nobody. It sounded a bit strange, impractical, but sentimentally I was very attracted by the idea.

In 1971, I visited for the first time. It was all rather barren. I wanted to see trees here, and I wanted to help the rural population of the area. So when 'Auromitra' (a funding channel for Auroville projects—eds.) was set up, I gave some support. But you took very little from me—obviously you people don't

'Don't Lose the Pioneering Spirit!'

need money! When I came back years later, I was amazed to find that Auroville has become a forest. But even as I drove in yesterday, I felt that there's still room for another million trees...

Another reason I became interested in Auroville in the 1970's was that a battle was going on here, and I was afraid that both the spirit and the substance of Auroville would be destroyed. I wanted to help prevent this. Now I understand that this matter is settled. But I see that Auroville is still not free. Dr. Karan Singh explained to me that the Aurovilians want to be completely free, but that any large organisation has to have some rules and regulations, and this is why the Foundation was created. I approve of the Foundation. But if I'm asked for my opinion



Mr. J.R.D. Tata

as a member of the International Advisory Council—I won't be, of course!—I'll say that I would like the Aurovilians to keep their freedom. I don't mean a legal freedom, but a soul freedom. There is always a chance with governments and politicians that your freedom of thought and right to pioneer will be interfered with. You should resist this, you should fight against institutionalization. The Aurovilians should decide what regulations and controls should be exercised in their own interests.

Above all, the Aurovilians should not lose the pioneering spirit and your sense of adventure which comes from the strength and creativity of The Mother. I have always believed in living a little dangerously and

taking risks. Don't be afraid of danger—but keep the power to dream.

In this rampaging world, Auroville could be a sort of model, a hope, as you are pioneering a new way of organization, a new way of life. But Auroville still has much more to achieve in this, and Auroville remains unknown by many people. Perhaps in the future, other Aurovilles could be created in India...

Auroville is not just an idea. It is the future, the future of the world. It is the only model that I know of that has survived, and I believe in it more today than ever before. I've come here today to breathe the Auroville spirit. I'm not an Aurovilian, but I have the Auroville spirit!"

IN TERMS OF THE ACT...

Under the terms of the Auroville Foundation Act, the Auroville International Advisory Council:

- "shall consist of not more than five members nominated by the Central Government."
- "may, on its own motion or on a reference made to it by the Governing Board, advise the Governing Board on any matter relating to the development and management of Auroville."

In giving any advice to the Governing Board, the I.A.C. will try to ensure that:

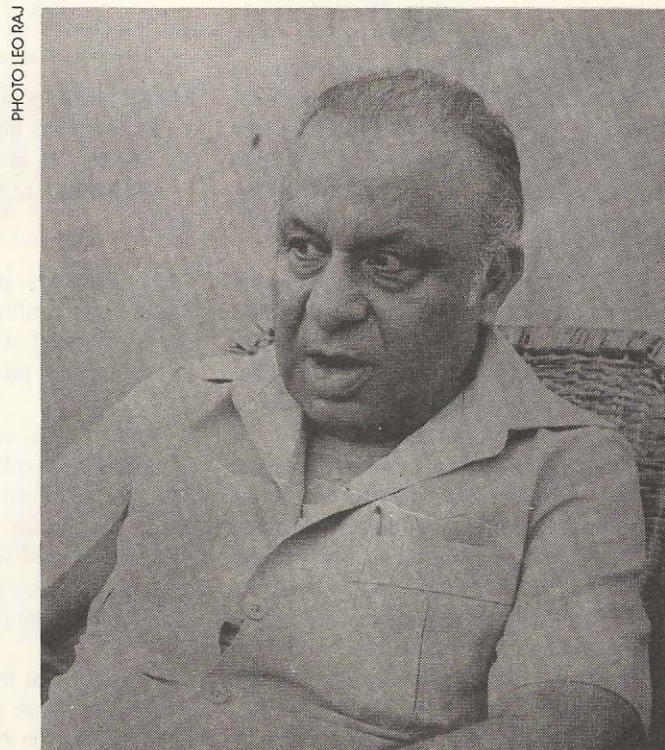
- "the ideals for which Auroville has been established are encouraged", and
- "the residents of Auroville are allowed freedom to grow and develop activities and institutions for the fulfilment of the aspirations and programmes envisaged in the said Charter of Auroville."

MR. C.L. SHARMA, the Deputy Director-General of UNESCO came from Paris in place of Mr. Federico Mayor, Director-General, to attend the first session of the new International Advisory Council. He spoke with Bill about UNESCO's connection with Auroville.

"I am absolutely delighted to be here and it is much better than I expected it to be. UNESCO has been conscious for a long time of Auroville's mission, of what it is trying to do. There have been successive resolutions passed by the General Assembly in favour of Auroville, bringing it to the notice of our 170 member states. UNESCO has also associated itself with seminars and meetings and contributed \$25,000 to the recent Birthday celebrations. This is a very clear expression of UNESCO's, not just interest, but support and appreciation of an experiment that we definitely want to succeed because today's world problems are due to lack of understanding between human beings. When you look at some events happening around the world today you would think we were in 1933 and in some parts in the Middle Ages. Obviously, we need a fresh look at how these problems can be resolved. There was a time when we thought if the "cold war" would end our problems would be solved. Today in some places we are in a worse situation. We need to make a conscious effort in "peace building". Billions of dollars are spent on "peace keeping". This is only a short term remedy but "peace building" is the longer term and that is UNESCO's mission. The mission of Auroville has a lot in common with what UNESCO is trying to do. The form of support of Auroville by UNESCO has to emanate from Auroville itself. We have many programmes in education and environment, cultural activities, promotion of human rights and international understanding but it depends on how Auroville wants to collaborate with UNESCO. As I said yesterday, UNESCO should not be viewed as a funding organization, because its budget is less than a medium-sized university, but it has a name and can act as a strong catalytic agent and assist on the information and formulation levels. Our main role is to provide expertise and an initial push toward development of projects. I will make some preliminary proposals about our "Man and Biosphere Programme". I have an idea that may

appear a little quixotic about the International Informatics Olympiad for Students. I think it might be feasible to have it here and I've given the Aurelec team the details. It would be for about a hundred students who would come for a championship in software games. I'm hoping something can come out of that. Something of interest to Aurovilians may be our education programmes because here you try to equip students for success not only in the outer world but also in the inner world. That's important. Our traditional educational systems have been lacking in that area.

Let's hope that all this will lead to a more fruitful collaboration."



Mr. C.L. Sharma

Advisory Council meets in Auroville (contd.)

Auroville, the 'hopeful monster'

ERVIN LASZLO was born in Budapest in 1932. A former Director of Research to the United Nations and Special Advisor to the Director-General of UNESCO, he is the author of 8 books and numerous articles. His special interest is in exploring a unified theory of knowledge that will link together advances in different fields of science into a comprehensive explanation of the Universe.

AUROVILLE TODAY : *Yesterday you were saying that your interest in Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary thought was one of the things that attracted you to this job.*

Laszlo: I got interested early on in oriental Hindu philosophy and in the modern expressions of oriental philosophy. In my late teens and twenties I read Sri Aurobindo and others as well as the classics - the Upanishads, the Vedas and so on. Then I got very much into science—I was trying to find my way by interpreting what science tells us about the world. Only a few years ago I discovered that the path had taken me back to ancient and modern Hindu philosophy, and Chinese philosophy as well.

When this invitation came, I thought it was a chance for me to bring into conjunction my own evolutionary thinking, which is linked to contemporary physics, biology, neural psychology, and the systems sciences which have developed in the past thirty years, with the thinking of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

How in a nutshell could you sum up your systems theories?

I think the main message is that change is not fortuitous. There is a logic, an underlying logic, one that is already in Nature. Changes are irreversible, but not linear; that is, there are strong discontinuities, sudden appearances, where new thresholds are being reached.

Are we at one of these thresholds?

Definitely yes. Most people don't realize it. The message I try to bring is that we are certainly nearing a threshold where the sustainability of the world we have created is coming to an end, and the choice for us is in either creating a new dynamic equilibrium, or in facing extinction like so many species before us.

Do you have a sense of how that transition will take place?

What happens is that when you immerse a system into an energy flow, the system begins to pick up and store some of that energy. When you inject information - which is a finely structured energy - into the system, it becomes meaningful to

the system and it reacts. And when this happens, the whole evolutionary process is accelerated. At a certain point, consciousness appears, which is really the awareness of ourselves. This is a remarkable step, but it emerges as part of the process. I'd like to see it as a natural step, not as an intervention from outside. After consciousness enters the scene, you have an increasing interaction between human systems and the environment, and this generates further sensitivity and a constant remapping of the environment. So you have this non-linear process that is unpredictable in detail but which has directionality.

Now the process is intensifying because through our technologies we've increased the information flow tremendously.

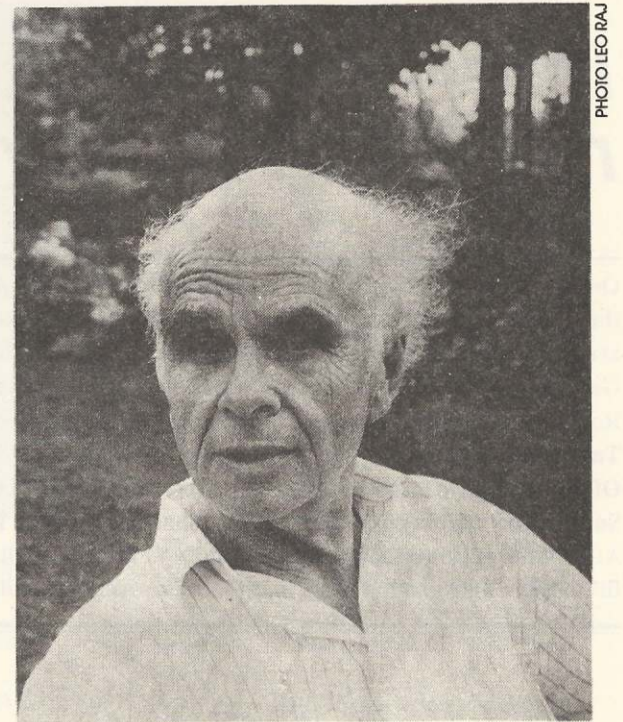
Does this theory assume an overriding intelligence that is guiding this process, or is it just chance?

I think that what is occurring is a self-organizing process. If I want to then ask who has organized this process, I am moving beyond Western science into an area which is either mysticism or theology. One can only recognize that this universe is so fantastically finely tuned to the emergence of complexity that to say that it is by chance is not acceptable.

Your latest book 'Au Racines de l'Univers' (soon to appear as 'The Fifth Field' in English) has just come out in France. What is its theme?

