

AUROVILLE TODAY

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"The highest aim of the aesthetic being is to find the Divine through beauty; the highest art is that which by an inspired use of significant and interpretative form unseals the door of the spirit." (Sri Aurobindo)

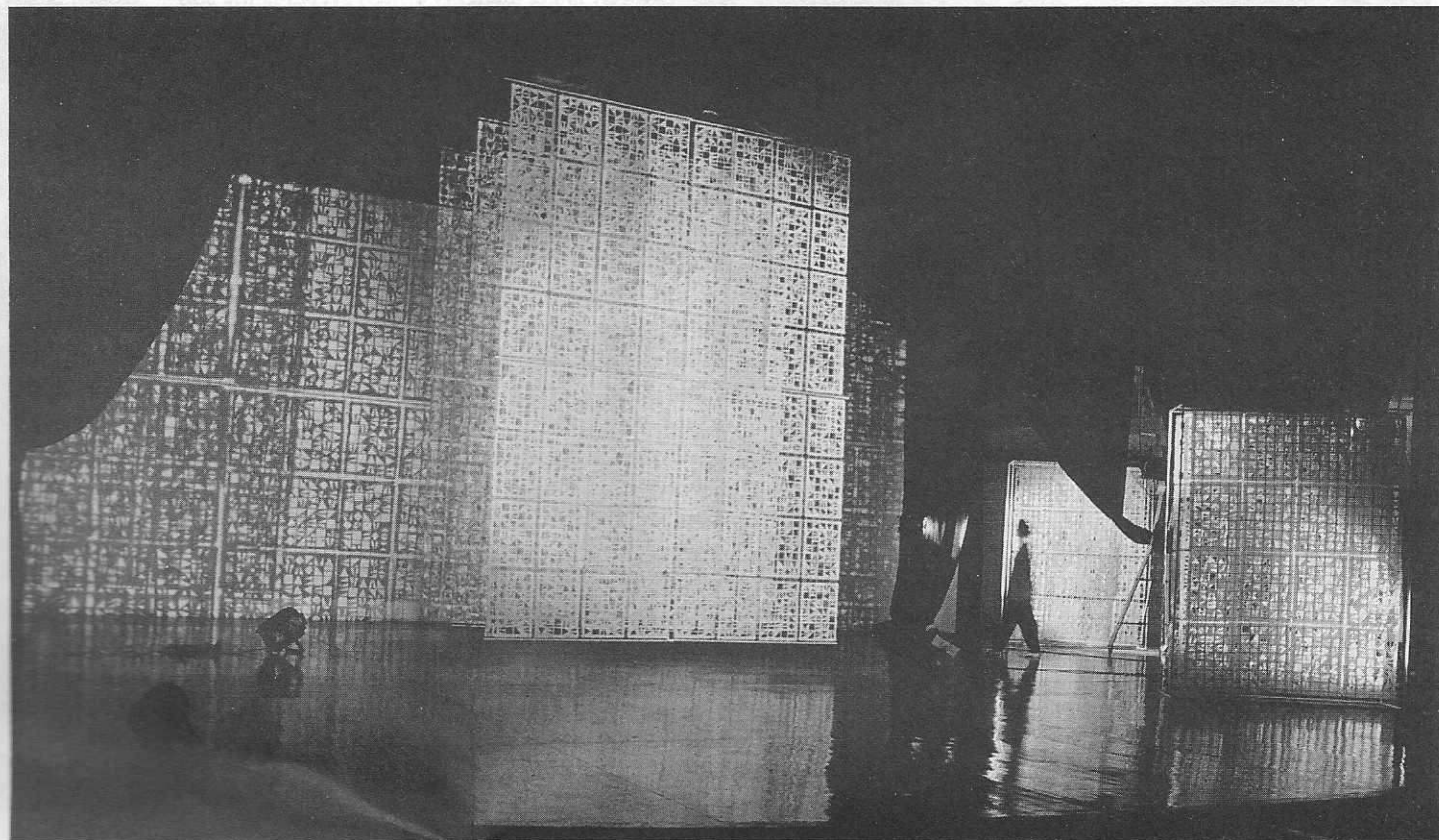
Today, there is a tremendous increase of cultural activities in Auroville. Serious creative research is going on in all fields: writing, photography, dance, theatre, sculpture, painting, music, pottery, cinema.

Such a situation gives rise to fundamental questions: What is the true role of Art? How can we create funds and support systems to encourage research and development of innovative art projects? What could we do to reduce the "artistic deficit" so that our artistic concerns become an economic priority? How can we keep in touch with artistic developments elsewhere? On the next page you will find some responses to these questions.

On this page, Aurovilian artist Pierre Legrand writes about his latest work, *Light Matter*, a multi-media presentation which will be exhibited in the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium in mid-February.

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Light Matter—a multimedia installation. Photo: Jean-Michel

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"What is your best painting?"
"The next one," replied Picasso.

One could not better summarise the thirst, the expectations or speed inherent in any true creative process. I am not Picasso, but the next work has been luring me since I found a certain method around 1989. Drawing, sculptures and paintings have been produced at an enormous rate, to become obsolete once finished. A work of art done in full energy is like a pointer towards the direction of our quest. We cannot rest until we reach—or at least get closer to—the goal fixed for ourselves.

One unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That the Gods reach not for it progresses ever in front. That/which standing passes beyond others as they run.

It is that which pulls us, it is that which remains hopelessly in front, and to which we have to ultimately give ourselves. In the course of the quest we sometimes develop 'methods', 'techniques', but at one point we realise that all these are veils between us and the goal and have to be cast aside. This year was a process to relinquish all personal and known techniques and theories. Something deeper was at work and I had to simplify—to go to the essence, to reach again the decisive experience which triggered this adventure 15 years ago. Now my pieces are so simple that anybody can do them, even a child. But only now they begin to respond in the same way as the experience which had

by Pierre Legrand

once captured the being on a cellular level.

Its expression has become multimedia—not by assembling different art media to create an aesthetic synergy—but a natural co-relation which occurred by relating to the same source of experience, structurally or otherwise. In a sense the Resonance expo of '93 had been a first attempt towards this, when Holger deciphered and manipulated a structural code based on my work, in musical terms. And, just like this time, the structure was set to the poems of Anu.