Its thesis takes the idea of the implicit order of Bohm and the morphic genetic field of Sheldrake and links it up with quantum theory. I'm starting with a new concept—one that is not based on resonance but on holography. Through holographic means you can store enormous amounts of information through a form of wave interference patterns. I assume that the energy field on which the universe is based is almost infinite and capable of holographic information storage. We see the interactions but physicists are trying to avoid taking notice of it because it generates infinities, and when you get infinities in mathematics you can't calculate.

I'm talking about a revolution that's going to have to take place in science if it's going to be able to solve these increasingly difficult problems. Darwinian and even neo-Darwinian theory is breaking down. We don't see how random mutations



Ervin Laszlo

could generate new species. There must be a connection between the mutants and the environment, otherwise you would never be able to come up with the mutants that would be able to survive in a changing environment.

If you follow through with the concept I'm advocating, you have in nature something the ancient Hindus called the 'Akashic' record. Basically everything that occurs in space and time on the level of matter energy systems is occurring within an energy field. That field creates ripples which spread and create a hologram. And from that hologram you can read back what happened.

If you put all these very complex ideas together, you come to the conclusion that there is a wave-form record of everything that has occurred, you just need enough sensitivity to pick it out.

What interests you in Auroville?

What I know of Auroville is enough to awaken my curiosity and interest. I suspect it's an expression of a new kind of human consciousness that we will need to survive in this world. The world has to become a multi-cultural world - and more sensitive, not suppressing any elements of our interdependence and intercourse with nature. I think Auroville may be one of the mutants - one of the 'hopeful monsters' as they are termed. They are monsters for the previous generation but they will be the new species when that generation disappears.

On 27th February, at the rather unsalubrious venue of the auditorium stage, Bharat Nivas, the Governing Board and the International Advisory Council met with about 100 Auroville residents. Here are some points from the meeting:

The meeting began with Dr. Karan Singh expressing his perception that the completion of the chamber of Matrimandir would see the beginning of a qualitative change in the earth's consciousness. He then called upon some of the other members of the Governing Boards and the International Advisory Council to say a few words.

Mr. J.R.D. Tata expressed his happiness at being amongst us once again as a member of the International Advisory Council of the Auroville Foundation. "Obviously, somebody forgot I was also on the previous International Advisory Council," he joked.

"I'm deeply touched to be here," remarked Erwin Laszlo. "Coming here for me is like returning home. In fact, I think I've been on the way to being an Aurovilian all my life. If you Aurovilians can solve some of the problems of living with yourself, with community and with nature and the environment, and you can create a new world here, then there is truly hope for humanity."

"This visit has been a complete change from the previous one," noted Mrs Bilkees

Latif, "when we were looked upon with some suspicion. Now we know each other better and recognize we are all working for the same thing." "Please look upon us as helpers," reiterated Mr. Krishnan, "and may the Divine Grace of Sri Aurobindo and The

Mother always guide us in this task."

At this point, members of the Residents Assembly were invited to express concerns or ask questions. Among the topics raised were:

The urgency to purchase more land: Dr. Karan Singh confirmed that purchasing land for the township was one of the Governing Board's highest priorities.

Concern about the proposed construction of the East Coast Road: "I've written to the Minister expressing my deep concern," noted Dr. Karan Singh. "As planned at present, the road will be an ecological disaster for the whole region. We will do all we can to modify the plan."

A request that the Government makes it possible for those who have dedicated their lives to Auroville to have longer term visas: Dr. Karan Singh noted there was an anomaly

when tourists could get 5 year visas, while most Auroville residents had to renew their residential visas every year. "I will write on behalf of the Auroville Foundation and take the matter up," he promised.

Would it be possible for the residents of

A new foundation of trust?

what aspires to be an international city to be granted dual nationality by the Indian Government? "Having been born in France, and therefore eligible for French citizenship, I'm all in favour of dual—and even multiple—nationality," remarked Dr. Karan Singh. "I will see what I can do."

How can UNESCO help us more?: "There are a number of possibilities," noted Mr. Sharma. "In July, for example, there is a world solar energy meeting, sponsored by UNESCO. Perhaps Auroville could become a site for a pilot project. We would also like you to participate in the Students International Information Olympiad next year—I have already spoken to some people from 'Aurelec' about this. It may also be possible for collaboration to take place in connection with the UNESCO 'Man and Biosphere' programme. But we would like more suggestions from the community about how we can help."

Auroville Development Perspectives

On Auroville's birthday, the Development Group presented a new document, titled *Auroville Development Perspectives*, to the Governing Board and the I.A.C. during their respective meetings with the Working Committee.

This 100-page document has four sections: Section 1 tries to express how Auroville addresses the 'problems of modern humanity'. Section 2 provides the basic data on Auroville that any sponsor requires. Section 3 depicts Auroville's achievements and development perspectives for the next five years in each field of work. Section 4 provides practical information on how people can participate. The Development Group hope that this document will soon be available from CSR Office and from all Auroville International Centres. □

The Significance of Matrimandir

by KARAN SINGH, Chairman,
Auroville Foundation

The completion of the unique inner chamber of Matrimandir in Auroville, with its huge crystal globe and twelve mystic pillars, is an event of deep significance, representing a creative synergy between the many individual and collective efforts that made this possible. The architect Roger Anger and the Matrimandir Committee, the engineer Piero Ciconesi and his colleagues working on the inner chamber, the countless Aurovilians who for two decades have laboured long and hard on this project, the donors from India and abroad have all cooperated to bring about the completions of what the Mother called "the Soul of Auroville". It was, therefore, deeply significant that precisely on the 25th anniversary of the founding of Auroville by the Mother on 28 February 1968, the inner chamber was completed and the blessings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother invoked in the presence of the Aurovilian Community, members of the Governing Board and the International Advisory Committee.

This is not to say that the Matrimandir as a whole is complete. The sphere with its gold-plated petals, the twelve entrances, the subsidiary structures and the gardens will take another few years. It is my hope that the whole project will be ready in all respects by 17 November 1998, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the passing of the Mother. But the existence of the inner chamber itself, as in the

vision of the Mother, makes a decisive event in that the power of the supramental will have a powerful vehicle for its radiance.

The 70 centimeters diameter crystal globe specially fabricated in Germany stands on four lotus symbols of Sri Aurobindo, and is illuminated by a single beam of sunlight which is regulated by a revolving heliostat. The huge chamber, 24 metres in diameter, and 15.20 in height, finished in pure white Italian marble, is entirely bare except for the pillars and some cushions for those genuine and sincere seekers who go there to concentrate after climbing the circular ramp leading to the Inner Chamber. Indeed the walk up the ramp symbolizes the ascent of human consciousness in an upward spiral, culminating in the supramental vision, and the double helix can be seen to stand for the two channels - Ida and Pingala that enclose the fiery Kundalini Shakti, the spiritual power that pervades the universe and is located in potential form at the base of the human spine.

No doubt the Matrimandir will now attract large numbers of people from India and abroad, and one of the problems the community will have to grapple with is how to balance access with undue disturbance. While the Aurovilians would certainly have prime access, it is clear that the Matrimandir is for all humanity and that reasonable access to visitors will have to be allowed. At a deeper level, the question arises as to what exactly the impact of the Matrimandir will be. This of course, is impossible to quantify. One can only rely on the soaring spirituality of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and hope that amidst the discords and conflicts of our times, a new spiritual impetus will be forthcoming which, radiating from Matrimandir, will suffuse our entire planet. □



In the chamber: mounting the crystal on its new stand

Symbol Ray

As of three o'clock on Thursday afternoon, February 18th, dozens of Aurovilians had already started gathering on the ramp leading from Maheshwari pillar to the Chamber, ready to be present for what was to be a historic moment. By the time the keys had been found, some sixty or so Aurovilians settled themselves inside the Chamber. Piero arrived with the gold-plated disk that had been given a final working on in Pondy. The crystal—suspended by pulleys attached to a wheeled scaffolding—was then rolled over and at 4.10 pm carefully lowered into place onto the four newly installed gold-plated sym-

bols of Sri Aurobindo—four months in the making in Germany. The last adjustments made, the protective cushions and plastic that had been covering Mother's marble symbol were then removed, as Piero—23 years after Mother's detailed descriptions of her vision of the Chamber in the *Agenda*—removed the dust cloth from the crystal and the sun's light struck—"symbol of future realizations"—the globe. Reflected upwards, the golden glow of Sri Aurobindo's symbol—in what was for many an unexpected effect—traced its silhouette on the Chamber's roof. Many were to linger on afterwards, caught up in the magic of the moment and its power. □

Consciously Cultivating a Dream

Our chief architect Roger Anger once observed in an interview that the Aurovilians have forgotten to dream. This is perhaps the gloomiest thing that can be said about Aurovilians because it amounts to saying that we have cut ourselves off from the very source of inspiration and the *raison d'être* which brought and kept us here all these years.

If this is true, as perhaps many or most would agree, the reasons ascribed to it, such as the increased role of money in our internal system etc., although quite valid, sound insufficient to me. One single and most important factor that seems to me responsible for this still repairable situation is that we, individually and collectively, have ignored the fact that all dreams, all visions, all bright pictures of a new life and a new world to be needed conscious caring and a loving cultivation. Most of us came here because we subscribed to Mother's dream out of our inmost soul tendencies and idealism, but once we subscribed to her dream, we or the majority of us perhaps didn't care sufficiently to identify ourselves with it, to live with it, to make it a part and substance of our existence and to enrich and strengthen it by frequently and vividly recalling and refreshing it in our memory, by holding it fast and clear before our mind's eye and in our consciousness. Perhaps this is due to a mental sluggishness, or due to our being overcome by the daily round of things, or perhaps we didn't realize how important the role of a well-conceived and consciously cultivated imagination is in the sphere of action and for the health of the inner spirit.

As I try to glance objectively at our collective life on this occasion of our 25th

birthday—which certainly deserves a very happy celebration—it seems to me that one of the crucial conditions for the future of our enterprise is that we, individually and collectively, realise the significance of this important mental and spiritual exercise—IT IS AN EXERCISE—and take a vow that no matter what the material reality, however contradictory or disagreeable the external situation, we shall not let a day pass without spending some time, say 20 minutes a day, without replenishing mentally our vision and understanding of an integrally progressive community, without consciously loving and enriching the dream, without drawing before our mind's eye a still and evermore bright picture of the city of dawn, without going deep and giving our souls, our hearts, our minds a happy contemplative bath of Auroville spirit with the help of beautiful poems and lovely prose, uplifting paintings and music that convey the images of a truer and nobler life of soul and spirit and the new world that we all came seeking here.

What is my dream of Auroville? When I ask myself this question, the first spontaneous image that comes to my mind is that of an inexhaustible flame of energy and inspiration for a true and new life rising high in the sky for all the world to behold and feel uplifted, feel inspired, feel confident about the earth's glorious future. Or, at other times, it is the image of a great and grand orchestra that captures my mind. The unusual thing about the orchestra is that the individual constituent is not compelled to subordinate himself to the grand music of the collectivity but only asked or rather trusted that he shall play his best note that he or she is capable of—and

it will all add up to the grand collective music. The music may not be at a very high level in its origin or inspiration at first and for a long time indeed it may sound quite ordinary or even inferior and there may be plenty of discordant notes because it all corresponds to the level of progress that we, each of us, have realised within us. But the aim, the one uncompromising aim is to lift it as high as possible, yes, to the very psychic origin which is the first great door opening onto a new life and a new world. That is our collective goal, to be worked out in and through the acceptance and realisation of the same goal by each individual in his personal life.

Stretching my imagination further, I dream of a city which is always on a progressive track and by this I mean a constant presence of will in the community to forge ahead on the chosen path untiringly in joy and love of progress, in joy and love of the work to be done within and without, in joy and love of those two great beings whose deep influence upon us has worked like a powerful magnet drawing us to this once barren and insignificant plateau of earth. And since physical culture, as the Mother points out, is the foundation of all progress, I dream of a city where this will be explored to the utmost. There will be an intelligent and enlightened approach to achieve the highest possible perfection of the human body. There will be beauty and rhythm in all the movements of the body and this will quite naturally reflect on the inner spirit. This strong and well-developed physical culture will also extend to embrace in its scope the organization of an attitude towards things that we use. Things will be regarded and treated as conscious entities which feel and respond. There will be beauty, a spiritual-

ly artistic sense in the arrangement of things, in houses, in offices and in public places.

While writing all this, I do not think it necessary to speak of those basic requirements, those most preliminary elements such as procuring enough land, constructing enough dwellings, completing the Centre so dear to most of us or of purposeful and harmonious village relations and a clean and healthy environment or the coming of the right sort of people; because these are so obvious that anyone with a little sense of responsibility will understand that without them there can be no further progress or fuller realisation of Auroville.

I would like to close with the following quote from the Mother.

"I say to you never be dejected and disappointed but let your imagination be always hopeful and joyously plastic to the stress of the higher Truth, so that the latter may find you full of the necessary formations to hold its creative light.

The imagination is like a knife which may be used for good or evil purpose. If you always dwell in the idea and feeling that you are going to be transformed, then you will help the process of the Yoga. If, on the contrary, you give up into dejection and bewail that you are not fit or that you are incapable of realisation, you poison your own being. It is just on account of this very important truth that I am so tirelessly insistent in telling you to let anything happen, but, for heaven's sake, not to get depressed. Live rather in the constant hope and conviction that what we are doing will prove a success. In other words, let your imagination be moulded by your faith in Sri Aurobindo."

from: *The Sunlit Path*, p. 110

An Aurovilian

Auroville 1

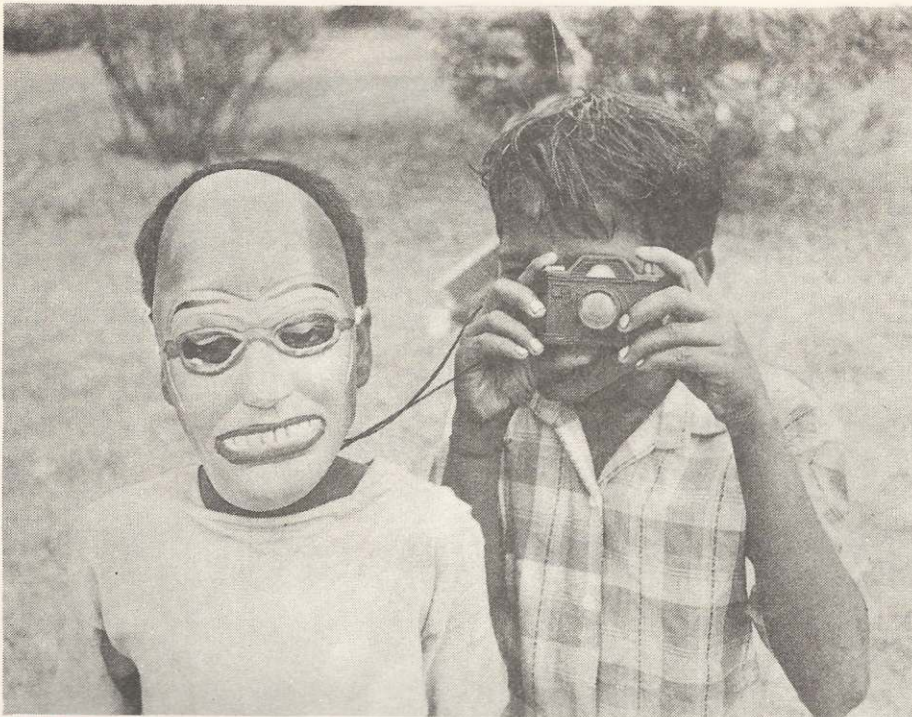


PHOTO SVEN

These photographs, taken by Aurovilian photographers, are part of an exhibition that will be mounted in UNESCO headquarters, Paris, from April 2nd to 9th, in celebration of Auroville's 25th birthday.

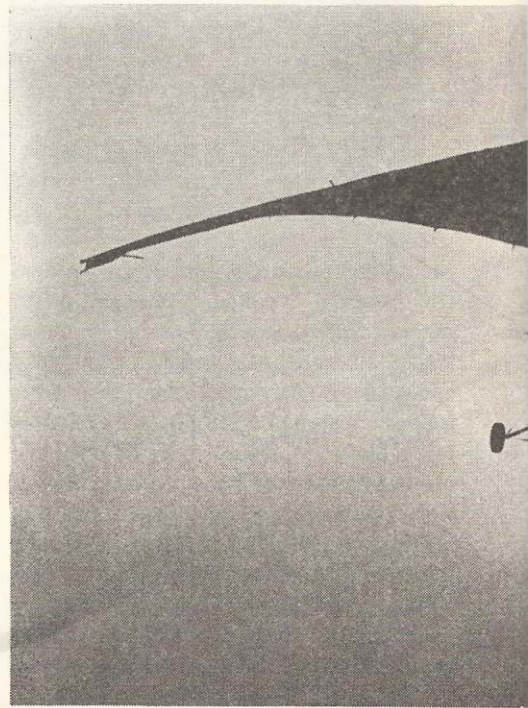


PHOTO JOHN MANDEEN



PHOTO SVEN

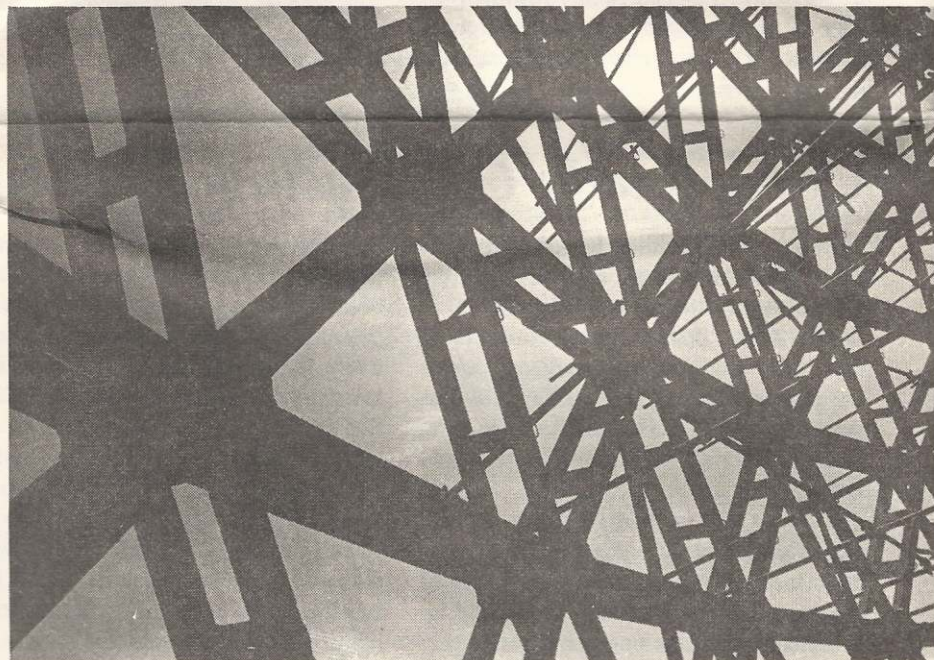


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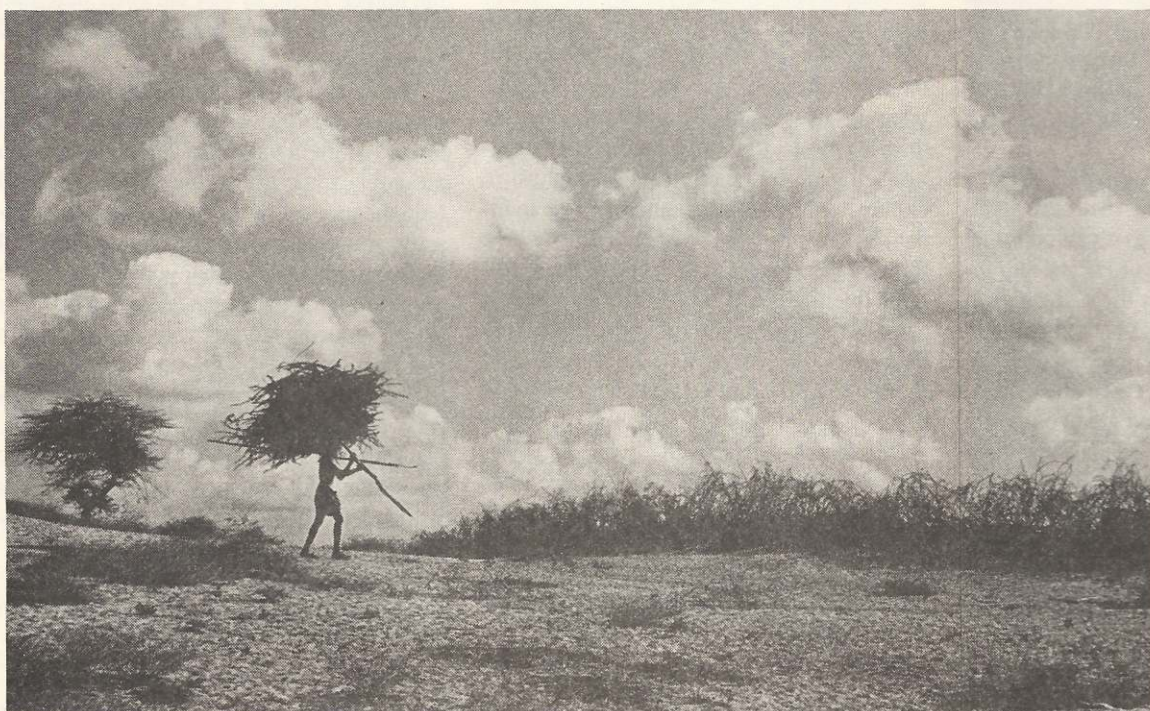