When work began on *Light Matter* I invited some Aurovilian musicians, particularly Holger, to collaborate again. As things became simpler and simpler—pure white paper and thread, with no other influence on the structure except light—I began to wonder if it would not be better to just leave it in silence? Holger took one look at it and said, "But you need music to hear the silence." That set it off again. But as circumstances would have it, this time Holger was too busy. Martin who pitched in at a very crucial point, to set the first structural code in gear, got also very busy. At this point Stefano offered to give me some music lessons, concerned by my appalling lack of knowledge in the field.

We had one serious lesson.

It was like a door opening to a marvelous world, with immense possibilities in terms of sounds, the natural laws of its

structures and the movement of these structures.

We never went beyond the second lesson.

As we spoke of the work I was trying to do with Martin, Stefano got interested and offered his help, time, energy and computer to try. Before I knew it I was making notations (of my own kind) and Stefano with incredible patience and openness was steering his mouse to many landscapes of sound, which I tried to visualise... It was at the same time a wonderful yet a very humbling experience—to begin to understand the complexities that lay ahead and of all that had already been done before. We also had to fit our trials according to the possibilities and limitations of the machine we were working with.

Many of these trials were instantly rejected. Some were interesting and musically very sound—but they were not what I was hoping to hear. Stefano found colourful titles for some of these: Punnuswamy 2000 (based on the sound of telephone rings) or One Note Sambar etc. The pieces which will be heard during the expo are a first approximation of soundscapes which hope to energise or help us get in touch with the experience *Light Matter* wishes to achieve. These explorations should not be regarded as music per se but sound fields that go specifically with the installation.

But again, if asked which track I prefer, I can only say the next one...

In the present world, where the momentum of events and experiences have to be sustained very fast and responded to immediately, what is the place of art? This is a question which must sooner or later confront any contemporary artist. Is it merely a decorative standby, an occasional thought-provoking appendage or programme, at which a nation or a people glances in after thought? Or does art, if it is to fulfil its true role, have a responsibility?

Artistic events occur and are sustained because they have been pre-nurtured underground—by the actions of

DOES ART HAVE A PLACE?

by Anu

consciousness on the innerscape. The influence repeats itself outside, through various expressions of art. Art is a catalyst that can train our vision to become spontaneous with the present. Through it, culture constantly evolves from its static position of accumulated ideas and traditions, by opening up its frontline with the future; for *there are not only aesthetic values, but life values and mind values that enter into Art*. Art is the alchemy which prepares the spirit for change through many tangible readings of intangible things.

This is art's unknown signature of influence, with which it may instruct the spirit. It is the fishing net that the artist spreads open to collect visions. With rare luck, he collects consciousness, if he has really pushed his own frontier. This is moulded into his work, then given out—so that it may permeate the collective imagina-

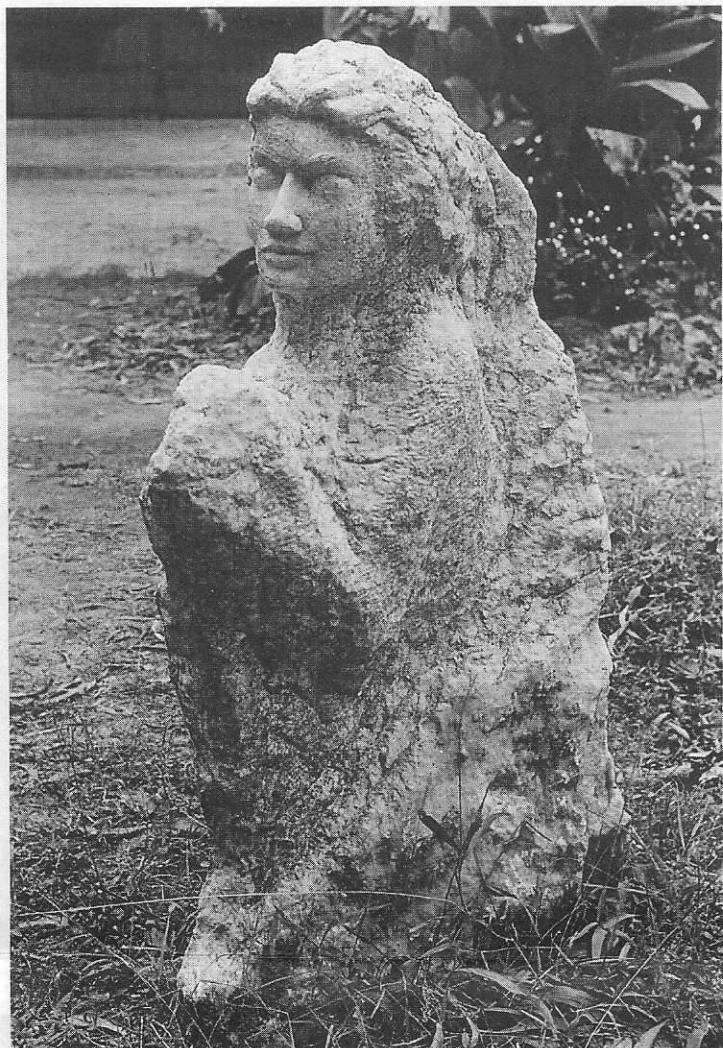
"Between them music, art and poetry are a perfect education for the soul; they make and keep its movements purified, self-controlled, deep and harmonious." (Sri Aurobindo)

tion, get under the skin of a society's vision of life and of itself. In this sense, true art always remains spiritual, always avant-garde. It is that which actively pushes at the frontier, so that gradually things can collapse, transmute, be built or just happen.

Of course all along one has been speaking in ideal terms, Art with a capital A. The principles mentioned above can be more readily accepted when art will begin to fulfill its real role. Until then, in the present world, it will only come "after". The concerns of the world are still very shallow, in spite of its hallowed global status. Even the Divine comes after, so who can complain? The present world is political and is governed by commerce, in order to consolidate certain aspects of the "globalisation". An apt reflection of this is Ganesha, the common spiritual token easily found on the Indian canvas.

The future will be inherently artistic if it is ruled by the Consciousness. For Sri Aurobindo, the Rishi was not just a seer, he was a poet, and the most innate and complete artist. *The discipline of Art has as its centre the same principle of Yoga. In both you have to learn to see and feel something that is beyond the ordinary vision and feeling; to go within and from there bring out deeper things. A work of art, a word of art, a sound or movement of art, was something that could train the spirit. In ancient times the training of the spirit was directly aimed at those who governed. In the future it can apply to society as a whole for between them music, art and poetry are perfect education for the soul; they keep its movements purified, self-controlled, deep and harmonious.*

Those who learn to recognise themselves as the material and visionary alchemists of the Time-Spirit and of the Consciousness, and train themselves to become such, are the artists. No nation or people in our time has this objective clearly before them anymore. So it must be created for the future and naturally become the starting point for art in Auroville. For art is the way a nation or a people mature. It reflects the distance of its vision and becomes the map of its self-knowledge.



Sculpture by Rolf, at Kalabhami

Res Artis: Linking up with the world

Res Artis, the International Arts Exchange Programme, helps us to be in touch with all that is happening in the contemporary fields of art. "We are an affiliated member of this international programme," says Tapas, the indefatigable arts co-ordinator, "because we have small studio spaces, not really any professional spaces—yet. But we have a website address. People can read about Auroville and if they're interested they can contact us. We have already received some fifty requests from artists in theatre, dance, photography, painting—from the USA, Europe, Japan, Pakistan. I'm certain this kind of interaction between Auroville artists and those who we invite from outside will have a positive impact here. We can share research, different modes of expression. Especially in the visual arts, I am hoping we can get people from galleries and artist's agents to come and see what's going on here."

FINNISH INTEREST

Two performing artists who responded to the Auroville website are now visiting Auroville. Kari-Pekka Toivonen and Merja Larivaara-Toivonen are from Finland. When they read about Auroville on the Web, they decided to call Tapas

directly from Helsinki. They work as actors, singers and writers for stage, screen and radio. Well-known in Finland and elsewhere in Europe, Merja has just released a CD of her music called "Valon ja varjon tie." "We were looking for an artist's residency where the whole family could go. Other than that, we had no criteria. Perhaps to go some place where we could speak the language!"

While they are here, Kari and Merja are working on five or six radio plays for Finnish radio, with the theme of "a couple on holiday in India". "I also wanted to practise my accordion playing and write some songs," Merja says. She has delighted Aurovilians on several occasions with her music and singing. Besides their writing work, Kari has also been conducting a weekly theatre improvisation workshop with Auroville actors at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium. Under Kari's guidance, the group has already performed one improvisation and he will direct a small play written by Anu to be performed in January.

Their busy schedule of writing, reading and raising two kids leaves them little free time, but they have managed to get to know Auroville, attend Astanga Yoga classes and work out at the gym in New Creation. "The reason we came was to

Kalamitra means "Friends of the Arts." It is also the name of a small group of Aurovilians whose aim is to promote the Arts in Auroville. They welcome visiting artists who come from within India as well as from abroad and support the work of upcoming artists in Auroville. Kalamitra organises cultural programmes, workshops, and exhibitions for the community at large. These programmes cover theatre, dance, music, poetry reading, visual arts exhibitions, cinema, etc.

Obviously, Kalamitra plays only a small, symbolic role, trying to hold the arts scene together with a very small bud-

get. Considerable effort goes into finding donations for every show, be it from individuals or from commercial units or the Auroville Foundation. The minimum cost of each event (because no sale of tickets or fees are involved) is between eight and ten thousand rupees, which barely covers local transport, hospitality, publicity, gifts and stage (light and sound) expenses. Thanks to support from the community at large (major donors are Auromode, Maroma, Unending Education, the Centre for Indian Culture and the Auroville Foundation), Kalamitra managed so far to organise many performances and workshops.

break the routine in Finland and to observe your way of life in Auroville, and the Indian way of life in general and also to get some inspiration from it."

Several other art directors, members of the same international network from Berlin, Maastricht, Amsterdam, USA and New Delhi, have also visited Auroville. These directors have shown a deep interest in making a link with Auroville. "This is only the beginning," says Tapas. "We are asking the Central Fund for 6 lakhs over the next two years for arts programmes. If we can get this support, we can continue to receive professionals from outside and initiate co-productions and collaborations. It's an opening for communication which

can touch everyone."

KALA KHOJ

One of the Kalamitra members has created another body called Kala Khoj, meaning "the search for Art". Its role is to develop an international network of exchange programmes for artists from India, Auroville and the rest of the world. The Kala Khoj project is still in its developing and experimental stage. On an experimental basis two events have taken place: an Irish children's story writer, Geraldine V. Whelan, stayed in Auroville for one month in 1997, and now Kari and Merja from Finland (see above), both professional actors, are here for three months. *Jill*

A Personal Perspective on the Incompletion in Mother's Work

B (formerly Bill Sullivan) is a long-term member of the Auroville Today team. Last year he returned to the U.S. for a retreat. Recently he sent us an account of "the adventure of my life", of which this is an edited version.

During this last year, I have had the adventure of my life. When I decided to "set sail" in the middle of 1998, in what now seems like a past life back in Auroville, there was an immediate reaction—a revolt of my body. "You're going to do what? Are you crazy? What torture are you going to put us through now? You have everything you need and want, don't be stupid! You know better. You've got Auroville, not boy!". Through some meditation at Matrimandir and insight, I could convince the body to travel with me. People asked me where I was going but I wasn't sure where I would end up, and I needed not to be disturbed, so I gave no clues. They asked me when I would be back. I didn't know. I said it would take at least a month. It has been many months.

You may have seen Mother's painting: "Ascent to Truth". She drew a mountain path ascending in an oriental-style landscape. Always I am reminded of that image as I walk a similar path that switches back and forth on a steep slope near where I am staying to do this research and retreat. I have stopped on this path and wept more than once. I have also laughed. My inner journey turned out beyond anything I could have ever imagined.