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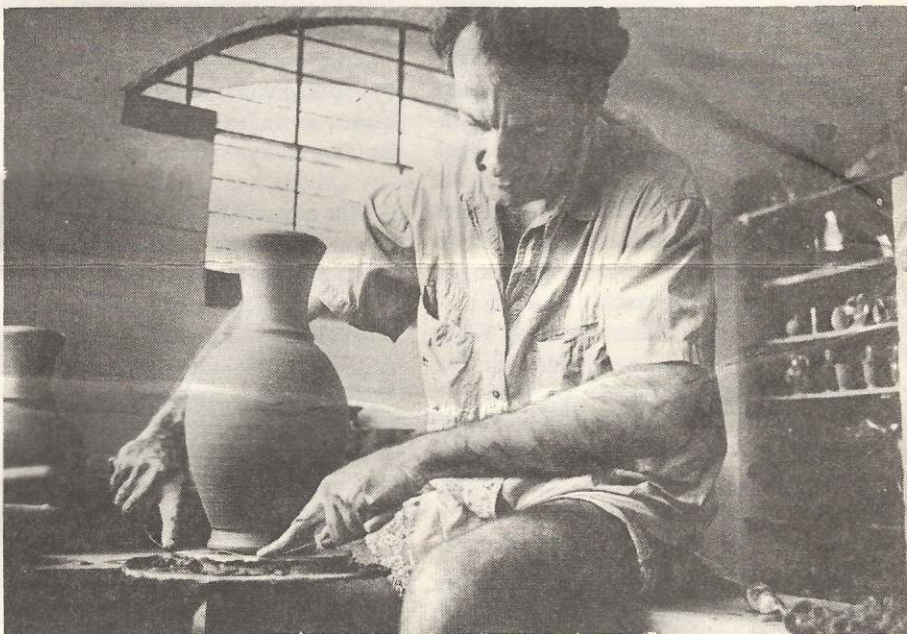


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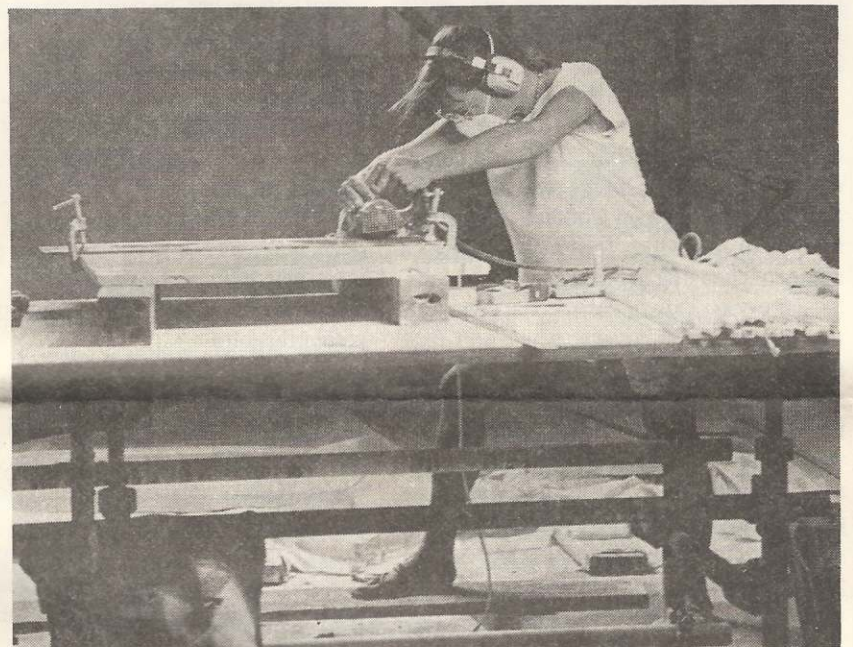


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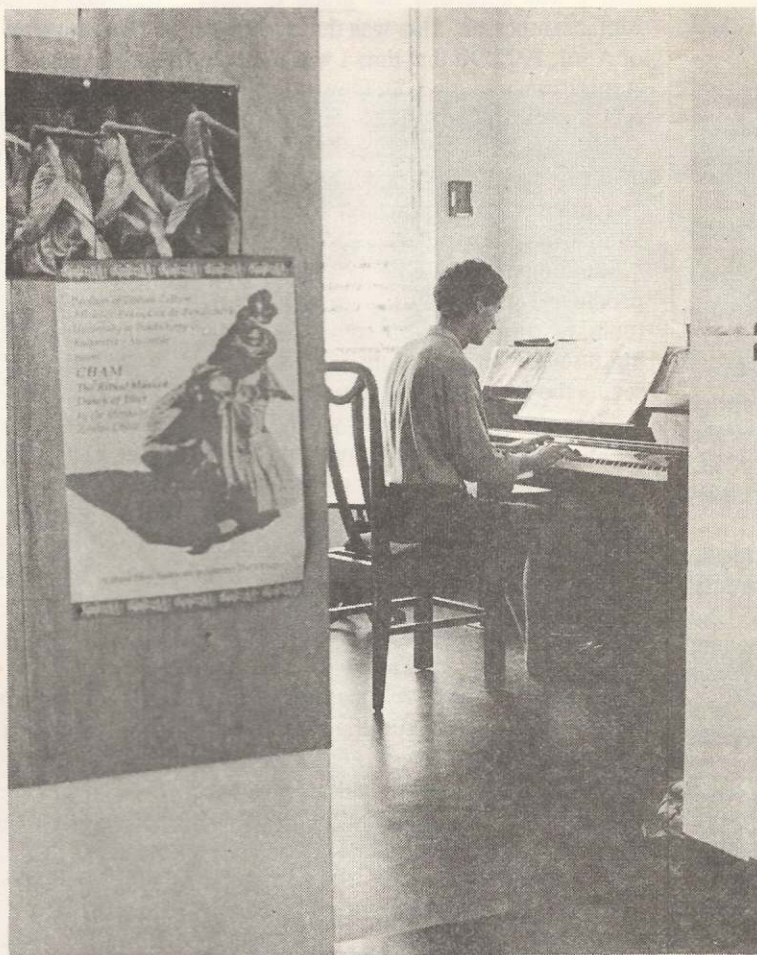


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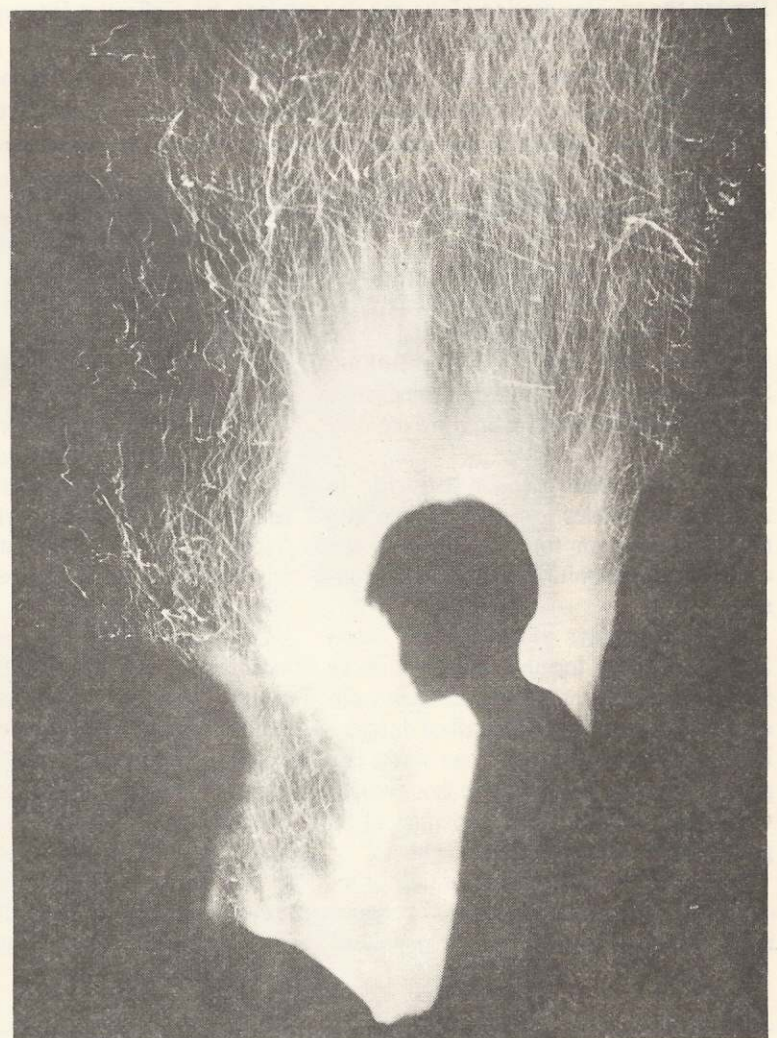


PHOTO IRENO

INTERVIEW

Where Is Auroville's Spirituality?

Where is Auroville's spirituality? How does it show? These are questions that, nowadays, can be frequently heard. Some feel that in Auroville the search for the spirit has subsided, and that amidst its accomplishments on the material plane, Aurovilians have lost their impetus for the realisation of Auroville's deeper reasons of existence. Is this observation correct?

AUROVILLE TODAY spoke with Georges Van Vreckhem, who lives in Shakti near Aspiration. Georges met the Mother for the first time in 1970 and lived in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram from 1970 till 1978, when he moved to Auroville. He has translated the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and works of Sri Aurobindo, The Mother and Satprem into Dutch, and is now a teacher at New Creation.

Georges: When people come here and judge that there is no spirituality in Auroville they do so because they are bound to traditional norms. I think it is the same with many Aurovilians who actually expect traditional things in spirituality. But true spirituality is extremely simple—Sri Aurobindo and Mother have said this hundreds of times. And: "It is not what you do, but the spirit in which you do it, that is important for the integral yoga". But this has not been understood and it is not spectacular. People come here with all kinds of expectations, and some of them, if they do not have the satisfaction of the spiritual show, when they see no gurus around and all such things, feel very much disillusioned. This is, according to me, a lower level of expectation.

In my experience, Sri Aurobindo's yoga is a yoga that only gives its fruits in certain decisive moments of life. Small and big indications may come on the way, but for the rest you have to go on working. And that is the way of Auroville. Yoga in Auroville is a matter of changing, it is not a matter of spectacular mystic experiences. You can have as many experiences as you want, you may think you are a yogi and be a yogi according to traditional teachings, but here you are in the work, we are part of the work and this work, without any doubt, is being done in and through each of us. And people who complain about the absence of spiritual life in Auroville, have to realize also that it is a general principle of yoga, not only of Sri Aurobindo's, that one can only know what

one is oneself. You can only perceive what you have realized yourself.