My starting point is best summed up by the only condition Mother lays down in the Charter: "But to live in Auroville one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness". I knew that, I believed it and accepted it,

of course, but I didn't do it. I served my own consciousness. Then I asked the Mother for help to change. Step by step she opened every door I needed for the work to be done. It turned out to be much more than I bargained for. It has led me on a journey out of India so I could meet her in America, back to where and what I had left behind, to do what I would never have done in Auroville: cut it all back to zero and start over—this time with the Divine.

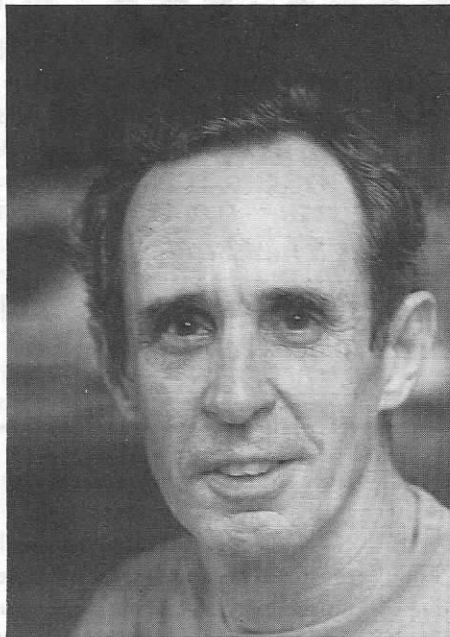
The Mother has made it clear to me how she completed her work and the incompletion is me. I have to do the part that only I can do. She has opened the path, but I have to walk on it myself. This brings the completion, the victory, which she has always assured me is certain.

Mother was in a squeezed situation especially in the last years of her life when she was surrounded by people who did not understand what she was doing, nor what they had to do to participate and support her work. I knew this most clearly from the Agenda where she talks about it. I projected judgment and blame on those people in the Ashram who resisted her, who didn't want to listen to her, but now I see clearly the same resistance is in myself. Now, in going through *Savitri* again in the light of far more self-knowledge, I understand how I never accepted, nor healed, nor even admitted the "no" in myself. I covered it up.

I lived in Auroville for twenty-four years before I started to really wake up to something I didn't want to do: live for the Divine—because, well, you know, what about "Me"? While, of course admiring Mother and Sri Aurobindo and appreciating their work, I actually told myself that I was following the ideals they set for me because I agreed with them and I wanted to live them but, well, it takes time and I couldn't reach those colossal heights overnight. Oh yes, and just look at how advanced I already am compared to all the people I see around me. Look at all I have "sacrificed" to be in Auroville. Look at all the wonderful things I have done, and on and on. "I" and "I". Who is this pretentious "I"? The answer from the soul was: "not me". I could avoid that message by keeping distracted, by being busy, tense or tired, but I was getting rather uncomfortable with my story of self-deception. My soul knew, as it always does, but I didn't want to listen about moving into territory where the old comfort zone would collapse. Still, I could easily imagine myself on my deathbed with the comfort zone gone forever, and could definitely feel the regret of "too late" having to step into the spirit world without completion, detachment and freedom.

So, I stepped into that world of spirit before the collapse of my body would force me to. I stepped inside myself to see, to heal the 'no', to see the light.

The word I needed to start with was "feel". Why didn't I feel that "love and oneness" all the time and live from it? Well, most of



my feelings were buried so I wouldn't have to feel them, and I found a few fears keeping it that way: like I wouldn't be free anymore to do what I liked and the "Truth" would ask impossible things of me and I would fail.

I had to drop, give up, surrender the bad, the sad, the mad me. Those were real attachments. They were my tricks, my deceptions not to change and stay in a self-created prison of that feeling. Now I feel fully every time such a feeling "rises again in full swing". I accept it without blame on anybody, especially myself, or the weather, the government or my flat tire. Then I drop it again and again without giving it any ground until it naturally atrophies. I found this secret works: acceptance with awareness heals.

Yes, and was I mad at myself for my insane sexual payout! First half of my life as an outward celibate, and a full-blown addict to inward sexual satisfaction to fill the void I felt. After that, the pattern was an indulgence/abstinence one. Abstinence always brought me to feeling the lack, indulgence also brought me to the feeling of the lack, the emptiness, and during both phases my psychic gifts were all aligned to support this addiction. By addiction, I mean my misplaced concentration on something that became a substitute fulfillment for my real need. I needed the Divine, but sex was as close as I could get because I said "no" to the Divine and trained my body to feel something in sex like fulfillment. My soul was never fulfilled and felt worse because it ultimately knew this was the wrong direction.

As part of the path to completion, I went, as a psychic being, back to contact the original state of being in union with the Divine. It is not in the "past", it is in the "now", and here I could heal the "future". Does it make sense? Whatever I do in the "now" is healing the past and the future or it is a step toward death. What I never healed in my past was exactly what I kept stepping into in my future. That's why I never seemed to get anywhere. Change of countries, jobs, lovers and whatever gave me some excitement but no inner change. The inner change came by clearing all the links and ties to this mortal state that I could write out, and all feelings that held me in a fixed state as being something other than simply an immortal child of God who has assumed a temporary mortal identity to learn something. I was guided by the Mother. It was her touch of Love that made it possible.

Only now because of that psychic journey back to the soul before the body is there healing. This was a journey in the body, actually, through my cells which have recorded every vibration which they have ever experienced. I went back to the root cause of my suffering, my rejection.

The "no" which happened back before I had a body, in the immortal life. In the Divine free state, I chose to "fall" out with God because I wanted to experience the knowledge of "good and evil", of separateness.

Yes, I did that and it was a state, a twist, in my soul. I experienced it as a feeling in my body, which I brought to the body and it is not comfortable there, and I had cut it off from awareness to feel "better". This is the thing that I did not want to know or feel about myself. Yet this is the basic cause of my "suffering", the agitation, the restlessness, the unsettled feeling that something is wrong somewhere down deep beyond reach. Now I feel it, now I accept it, now I can be different.

For this inner journey the inner witness "me" was essential. I used the witness "me", this "observer", to see and feel but not judge or react. Assuming it to be a "scientist" made it easier to accept what I found with a: "well, look at that, look at what is coming up now, etc."

I did not freak out, could stay detached and felt the Divine presences there too as witnesses. Now I'm

(continued on page 7)



"Ascent to the Truth"
(drawing by The Mother)

RESEARCHING RESEARCH

"This workshop marks a new stage in the Auroville organism: within the diversity we are setting up lines of communication between its cells."

Given the diversity of activities in Auroville and the relatively underdeveloped state of our communication culture, it's not surprising that many Aurovilians don't know much about what other Aurovilians are doing. This is particularly true in the area of research, where the work of certain Aurovilians may be better known in India and abroad than in their own backyard.

With this in mind, it was decided to issue an open invitation to all researchers to attend a weekend workshop in December and to give others a taste of what they were working upon. In the event seventeen came forward, and their presentations—on topics as diverse as the energizing of water, the Auroville economy and "creating the body hologram"—took up the first one and a half days. The final session was devoted to an open discussion.

The clear feeling from the 70-or-so participants was that the workshop was a success, not only because it afforded an insight into some fascinating research activities, but also because of the special atmosphere which pervaded the two days. As Michael, one of the presenters, put it, "It's very rare to experience this degree of concentration among so many people in Auroville", and another Aurovillian commented, "I looked around and realized that we really are a family. Why can't we always meet like this?" In fact, more than one person remarked that the workshop may have marked a watershed in our collective life: after all the years of individualistic endeavour, perhaps now, through such an event, we are beginning to put the pieces together by honouring what each of us contributes to the whole.

HIGHLIGHTS

THE ARTS

The first morning was devoted to research in the Arts and in education. Nadaka, an accomplished musician whose recent releases include 'Straight to your Heart' and 'Celebration', began with intoning OM, the primal sound, and then illustrated, through overtone singing, how it contains all other sounds and harmonies. After noting the limits to intellectual knowledge, of the need for music to come straight from the heart, he spoke of his own experiments in adapting his own instrument, the guitar, to produce the sounds and textures of Indian music. After much research, he discovered that this involves tuning it like a veena, hollowing out the space beneath the frets to enable the strings to be 'wowed' or stretched, adding two

extra strings, and inventing a way of quickly changing the fret positions.

Nadaka's experiments with Indian music are encouraged by other Indian musicians. "Not being born into this culture gives me a freedom which the traditional musicians don't have. So they are interested to see what use I make of it." And the goal of his research? "To reach a stage, in this lifetime, or the next or next, where my voice, my fingers and my instrument can sing the voice of my soul."

He ended by playing and singing a beautiful song of the Surdas of North India.

Later in the morning, Anu and Pierre spoke of their artistic odysseys. Anu, poetess and dancer, didn't come to Auroville to be an artist "but to be an Aurovillian. But my discovery of the Vedas through Sri Aurobindo awoke the thrill of the infinite and absolute in me, and I became interested in trying to express this in new ways."

Anu took up dance impulsively, learning classical Bharat Natayam at the same time as she was practising T'ai Chi and, "through this combination I began to see other ways that the body could express movement and emotions. It also changed my perspective. I started noting the tensile structure in everything around me."

Another of her discoveries was of the necessity for the "abdication" of the personality if something else is to be expressed. "When you abdicate on stage, bounded space doesn't exist. Everything is a continuum. Even the structure of what you perform has nothing to do with the mental. When the body is in harmony, structure automatically arises through the body."

Pierre Legrand spoke movingly of the artistic journey "which forced me to go underground for fifteen years." It began, in 1984, with him going through a very deep depression. "Suddenly, after some hours, I emerged in an overwhelming feeling of light, peace and serenity which remained with me for the rest of the day. I felt I had touched the meaning of life itself for the first time. Before this, I had been wondering what to do with my artistic talents. Now it became obvious: my task was to express what I had experienced, not just for myself but also so others could experience it too." It took him fifteen years, during which the changing style of his work paralleled the stages of his original experience. "First I felt in front of a wall, then I started punching holes in the wall to let the light through. But only now, with my latest work 'Light Matter', do I feel I have some

convincing result, something close to the original experience. Actually, I had to touch the cellular consciousness to recapture that experience. But then, to express it...well, I fell sick and, against my usual technique, I was forced to do things very simply. Now I'm mainly working with light."

Like Anu, Pierre feels that we have to find new ways in Auroville. "But how? Only when we have the courage to go underground will we invent new shapes—we have to go very deep to contact the new. My faith and experience is that if your soul awakens, all knowledge will be given to you. In Auroville we can do what our soul wants, and we can do it with whatever is at hand."

EDUCATION

For Deepti, who has taught at Last School for many years, "the aim of Auroville is for us to stop being human beings and to become something else". Therefore education here should be concerned "not with acquiring more and more information but with encouraging the growth of consciousness. For knowledge emerges from within, and when you are centred you will manage as a master."

Deepti noted that, educationally, we are far from realizing this ideal. She described some of the challenges, which included the diversity of cultures and languages spoken, but also the fact that "in Auroville we are always starting anew. For example, there have been many different experiments with education—including no education at all!—and this makes the stu-

adolescents", and he went on to define what motivation meant for him. "It means feeling that you are engaged in something real, that you are doing something which can make a difference. And what's real for me is the sense that humanity is on the cusp of a major paradigm shift to a post-industrial culture, a culture which I call a life-affirming culture." Noting that such shifts had happened before—from a hunter-gatherer to an agricultural society and then, more recently, to an industrial culture—he also noted that each paradigm had a mode of education appropriate to it. "For example, in our present industrial culture schools resemble factories. Knowledge is chopped up into segments and the students emerge at the end of the production line stamped 'finished'. As the new consciousness descends, then, we have to find new modes of education to reflect this shift. And the fundamental research we are doing in New School at present is to find out the essential elements of this new mode."

Some of the values which the students and staff at New School agreed they wish to realise include being active members of the community; acquiring critical skills; becoming independent learners and communicators; and being healthy, happy people. Ecological literacy is another of their aims. Peter quoted the results of a recent survey of schoolchildren in the US which discovered that they could recognise over 2,000 corporate logos... but fewer than ten native trees and plants.