The work is going on in each of us. And I know that there are many Aurovilians who are consciously attempting to live the teaching of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. This might not be so obvious at a first glance, used as we are to see only the outside with its impossible aspects of the character. But they are there and that is more than sufficient for all the rest.

Sometimes you hear the argument that Sri Aurobindo's writings are so inaccessible...

But nobody has the rich literature we have! If people complain about the intellectual difficulty, let them take the easy things, such as the letters of Sri Aurobindo, the conversations of the Mother, the book *The Mother* of Sri Aurobindo. Every sentence is full, condensed, of the most intense force! With Mother and Sri Aurobindo you can go very deep, and every time you re-read a passage, what was grey or black gets a little more colour the second time, and again little more colour the third.

No, no one has the literature we have. Apart from the easy works, there is Sri Aurobindo's poetry and especially *Savitri*, which in itself would be sufficient for 120 yogas! If you want the intellectual side, there are *The Life Divine* and the *Synthesis of Yoga*. But people who aspire to do Sri Aurobindo's yoga do not necessarily have to read these works. I know people in the Sri Aurobindo

Ashram who have been living most of their practical yoga life basing themselves on two or three sentences of the Mother or Sri Aurobindo.

What has been your experience with talking about Sri Aurobindo and The Mother in school?

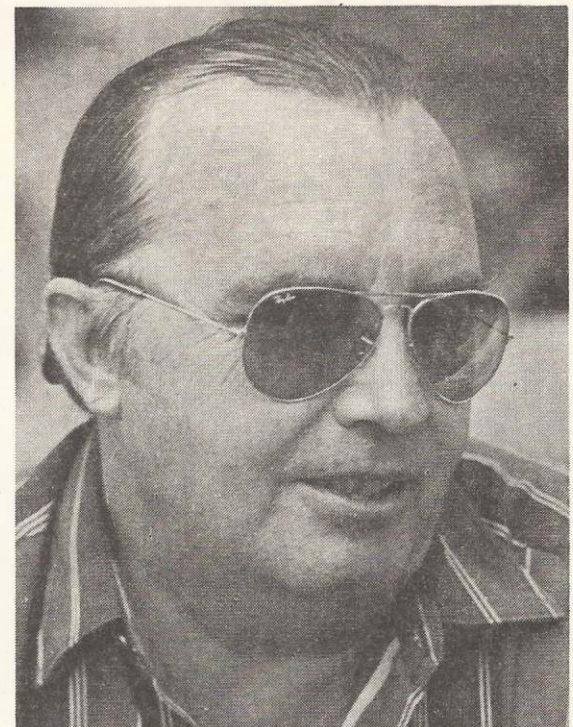
It is not easy to talk about Sri Aurobindo and The Mother without teaching religion. I have been struggling with that for all my years in the Auroville schools. Whenever a new class of students came, I told the life of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. But I saw that I only could go up to a certain point. I was not able to touch the spiritual side, because for me it would come down to teaching religion. For example, when I talk about who Sri Aurobindo and The Mother fundamentally are, I reach a point where I have to stop. Beyond that point I can only answer to individual questions that come from children one at the time in a certain circumstances, not generally before the class. What I miss most in Auroville is some understanding of spiritual and religious history. Many people think that everything that is happening now is new, and there is indeed one thing that is new, that is that Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have shown us the possibility of humanity to evolve into a new race. But the way human beings react has been the same for thousands of years. If one compares the

various and sometimes conflicting psychological attitudes at present in Auroville and in the world with the beginnings of Christianity and Gnosticism, for example, then one discovers that those attitudes, seekings and aspirations were already present there too!

The Force that Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have brought down into the world is working, is very alive. Auroville, said Mother, has been founded and is developed by the Supreme Lord. One of my favourite quotes is what the Mother said about the building of Auroville in September '69:

"The city will be built by what is invisible to you. The people who have to act as instruments will do so despite themselves. They are only puppets in the hands of larger Forces. Nothing depends on human beings—neither the planning, nor the execution. Nothing! That is why one can laugh."

Interview by Carel, January 7th, 1992.



Georges

PHOTO SATVA

Coming home

During the opening session of the one day seminar, "A Collective Introspection", a number of Aurovilians were invited to share something of their inner life—their joys, frustrations and aspirations—with the other Aurovilians present. Here is Tency's contribution, which captures something of the openness and depth with which we related to each other on this memorable occasion.

When a journalist asked Mick Jagger whether he had really changed after performing for 25 years with his rock band The Rolling Stones, he replied: "Who would not change after spending such a long time in a monkey circus?"

More often than not our daily life in Auroville resembles a monkey circus. But the real question for us is: "Have we changed? Is something really happening inside?"

In the early days of the Ashram, when Mother used to sit together with the sadhaks for questions and answers, I was told that in one such session the Mother asked different individuals to define what yoga was. The person who won the first prize that evening was Pavitra, the French disciple, who told the gathering that yoga was "to come home".

I have always remembered this little anecdote because the whole Auroville experience is for me like a "coming home"; a gradual

unfolding to one's real self, something like the road which leads you towards your only worthwhile inner home.

In my life there have been signs which I'm now able to recognize as fortunate happenings towards this goal of reaching home.

Since my early childhood I have always had a strong connection with the Mother figure. At that time it was encapsulated in a religious form, but it was kept alive during many difficult years.

Once, when my teacher was explaining the meaning of mysticism and described mystics as persons who had a direct contact with God, I had an instantaneous flash that I also could be something of a mystic. For I recognized within myself that I had no need to have or use intermediaries to communicate with the 'other side' and that, in fact, I always distrusted 'priests' who played the role of connector between yourself and the Divine. This is something which later kept me out of the

trap of the 'high priest cults', a problem which our community is still struggling with at times.

Another milestone in my life was the fact that I was accorded the grace to meet Mother in person. This was during March or April, 1972. At that time I was living in Aspiration and one Sunday morning I prepared myself to visit Mother. My oversized white kurta was ironed with the only available iron in the community. I was in fact not very well prepared and did not know what to expect.

Standing in line with so many other people and moving slowly up to Mother's room was already something special. Passing through the doors into Her room and seeing the frail old lady was a shock which I soon overcame because a young Indian standing a few places before me had a lively and joyous meeting with Her. She had a marvellous smile during that conversation so that I became more confident. And then suddenly I was standing in front of Her. I handed over the flower to Champaklal and looked at the Mother.

Her look was extremely intense and strong and... no smile appeared on Her face. I had no notion of time and space, and just cycled back to Auroville and slept a whole afternoon. The 'regulars' told me later that this was a normal phenomena, especially for the first time!

This fuel keeps me going, and even today I still wonder why She had to be so serious and severe with me.

Among the many things which help me moving homewards in my daily routine I recognize two support pillars.

The first is my relationship with my family. All the experiences, the joy, anger, grief and victories which take place are shared among and within this basic unit. At times the roof did blow off and pieces had to be recollected everywhere around, but we have managed and learned together that there is no easy highway which you can take to establish a honest, solid and mutually enriching relationship. It's just hard work to be performed along your way.

The second area concerns the people with whom I share my outside work at the Center for Scientific Research. I received and I continue to receive there tremendous opportunities for progressing in all kinds of fields and new situations.

Over the years I lost faith in our community meetings, but when an introspective gathering for the whole community was announced, I took the opportunity in both hands to participate.

There is another thing that I would like to say. It is such a privilege to be here at this time and to be able to participate in this experiment called Auroville. I haven't lost hope and I want to tell you this, loud and clear.

□ Tency

Birthday Week Events

Here we highlight a few out of the many cultural events that happened during the week of February 21st to 28th, on the occasion of Auroville's 25th birthday.

Good Work Fair

(February 19 and 20, Bharat Nivas)

A neatly made-up bed stands on display amidst wall hangings and clay figures, and next to that, around a long table, sits the entire staff of the Auroville Secretariat—typewriters and all. A small group of musicians somewhere on the roof play Tamil-style music with popular western melodies. Colourful banners, a lot of people walking around. Outside one can see a home-made sprinkler set at work, watch earth being pressed into perfectly shaped building blocks and have a complete overview of Auroville's electrical grid in miniature. All this and much more could be seen at the Nella Valai Mela, Tamil for "Good Work Fair", held on 19 and 20 Feb. at Bharat Nivas restaurant, where Auroville workers showed the skills they acquired at Auroville production or handicraft units and services.

Thanks to the fair organizers (Johnny, Dee, Susan, Roger and Sundaranayagam, with help of Miranda) who had started preparing the fair as early as November, the two-day event was a great success. And that's how Center Guesthouse finally could show everybody how to make a bed!

'Amravati'

(February 26, 27, 28, Bharat Nivas)

More than a performance, 'Amravati' (the Eternal City) was an extraordinary experiment in music, dance and theatre that delighted Aurovilians and guests with its humour, sweetness and warmth. The show brought together several talented Auroville dancers, children (from big to tiny), technicians, set and costume designers and an inspired backstage crew.

The story, danced to music composed and recorded by Igor and choreographed by Peter Morin, was about Indra the King of the Gods, who awakens from his sleep in the early morning and "as the day begins anew... we work and play and love and see..."

Peter Morin, who works with Carolyn Carlson's company (Groupe de Recherches Théâtrales de l'Opera de Paris) was inspired by his own spiritual quest. Experimenting in a few intense weeks of almost around-the-clock rehearsal, the

result was a performance of high quality and sheer joy.

A Collective Introspection

(February 22, Pitanga Hall)

During one full day, Auroville as a conscious collective looked within. A seminar at the beginning of the Birthday Celebration Week offered an opportunity for group introspection, and about one hundred Aurovilians attended. Before the seminar, each participant had received a folder of material for an overview assessment of various work areas.

During the introduction session, some people were asked to share their personal connection with their work and what it meant for their inner life. The group then divided into ten small groups to continue the process. The power and depth of the experiences people shared, such as meeting the Mother, and coming to terms with themselves within the Auroville experience, helped many to appreciate more fully their fellow Aurovilians, and connected us once again with our common language of aspiration.

'On the Way to Supermanhood'

reviewed by Bill (February 21- March 31, House of Mother's Agenda)

On the Mother's birthday, February 21, 1993, an exhibition of paintings inspired by texts from Satprem's book *On the Way to Supermanhood* opened in the House of Mother's Agenda. On separate panels, sixteen paintings were displayed along with excerpts from the sixteen chapters of the book and Mother's comments on them.

Mayaura, who worked eight months on the paintings, explained something of her process: "After becoming immersed in each chapter, a vision offered itself to me... It has been a concrete opportunity to link my art to my life and my life to my art."