Finally he asked us to imagine that when we breathe in, we are breathing in oxygen as purity, and that when we breathe



A presentation at the Research Workshop, held at Atithi Griha guest-house, Bharat Nivas

dents feel very insecure. The present student generation, in fact, is a generation in transition. They can't rely fully upon either their parents or the larger society for guidance. So they are forced to find a deeper spirit of stability within themselves."

Peter Thurrell is one of the founders of New School, a new educational experiment for Auroville adolescents. "Two of my inspirations for doing this were, firstly, Mother's statement that we should all be teachers and learners together and, secondly, the concept of 'synergy' which means that the whole is greater than the individual parts, and that by being together in community we can create something greater than our individual insights."

Peter's talk was entitled "Motivating

out, we breathe out carbon dioxide as a gift to plants. We then divided into pairs to see if our awareness of other life forms had changed as a result of the exercise.

THE LAND AND LOCAL TRADITIONS

After lunch, Joss, a long-term greenworker, described the uses of the local flora. Research with the local traditional healers has established that 400 plants in the area are used for medicinal purposes, and many of these plants also have nutritive properties. "Many of these plants were first codified by the ancient sage Agastya, seemingly through intuition, and now, through an association of 160 healers, we're trying to revitalise the local health traditions." The tropical dry evergreen for-

est of the Coromandel coast is a unique biosystem—at least six species grow nowhere else in the world—yet less than 1% of the original forest remains. In Tamil Nadu alone there are 76 species of endangered plants, “which makes it so exciting that some of these species are regenerating naturally in Auroville forests. This is a good indication that the very detailed research work some Auroville greenworkers have put into regenerating the dry evergreen forest is on the right track.”

One of the other ways of preserving local traditions is the creation, through consultation with the villagers, of community registers: records of all the biore-sources, the special skills and traditional

cost-free supply of large amounts of bio-waste, the whole project is economically unviable. “So now we are investigating large sources of unmixed bio-waste in Pondicherry. At the same time, in consultation with the Pondicherry Government, I am presently drawing up a plan for improved waste collection in a colony of 2000 Pondicherry residents. People’s habits don’t change overnight—in Europe it has taken many years of education before people start separating out their waste—and before I begin I want to make sure that we have everything in place: the containers, the right vehicles and the collaboration of the right people. I also want to involve VIPs and the media in making a

guished five distinct phases so far: 1968-1974 the pioneering phase, 1974-1978 the beginnings of the Auroville organization, 1978-1982 the development of the ‘Envelope System’ (“which I still don’t understand!”), 1982-1989 the growth of individual initiatives, and 1989-1995 the era of the Central Fund and the services/maintenance system.

“For each phase we look at how people are working and which economies are operating in the community.” They have identified eight different economies which coexist at present (“I discover a new one every day. I hope this doesn’t continue!”). These include the Services economy, the commercial economy, the personal economy, the in-kind economy and the village businesses economy.

“Traditionally the economy is the most difficult aspect of life to change in communities. Most co-operative economies collapse after fifteen years, so it is remarkable that Auroville is still relatively stable after thirty years. Why is this? This is what we want to discover in our study.”

BODY AWARENESS

The second morning of the workshop was more relaxed. There were four presentations, which included Priya talking about her research into the practices of traditional midwives in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, and her wish to see how living a spiritual life affects the way women bring up their children in Auroville, and Georges’ explanation of why he is writing introductory books on Sri Aurobindo and Mother. “The writings of Sri Aurobindo in particular are very difficult to approach for many people, so I decided to try and make them more digestible. My introductory books are offered as one perspective, a possible way of seeing, for how can one write definitively about that which one has not realized? They are merely pointers to the source.”

The main theme of the morning, however, was undoubtedly body awareness, or the development of consciousness through and in the body. The topic was introduced by Aloka and Joán who presented—through video and a talk—their work with children in Auroville schools. “Through a series of exercises,” explained Aloka, “we try to bring children into an awareness of the different parts—mental, vital, physical and psychic—of their being. We begin each class by getting them to focus on their body, posture and state of being through breathing and sensory exercises. We ask the children to observe their moods, to give them a name, and then to detach themselves from them. We ask them to look at their thoughts, and then to identify who is observing all this. In this way they contact the observer within. It is a way of helping children become truly self-aware.”

“We tell them,” adds Joán, “that they were born into this life without an owner’s manual, and that they can’t copy someone else’s because each person is unique. So they have to create their own. We try to

find tools to help them achieve this aim while offering them a safe space where they can explore themselves.”

Some of those tools were displayed on a video of their work. One is deep relaxation. Another tool is a thin stick and a plate. “Balancing the plate on the stick teaches concentration,” says Joán. “If the concentration is lost for an instant the plate falls, and this is often transmitted to the whole group. So it is also a demonstration of how individual moods and actions can influence others.”

“As teachers, we have to be plastic,” says Aloka. “If the children have had a bad day, we see how we can change the energy. Through the exercises they discover that they don’t have to get stuck in a fixed pattern. They can change it at any level.”

The students often use the skills and perceptions they learn in the body awareness sessions in other classes or situations. One of the most moving stories was how one of their young students, who was stung by a poisonous snake and then proved allergic to the antidote, managed to cope with a very dangerous situation by shifting his awareness into different parts of his body, “just like Aloka and Joán taught me”.

In the final presentation of the morning, Michael Spector, a dancer and therapist, shared with us something of his 25 years of research on the body. “What does it mean,” he asked, “to become whole, luminous, spontaneous with our body? How to access the consciousness of the cells? How to develop inner mind, inner seeing? It means surrendering what we already know and entering the unknown. And it means understanding how the different aspects of ourselves, the different levels, come together to create a whole.”

Michael offered to give us a taste of this through leading us through a series of movements. But first he clarified how certain key terms—like the four major aspects of The Mother and the five elements—relate to each other and to the body. “Light is spirit or ether and its movement is diffusion; Love is soul (air, fire) and its movement is expansion; Power is vitality (water) and its movement is condensation; and Utility is the body (earth) whose movement is contraction or compression.”

The morning ended with him leading about 50 people through movements which first distinguished these different qualities or potentials of the body, and then progressively integrated them into one flowing whole.

THE FINAL SESSION

During the final discussion session a number of views were expressed. One was that we need to be clearer about what we understand by the term “research”. Another perspective was that all fields of experience and exploration have a place in Auroville. The question, however, is how all the individual initiatives relate to the whole. “We’ve all been involved in the individual movement. Now a new type of collective process is necessary, and this means we have to find something new in the way we function and relate to each other.”

“Each of us is a cell of the overall consciousness,” concluded another participant. “This workshop marks a new stage in the organism: within the diversity we are setting up lines of communication between its cells.”

Alan



Children concentrating on their breathing using a “breathometer” in Joán’s and Aloka’s class.

Photo: Joán

technologies which still exist but which are fast disappearing. “Education is the key here. We teach the local children to map their bioregion, and then to draw it on the wall of their school.”

Dr. Lucas then brought us up to date on his organic cashew cultivation and composting projects (see *Auroville Today* no.117). After one year of the organic cultivation experiment with local villagers the results were not very encouraging. “The cost-free seeds for ground cover we provided were hardly used, we got exploited more than we had expected over the subsidized compost and, while the natural pesticides were well-used, the effects were not well assessed and are a matter of dispute.” In fact, only two out of the fifteen participating farmers kept to the agreement not to spray chemical pesticides, and Lucas concluded that while present chemical farming practices still offer a good revenue, there is little incentive for the farmers to change over to organic farming.

However, “our moral and physical suffering obliges us to keep the momentum up”, and his present strategy involves developing demonstration organic cashew plots at Auro-orchard, setting up sales centres for organic farming inputs, and offering premium prices for organically-grown cashews on condition that the farmers submit to strict checks.

Regarding the composting project, it’s now clear that there is insufficient bio-waste in and around Kulilapalayam to provide enough compost for all the farmland around the village. Moreover, if there is no

success of it.”

ENERGY AND HEALING

As the prime motivation for Lucas becoming involved in composting and organic farming was to improve the health of the local people, it was appropriate that the next two presentations dealt, directly or indirectly, with healing. Jerome, a therapist, described how kinesiology is a method by which energy which is blocked is freed again in the body by putting energy—via light, music etc.—on points of the body meridians. Then Rolf Brockmeyer described his own research into how to improve the quality of our water here by “energizing” it. He now manufactures low-cost systems for energizing water which are on trial in the community.

THE AUROVILLE ECONOMY

The final presentation on the first day was made by Dr. Henk Thomas. Henk, a frequent visitor to Auroville, is a Professor of Economics at a Dutch University and, together with Aurovilian Stuart Leard, has just begun research into Auroville’s economy between 1968 and 1998.

After noting that economics is not a dry science—“As Amartya Sen has shown, it is about people, collective welfare and deep social choices”—he distinguished the different lines of their present research. These included ascertaining the true meaning of Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother’s writings on economy, and in plotting the different stages Auroville has gone through in its organization and economy. He distin-

A General Speaks...

Ashok Chatterjee is a familiar figure as he drives around town on his red moped. However, not many perhaps are aware that this quiet, unassuming and courteous man was amongst the highest-ranking officers of the Indian Armed Forces before he retired in 1990 and joined Auroville. In Auroville, Lt. Gen. Chatterjee, or Ashok-da as he is more affectionately known, serves as a member of the Governing Board, an executive of Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Research (SAIIR), and in general, as a goodwill ambassador of Auroville in India. Here he talks to Auroville Today about his life in the army and in Auroville.

AV TODAY: How did you hear of Auroville and come to live here?

Ashok: In 1971, in the Bangladesh War for Independence, I was a young officer in my early forties, serving in the Indian Army. I had heard about Sri Aurobindo and The Mother of Pondi-

experiment of Auroville, by the dedication of Aurovilians to achieve human unity, as I was often involved in conflicts between different cultures and nations. This led to a further tumult of questions in me regarding the meaning and purpose of life. After these two instances and quite a few visits

think that the army and the wars that it has to fight dehumanize one. In India, traditionally, taking up arms to serve the society and a higher cause is considered as the *dharma* or the highest duty of the Kshatriya (warrior caste—eds.). One should not forget that the supreme teaching of India, the Bhagavad Gita, was given by the Lord in the battlefield to a warrior. And one has to realize that wars and aggression are part of the current human condition. As long as humanity is not broad-minded or evolved enough to accept one another, every society has to defend itself. (Even Auroville, for instance, has to protect itself with rules and regulations to safeguard its interests.) War is just another process through which mankind evolves. What matters is the attitude with which you fight the war or take

down as Chairman but continue to serve as a member. Additionally, I represent three international charities for animals in India and am specifically interested in promoting scientific methods for reducing pain and unnecessary cruelty when dealing with animals. Given the active interest of some Aurovilians in looking after stray animals, we have established an Animal Care Trust in Auroville.

What is your perspective on Auroville and the image it has in India?

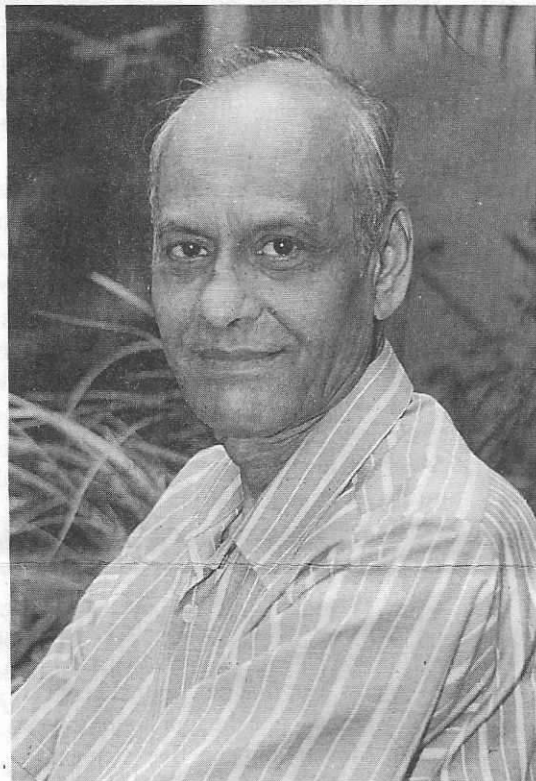
To me Auroville is a laboratory. A laboratory of Human Evolution. And as in any laboratory, we need to have patience and faith, for all our experiments cannot be successful from the very first instance. And to achieve a living human unity is not an easy task. Both the Indians and the Westerners in Auroville carry the heavy baggage or *karma* that has been shaped by their society and culture. The Indian race has been crippled by centuries of poverty, slavery, inadequate nutrition and inadequate opportunities for the mind and body to develop. Yet the saving grace for Indians is their sense of *bhakti* (faith) and their intrinsic spiritual values which makes them recognize and bow down to the Divine Consciousness prevalent everywhere in the universe. The Westerners have their colonial past, their materialistic industrial culture, their strong sense of individuality or ego to deal with. They also have a vitality and a developed mind by virtue of which they have a vast capacity for aesthetics and organizing matter. And yet, they are limited by this very same mind.