In Chapter One, "The Mental Fortress", Satprem writes, "Our mental existence is a closed system. Nothing gets into it but what we ourselves put in. This is the cornerstone of the Great Fortress..." You glance from this text into the monochromatic density of the linear labyrinth of the painting and... yes, that's it! and so it goes as you move through

"The Great Process" along "The Sunlit Path" to "The New Consciousness". Each step, each chapter represents such a staggering process that chairs and cushions were fortunately provided so one could collapse under the intensity of the exhibition. A beautiful touch is the relationship between the paintings of "The Greater Self" and "The Sociology of Superman" where there is a progression in the vision of the galaxy design concept of Auroville. "Not a super-city among the millions of buildings of the world, but a listening post for the forces of the future... a first tangible sign of the new world..."

Twenty three years ago Mother commented to Satprem about his book: "It is really the book of tomorrow, it is something like a miracle ... it is magnificent (Mother has tears in her eyes). I feel like telling you thank you..." Has "the book of tomorrow" now become "the book of today"? This "is indeed our intimate conviction and one of the raisons d'être of this exhibition", wrote the group of Aurovilians who organized it.

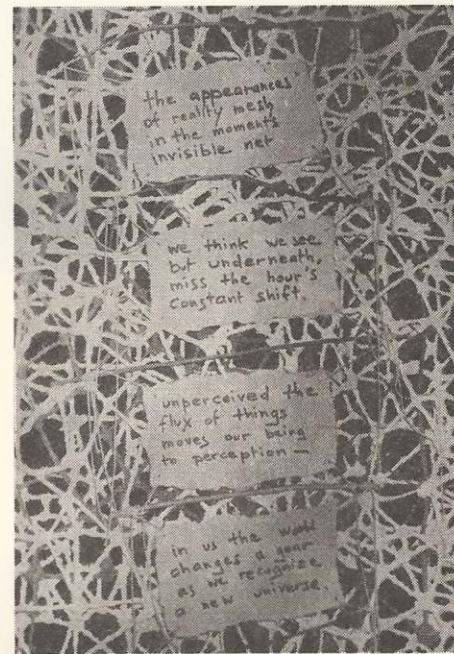
The exhibition will continue till the end of March.

'Resonances'

(February 21-28, CIC, Bharat Nivas)

The round hall at Bharat Nivas which houses the Centre for Indian Culture was for one week used for a high-quality multi-

media exhibition. Three Auroville artists—Pierre, Anu and Holger—managed to create an audio-visual ambience with music, poetry, paintings and sculpture, which blended into a harmonious whole. Pierre's intricate and beautiful 'net-works' were at times a background for Anu's poems and easy chairs were provided to sit, listen to Holger's live music and tune in. □



On Birthdays

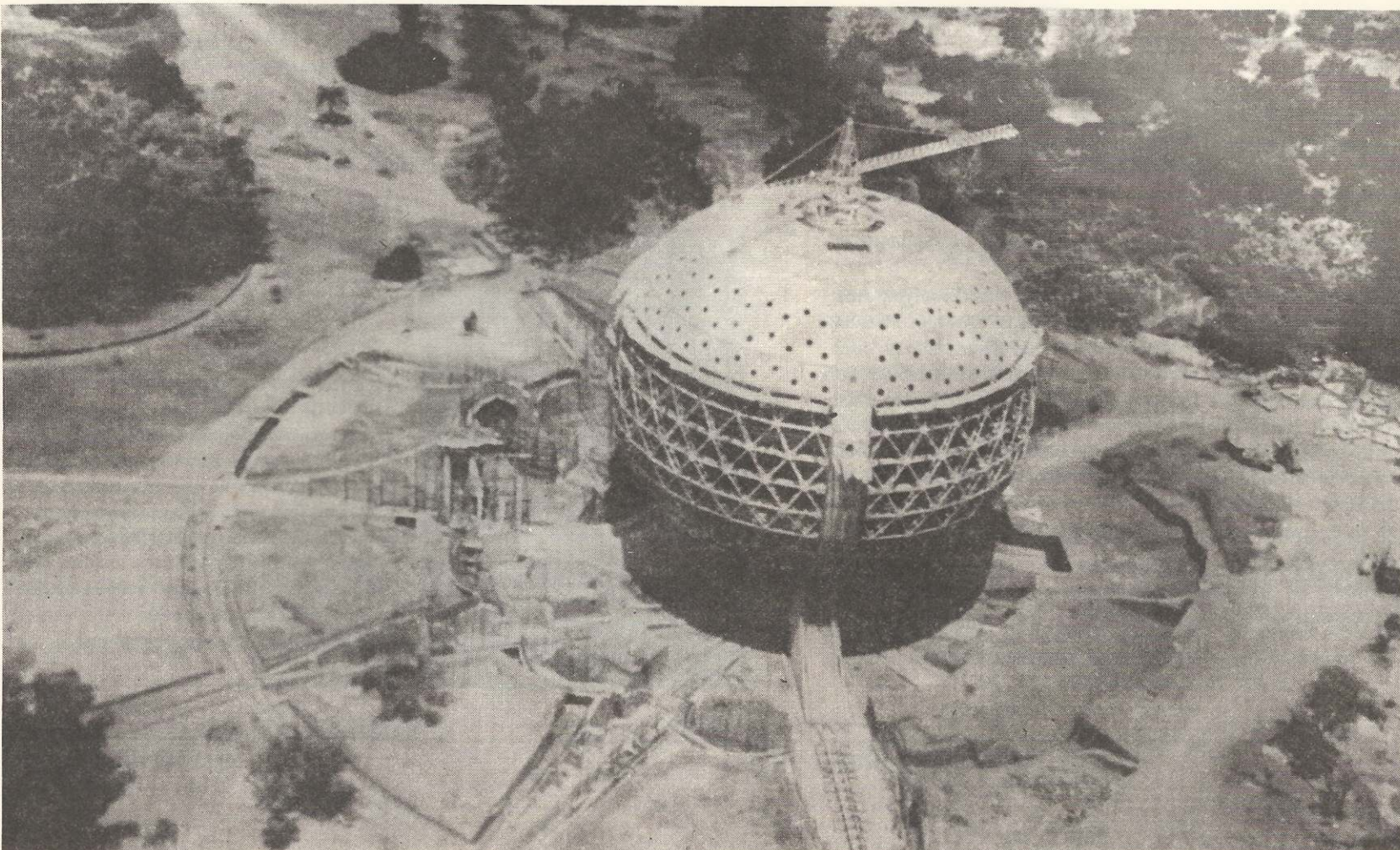
Auroville's 25th birthday, of course, was unlikely to pass off unnoticed. Already months before, rumours were circulating that we would be inundated with VIP's, security personnel and package tour 'crystal tourists'—and a number of Aurovilians immediately made plans to be elsewhere. In fact, the birthday week went off very much like a family affair as Aurovilians and workers emerged from relative obscurity to display their talents, and to open themselves to each other in diverse and unexpected ways. There were even many beautiful moments. So why do I still feel a residue of uneasiness as if, somehow subtly, we missed an opportunity?

Mother herself pointed out that birthdays can be very special opportunities for spiritual progress. Keeping this in mind, I can't help feeling that our attempts to mark the 25 years of its existence were inadequate.

That, somehow, we lack the forms appropriate for honouring what Auroville—the real Auroville—is about.

Perhaps the whole thing is just too big for us—as Ruud Lohman once put it, if we understood the full significance of working on Matrimandir, we'd be unable to knock a nail into a piece of wood there—and so we busy ourselves with celebrating on a more human scale. Fine. But while we—rightly—celebrate what we have achieved—the trees, the infrastructure of services and productive units, experiments in education and appropriate technology etc., and perhaps the discovery last week of what may be a new community spirit—let us not forget to acknowledge the Grace which, for 25 years, has allowed us to go on playing in the spiritual kindergarten, dirtying our knees and scuffing our elbows, without turning us out into the cold...

Alan



Matrimandir,
February
28th, 1993

Book Review

Selected Poems 1989-1993 (Auroville) and Trek

L. Kenneth Fator

Review by Roger

This volume dedicated to the "Warrior of the Worlds" and published privately by subscription in Auroville is a remarkable testament to the sudden re-flowering of the poetic genius of the author—an American who has been living permanently in India since 1969—first as a member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and then from 1973 on in Auroville. Who after having surrendered his desire to write creatively for 23 years, "suddenly and for no explicable reason" began to write again in 1989. Many of the poems in this volume reflect the author's lifelong fascination with the enigma of life's ambiguities and the shadow-play of its masks. A metaphysical realist with a painter's eye for detail, he seeks—with fierce intensity—to see behind the veil and pluck the beauty that is masked. His spirit—at times celebratory, frequently ironic—wrests "words secret animalities" to vehicle retrospective insights and long-retained emotions. An acute attentiveness and skilled work-craft sustains the complex layered quality of these poems; the sheer variety of themes and moods throughout the collection is startling. In *Prelude* he asks himself:

*A single voice with many tongues
Unsung, they'd sing—why not?
Am I, inside, a multitude of one?*

These many voices range from personal bitterness to moments of profound empathy and compassion: whether it is for the stoic dignity of a beggar on Nehru Street, a friend remembered, or the victims of the senselessness and savagery of war and man's cruelty to man. He is moved by the nobility of the human soul that shines through in the midst of suffering. In *The Eye of the Storm*, stunned, he is taken back by the grief-enhanced beauty of the woman with "Nephretite face and pillared neck" glimpsed in the corridors of Miami's Dade County Hospital, her dead child "Hung casually—like a purse—from one crossed arm."

*Her silent tears fell slow as centuries unrestrained,
Distilled in pure crystal drops our universal pain;*

His poetry born of an "overwhelming need to create something beautiful from the ashes of his experience and thereby live joy" is in many ways an act of lyrical redemption where pain becomes transformed through song. In *Tonal Moduli*, an almost Elizabethan meditation on time's passing:

*Past's vestage lingers aged as my face,
Drear chronicler of passion's slow eclipse.
A waning sun that vast horizons burned,
Shadows now the dark side of the moon.*

turns, rising into a vagrant song that "tracks blue butterflies and tears", and soaring ends on a note of canticle. His metaphysical intensity is leavened by a whimsical sense of humour that ranges from the iconoclastic and the self-mocking to the folksy and the bored, with an occasional dose of the ribald thrown in as an added spice. He frequently has the capacity to draw the reader into a poem with the equivalent of an accomplice's wink or an irreverent aside.

Many of his poems, if not directly about nature, draw their imagery from nature as in the elegiac *Memories Fade* or in his recent love poetry. When nature—minutely ob-

served—is the main focus, animals of different sorts acquire an almost totemic quality. Whether it is a cobra safely observed from behind a window pane, the memory of a mountain lion's roar, that inspired terror as a child when hitchhiking in Tennessee, or the proud beauty of a hawk in flight, that he celebrates, and its solitary dying that he grieves.

In *Mayan Vignette*, nature—shadowed by the presence of a soaring eagle and prowling jaguar—becomes a threatening backdrop that accentuates the poems psychotropic atmosphere of sorcery, initiation and sacrifice.

*Through the jungle's heart the river slices deep
Obsidian smooth, like a sacrificial knife.*

The stark frozen frames of *Witness* capture, as empathy turns to barely controlled rage, his stunned disbelief at the gratuitous murder of a bird.

*Revenge while rising
Saw the future clear:
Court room scene—
The defendant is charged
With murdering
A man, because
The man murdered
A bird.*

Much of his poetry is rooted in his memory. In his poems about women the tone is—at times—one of retrospective homage, whether it is Marie to whose arms he returns in *Ad Hoc Surgery*, or the muted tenderness with which he remembers Evelyn dancing her desperate way naked through the New York snow. In *Flower and Bud*—a poem he wanted to write for years—he comes to terms with childhood memories of his Irish father and grandfather, gambling on Saturday nights "kitchened in revelry".

"I've always been an outsider and absolute non-conformist" he says, and *TREK*, his longest poem, divided into three parts: *High-Wire*, *Treadmill* and *Fire-Walk*, is the cornerstone of this autobiographical collection of poetry. It traces his rebel quest that takes him from the New York City of his youth—spent in and out of jail and on the run from the late 40's through the mid-50's—; to Columbia University—where he studied creative writing; and finally India, —where his meeting with the Divine Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry was to prove the most decisive turning point in his life.

In *High-Wire* the tone is both self-mocking and cynical as he looks back on the outlaw persona he not only assiduously cultivated but defiantly lived to the hilt:

*The world of lies was mine to cheat—
I robbed the rich—sometimes, the poor.
From honest men I never stole—
Because I never met one, whole.*

He roams—ever the outsider relying on his wits—an underworld of dread, of guns and drugs and lust, whose atmosphere he effectively recreates and renders all the more vivid by a commanding use of slang. He stalks, struts his way at night, against a backdrop of theatres and gilded bars and grills, through West Side city streets, peopled with a Villonesque cast of characters: junkies, thieves, cops and whores. "Until the day a heist 'went wrong'."

Released from jail five years later, a reversal occurs in *Fire-Walk*. The temptations of the city of his youth attract, but can no longer

satisfy, nor quench his spirit's thirst. "Unknown, another quest began." He diverts his pent-up rage and roams "In self-blunted fang and claw" courts of academe whose halls of "mind-mauled mystery" cannot hold him long. Inwardly impelled his journey drives him on until:

*Far to the East, I shared a look that probed
The wasted space behind my eyes;
(the light seemed strobed)
Visioned Her Smile that cornered Eternity.*

Heart recaptured by a flame:
"Her Sovereign Smile resolved all doubt"
he kneels absolved, at journey's end—in surrendered irony.

The style of Kenneth's most recent poetry has become more simple and its effect more direct. In the exquisite *Night-Bird* for example he reflects on a woman's moonlit beauty:

*In the shadow's waterfall
I see her standing there,
and wonder
if it is the poets
who prevent
apocalypse;
while the moonlight bathes
her hair.*

These poems I feel are a document of his personal change and chart his journey's course. They are also personal testaments of his faith, a ship-wrecked survivor's hymns to Her whose Grace moves all.

The book is available from the author, Certitude, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, India.

EARTH SINGING

*Far, far—do those beckoning beacons flare,
Like buoys marking channel'd shoals at night.
Rafted on the universal sea, I float;
Shipwrecked by galactic storms, I dream
A golden ball that metaphors My Sun.
Its crystallized rays harboring The One
Indivisible in resplendent light;
Beaming clear—streaming here and not remote.*

*My dream is of an ocean'd thirst Supreme;
Sun-fevered, I drink my salted tears
While crested buoyant on the tidal swell,
Surging, swift, I plunge on and race the stars.
In shadow of their flaming course, dark knells
The dawn triumphant in the sky afar.*

L. Kenneth Fator



DRAWING BY MARTI

Brief News

College

For about two months, between 4 and 6 pm at Center field, many people flocked towards what used to be the Joy Workshop, from where crochet lampshades were once exported all over the world. Now there is a sign saying COLLEGE, and following it you will come to a banner saying 'Auroville Center for Development Studies'. Janet and Philip have started what looks like a new phase in their own as well as Auroville's life, by transforming their living and working space into what eventually is meant to become a real college. The first trial course started on the 8th of February with the opening of the 'Coffeshop' and on the 15th with lectures held every evening from 5 to 6 pm. It ended in the first week of March. The trial course was presented as an opportunity for everyone to contribute to the design of the real course in development studies, starting on August 15th. Talks were mostly given by Aurovilians, on topics ranging from health and the body to Tamil culture and from 'Why Auroville' to 'Reflections on a Shakespearean Echo in Savitri'—sometimes in a lighter humorous vein. All talks were held in both English and Tamil (a translator had to be provided by the lecturer), and the keet-roofed lecture hall was usually filled with a happy mix of people; especially the non-English speaking Tamils were a very responsive and grateful audience—for quite a few of them it was a unique chance to learn more about Auroville.

The New Auroville Directory

The first Auroville Information Directory was published in December, 1991, and was well received. A new, expanded Directory—featuring a vastly improved map, a new section on construction, and updated information on all aspects of the community's activities—has now been published by the Auroville Communication Centre. The Directory is available at both Boutiques d'Auroville, price Rs 75, or by post; India Rs 85, abroad Rs 150 (\$5 or equivalent) should be sent to the Auroville Communication Centre, CSR Office, Auroshilpam, Auroville 605101. Cheques should be made out to 'Auroville Fund', specifying 'Auroville Directory'.

A Rare Visit

The 10th February was a historic day for the British in Auroville as it marked the first visit to Auroville in 25 years of the British High Commissioner and the Deputy High Commissioner. They promised to improve the contact with the British Aurovilians in the future—and assured them that they will not have to wait another 25 years for their next visit.

House for the Secretary

The Secretary to the Auroville Foundation, Mr. L.K. Tripathy, moved into his new residence on February 28th, after having camped for about a year in a small room in Aurobrindavan. The Secretary's residence was built using the abandoned structure opposite Bharat Nivas, which was originally intended for a telephone exchange.

Poems of Japan

A small booklet, titled *Black pines, white waves*, appeared recently on the shelf reserved for various Auroville publications at 'Pour Tous'. It contains simple and beautiful poems, written by Marti after a voyage to Japan in 1990. It is a 'Shanta' publication. 'Shanta' has also produced a series of environmental education booklets, which have been translated into several languages.

A Journey to the West

Krishna (Major General K.K.Tewari) and Kamala (Dr K.Tewari) have lived in Auroville for more than sixteen years and recently made their first trip to the West to visit their youngest daughter, Shubha, who is finishing her doctorate in physics at the University of California in Los Angeles, USA. Back in Auroville, they invited people from the community one afternoon and talked about their experiences in America and Europe. Here are a few excerpts selected by Bill.

Originally we had planned to visit only the USA and the UK, but as we were invited we visited Canada and France too. At every place we visited, we became involved in Auroville affairs; we met friends of Auroville, old Aurovilians and people who were interested to know more about Auroville. We were also invited to attend Auroville International meetings in US and France and we visited Sri Aurobindo centres at a couple of places in the US and Canada. We were to experience the warmth of feelings of some friends living outside Auroville. Monique came in her car all the way from Canada to Boston and drove us to Montreal through the lovely countryside. In England, 86 year old Joy Calvert drove her car 100 miles and met us in Cambridge, and then drove us to her and Edith's old place, Boytons, which has now been sold.

Later, we were both waiting to catch a train at the crowded Victoria railway station in London, perhaps looking a bit lost, when someone tapped my shoulder from behind. What a warm feeling it was to meet Ivar, a brother Aurovilian, amongst the hundreds of strangers. He really touched our hearts not only by seeing us into our train but running off just before the train left to fetch us two packets of sweet French bread to 'munch on the way' as he put it.

We were made so comfortable during our stay in Montreal with Francine Mineau. We were shown around and were also invited to attend a meeting in Louise's house where we met a number of friends—Dutch Consul Robert and his wife Gap, Georges Kalifa, Pierre Ladouceur, Jeevan (Roger) and others.

In New York, we met so many old friends: Roger Toll, Bill and Louise Greaves, Auro Luigi, Mirriam (and her husband, Garry), Anie Nunnally, Sam and Eric at Matagiri, Rudy Phillips and Tom O'Brien and Julian Lines. In Washington, we met David Wickenden and Patricia's parents, Ann and Earl Greer, at a lunch to which they had invited us.

In Colorado, our biggest regret was that we could not go up to Baccato to meet Seyril, but our time was taken up very fruitfully attending the ailing Muriel Spanier and her husband Joseph. Kamala prescribed homeopathic medicines for Muriel and in the

four days we were there we could see an appreciable improvement in Muriel's condition. Joe and Muriel presented us with some very useful papers for the Archives. We stayed in Boulder with Simone and Larry Tapper who made us so welcome and comfortable.

In California we stayed in Los Angeles with our daughter and visited Disneyland, Wild Life Park and the Grand Canyon. We were invited to the Auroville International U.S.A. meeting at Mt. Madonna. There, on the first day I was asked to clarify doubts and questions about the Auroville Foundation. I gave my views as follows:

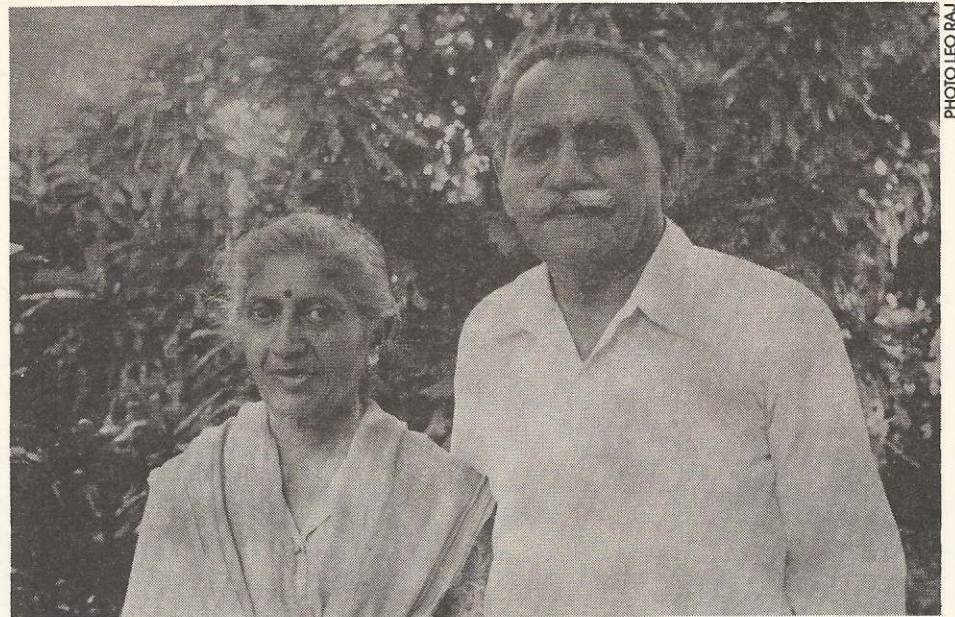
a. An autonomous body called the Auroville Foundation was created by an Act of Parliament of India to give Auroville a status independent of direct government control. Under the old Act of 1980 (which lasted eight years), the Central Government had temporarily taken over the management to free Auroville from the Sri Aurobindo Society at Auroville's own request. When this Act lapsed, the management had to be put on a sound basis so that the Society could not come back (as they were claiming) and they could not go to court against the Act.

b. Records of the last ten years or so of the Central Government involvement in Auroville had not resulted in any interference in the internal working and Auroville has had complete freedom in its activities.

c. Some doubts regarding imposition of Government control, which in my view were entirely imaginary and anticipatory, were expressed by one of the commercial units. This had resulted in confusing a number of Aurovilians.

d. The past few months' record of the functioning of the Auroville Foundation and its Governing Board (headed by Dr Karan Singh, who was until recently India's Ambassador in the US) with a senior Officer as the Secretary had already produced results. Just one example was the acquisition by outright purchase of land around Matrimandir for which efforts by Auroville had failed to produce results after so many years.

d. To expect and seek a special status for Auroville, which in democratic India can only be granted by the Parliament, I believe we have to prove our bonafides and not take the Government to court against the Act, as



Krishna and Kamala Tewari

one of the commercial units had done. We have to prove our worthiness for a special status.

Kamala had a unique experience at every place we went to, because a vast majority of people we met are deeply interested in her holistic approach to treatment, incorporating all available systems of medicine. Her own special field (even though she is an allopath and a gynaecologist) of homeopathy was welcomed everywhere, inviting a lot of patients.

We were invited to the East West Centre in Los Angeles and the Sri Aurobindo centre just outside near Pomona. These centres have been connected with the Ashram and Sri Aurobindo Society and obviously had some reservations about Auroville. I was asked to give a talk about life in Auroville at the East West Centre. While the talk part was restricted to just one sentence to say that life was very exciting, challenging and interesting, the rest of the time was spent on answering questions.

In Paris, we attended the annual meeting of the French Association held in Alain and Hashi's house where we stayed also. A considerable quantity of archive material (photographs and other papers and publications) was offered by Alain G. and it is being sent to Auroville in small bundles by hand of those coming here.

I called on Jeanine (Mother's grand daughter) for archive papers among her father, M. André Morriset's collections. She agreed: firstly, to let Alain G. go through the collection of papers with her in Paris and pick out what was required and secondly, to write to the Ashram trustees to permit me to look for suitable archive material from among M. André's papers in his office room in Pondicherry. These will then be kept in the Auroville Archives.

I was also invited in New York to give a talk to a group of representatives from different states who has assembled to discuss the questions relating to the re-settlement of 1000 Tibetan immigrants. One remark I made while describing my experiences as a prisoner of war in Tibet was as follows: "At the end of this 20th century we were witnessing the systematic destruction of an ancient and unique civilization which has nothing in common with that of China and even of India. Are we going to remain silent spectators to this?"

An impression on reaching the US was that there are more cars than people. Complete indifference towards India and its problems is another fact in the US and we were really starved for news about India.

It has been a most enriching, powerful and rejuvenating experience for both of us. Not only did we remain fit throughout, in spite of our rigorous schedule of travel, but we have come back fitter. The bracing cold climate of the West seems to generate energy and enthusiasm.

We met and saw numerous friends of Auroville working for Auroville outside and felt their dedication, deep feelings and concern and Auroville's future. It comes as a powerful feeling that friends of Auroville outside are as important and are perhaps contributing more than we imagine. In Auroville we are too involved in the day to day problems (and also our 'stupidities') to appreciate at times the role being played by those who may not have chosen to live here; they do carry an unbiased view without the confusion which individual interactions and personality clashes cause in Auroville to cloud our thinking sometimes. There is need for a deeper interaction with friends outside.

❖How To Subscribe❖

The contribution for the next 12 issues of Auroville Today in India is Rs. 150, for other countries Rs. 750, Can.\$ 30, French F. 150, DM 47, It.Lira 35,500, D.Gl. 52, US \$ 25, U.K.\$ 14. This includes the postage by airmail. Please send your contribution (or your supporting contribution of double the amount) either to the Auroville International centre in your country (add 10% for admin. and bank charges) or directly to Auroville Today, CSR Office, Auroville 605101. Cheques should be made payable to Auroville Fund, specifying: 'Contribution for Auroville Today'. You will receive the issues directly from Auroville. Personal cheques are preferred to bank cheques. Please do not send postal money orders. Subscribers will receive a reminder when their subscription is about to expire.

Addresses of Auroville International centres:

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50 issues young

"You'll never make it beyond two issues", was the stimulating response we received after publishing our first issue of AUROVILLE TODAY in November 1988. Today you are reading the 49th/50th issue, perhaps to your amazement, certainly to the amazement of our critics, and also to some extent to our own. The list of things that can go wrong before an issue reaches you is astoundingly long. Apart from the normal hardships such as no printing ink, strikes, developer finished, film mislaid, computer breakdown etc, we have those exotic ones like termites in the paper and cockroaches in the laser printer.

All this has tested our endurance, tempered the team, and made us firm in our resolve to keep giving you information on Auroville. We hope you will continue your support and renew your subscription promptly when you receive the renewal form. And, have you considered a gift subscription for a friend? — *The editorial team*

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, Bill, Annemarie, Alan. Typesetting on computer: Annemarie.

AUROVILLE TODAY

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In this issue:
The 25th birthday of Auroville; reflections and images; visit of the International
Advisory Council; travelogue; a goodbye from Carlos; etc.

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ANKE AND MICHAEL
BRACE
AUROVILLE



DRAWING BY AMBALAL (SWITZERLAND)

'I haven't yet heard your unifying spiritual voice'

Ram Dass was born Richard Alpert in Boston, U.S.A. While teaching psychology at Harvard in the early 1960's, he and his colleague, Timothy Leary, became widely known for their research programme that employed psychedelic drugs to alter states of consciousness. In 1967, he came to India where he met his guru, Neem Karoli Baba, who renamed him Ram Dass. For many years, he has been writing and lecturing around the world on liberation through service. (His books include *Be Here Now* and *Grist for the Mill*.) His Seva Foundation sponsors many projects in the Third World to alleviate suffering.

At the end of December, Ram Dass visited Auroville and was given an intensive one day introduction to the community. Later, he gave a talk to a group of Aurovilians. "I'm just a rent-a-mouth!" he began, as he reminded them that his wisdom was no greater than theirs—"I just say it better. And don't get hung up on my language. I haven't had time to learn yours."

Here are some of the main points of his talk, as recorded informally by Alan and Mauna.

Q: What are your impressions of Auroville?

I was blown away by the trees—I want to honour what Auroville has done in reclaiming the land—and by the size of this experiment. It has all the levels; from the bottom up, the social, economic and political levels, and from the top down, the spiritual level.

Western culture is focussed upon personal freedom, whereas India is focussed upon *dharma*—upon growing through playing one's part in the game. In Auroville, I see a culture that is being built upon the Western sense of the individual; in other words, where the attempt is to ~~surrender~~ the ego through the choice of the ego. This is very different from the Indian way.

It is very rare that a community which is based upon so much individualism succeeds. Usually, everybody goes for the truth at first, but, after a while, everybody pulls back and only wants the truth on Saturday night. To live in an experiment like this is like inviting the Kali aspect of Mother (the destroying aspect which cuts ruthlessly through falsehoods) to live with you all the time. It's a matter of keeping as close to the fire as possible so that the ego is being burned up all the time. But there are millions of ways to hide, in righteousness etc., instead of having your personality burned up at the stake.

The typical spiritual path to deal with the melodrama of the world is to renounce it until one is strong enough to be in it. In Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical dynamism you stay in the world while attempting to transform it. It's brilliant, but it's a profound and difficult path, because the toxicity of the market-place is very high, and it's so easy to fall asleep in the drama of life. For, to the extent to which you put each other to sleep—through relationships, work etc. - you've lost it!

Q: What do you see as the shadow sides of Auroville?

One problem seems to be that everybody here is very attached to their own opinion about reality, whereas, as one text puts it, "The great Way is not difficult when you have no opinions".

Also, I sense that you are leading parallel rather than interactive lives - that you are into community but not communal living, and I wonder if the power of the contract between

you is strong enough to overcome the divisiveness of your personal lives.

I haven't yet heard your unifying spiritual voice. Do you meditate together, or have other rituals that keep you together spiritually? No? But that's off the wall! You have to have a unifying practice. Potentially, you have a great support system in each other. Get together, hear what each person is doing, what struggles you are going through. Ask yourselves, 'How much did I develop the witness consciousness today? How conscious was I? What closed my heart today?' Meet not as foresters etc. but as people seeking enlightenment.

I think, however, that the Matrimandir is so strong, so much larger than life,—it's the vision of a very high soul—that the community will eventually be deeply focussed around it, and that the people staying here will all have a spiritual practice related to it. Another thing, you can become so enamoured of the 'new' that you lose the worth of the 'old'. It hurts me, for example, that Auroville and the Ashram don't respect each other's trip. This 'us' and 'them' thinking is definitely 'shadow' thinking. And then there are all these Aurovilians leaving Auroville every Spring. While I understand the reasons for stepping out, to have so many 'part-time yogis' must weaken your structure.

I have a real sense of a transition game here. Your joy, as Aurovilians, will have to be in the transition - as process people rather than product people - because the flowering of this place will probably be several generations down the line.

The vision of Sri Aurobindo is a brilliant construct designed to relieve suffering, and that's the key question we all need to ask ourselves - Is my life relieving suffering? We need to make, as Gandhi put it, our lives our message.

As for me, I want to search for truth, to have my heart open for truth. It is the overriding force in my life. It feeds me and inspires me immensely to be in the world of service. I invite you to join me in this.

There are very few expressions on earth at present that have Auroville's level of aspiration. The challenge will be to keep it up. It's an incredible game that you're playing, and you have all my emotional support.



"Now I'll have to keep coming back!": Ram Dass planting a tree in Auroville