The trouble however arises because the two races do not understand these strengths and limitations that prevail in them. Because of this ignorance, they are arrogant, quick to judge and blame others.

What we have to realize in Auroville, and what interests me, is that we have to somehow to combine our strengths to create a new human being. And I feel that consciously or unconsciously every Aurovillian is working towards this. You have to realize that this is not a race where one needs to be first to breast the tape. It does not matter if one has breast the tape while another is still at the starting gate. We are all in this race together—that's what is important.

Regarding Auroville's image in India, I feel that if Auroville develops with a purpose, if it glows from within with the spirit which moves it, then that itself would give a positive impression and attract the right kind of people. For it is not the buildings, not the greenwork, but a personal human warmth that inspires others. If Auroville is prepared to share its warmth with those who would like to interact with us, things would proceed smoothly. Whatever little interaction I have had with people in India and abroad in connection with Auroville, I have always received very, very positive support. And each of us must realize that all we can do is work on ourselves, do our yoga and perfect ourselves. We cannot point fingers at others; for ultimately we have control only of our lives.

Interview by Bindu



Ashok

cherry, but did not know much about their teachings. One day, a friend of mine, a fellow army officer, gave me a small packet of rose petals saying that The Mother had sent her blessings to all of us in the army for serving a good cause. I was taken by surprise. But as an overworked man in a difficult job, this unexpected support gave me an uplifting spark of joy and encouragement. Upon questioning my friend further, I was intrigued to learn that The Mother did not support the partition of the country on spiritual grounds. My friend then gave me Sri Aurobindo's *The Foundations of Indian Culture* to read. That was the beginning... As I was based in Calcutta then, I had the opportunity of making use of the library of the Sri Aurobindo Centre there and participating in the talks and discussions. I thus came to know their teachings more deeply.

Years later, in 1987, I was posted in South India as the overall Force Commander of the Indian operations in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. A friend of mine served as the Lt. Governor of Pondicherry then, and he used to invite Maj. Gen. Krishna Tewari, another Aurovillian with whom I had served in Calcutta, and me to take a break and relax at his home. I thus started coming to Pondicherry and Auroville on weekends. I was fascinated by the

"War is just another process through which mankind evolves. What matters is the attitude with which you fight the war or take up the role of a soldier."

to Auroville, it was natural for me to come to reside in Auroville as soon as I retired from the army in 1990. I started out by commuting from Pondicherry to teach in Last School.

I remember, on one of my visits to Auroville, an Aurovillian told me, "We do not need generals, we need soldiers in Auroville." And I replied, "Yes, but every general starts out as a soldier!"

You have served the army for a number of years. In what ways did life in the army prepare you for Auroville?

I have served in the Indian Armed Forces for 40 years. The army inculcates certain values and offers a multi-disciplinary training in various aspects of life. To give an example, I know many young boys from these local villages who have joined the army, and are now posted in the snowy mountains of the North, far from their birthplace. These boys are now physically fit, and have certain high selfless values in that they are ready to lay down their lives for their country. However, as you know, many of their peers here, who stayed behind in the village are lazy and unpunctual... In my case, starting from the age of 18, I have served in diverse posts in the army—playing music in the band, nursing the sick in the hospital, mending clothes, cooking, taking care of animals, being an airplane motor mechanic, etc. Picking up all these diverse skills is in itself a good preparation for life in Auroville. But more importantly, as a soldier you learn to develop courage and to overcome your fears. It instills a strong sense of brotherhood as you cannot afford to let your company of fellow soldiers down. In my opinion, the army trained me well to be a sadhak of Integral Yoga.

What was missing at first, but came later, was the spiritual attitude—the attitude that we are here to serve, in all that we do, a higher cause. I feel it is a mistake to

up the role of a soldier.

As an Aurovillian serving on the Governing Board, you have a unique perspective on the Board's role. Can you say something about it?

The Governing Board should not have a pro-active role. It is not for the Governing Board to give direction or to channel the energy of Auroville. It is futile to expect the GB to take the initiative in the planning of Auroville, as it visits the place only once in six months and is not in touch with the day-to-day ground reality of this community. It is for the community of Auroville to decide which way it wants to go, and then subsequently to approach the GB for help. The Governing Board plays the role of protecting Auroville in India, in the sense of interpreting its actions and explaining it to the concerned authorities. It acts as the liaison between the Government and Auroville.

You were nominated as Chairman of the National Animal Welfare Board in 1992. How did that come about?

My love for animals was instilled early in my childhood by my family. And then as I mentioned earlier, I used to help look after the animals in the army. More specifically, I remember once I was in charge of relief operations in Western Rajasthan during the drought of 1986. It pained my heart that while we were saving the people, we were doing nothing for the animals. As I was supposed to train soldiers in driving army trucks, I instructed these trainee-drivers to go out in their trucks and pick up the best specimens of each species and take them to a sanctuary outside of the drought-affected area and to bring back fodder and water for the remaining animals. So when the Govt. of India nominated me to the post of Chairman of the Animal Welfare Board, I was happy to accept, all the more so as the Board is located in Chennai and I could do my work from Auroville. I have recently stepped

HAPPENINGS

AROUND THE NEW YEAR

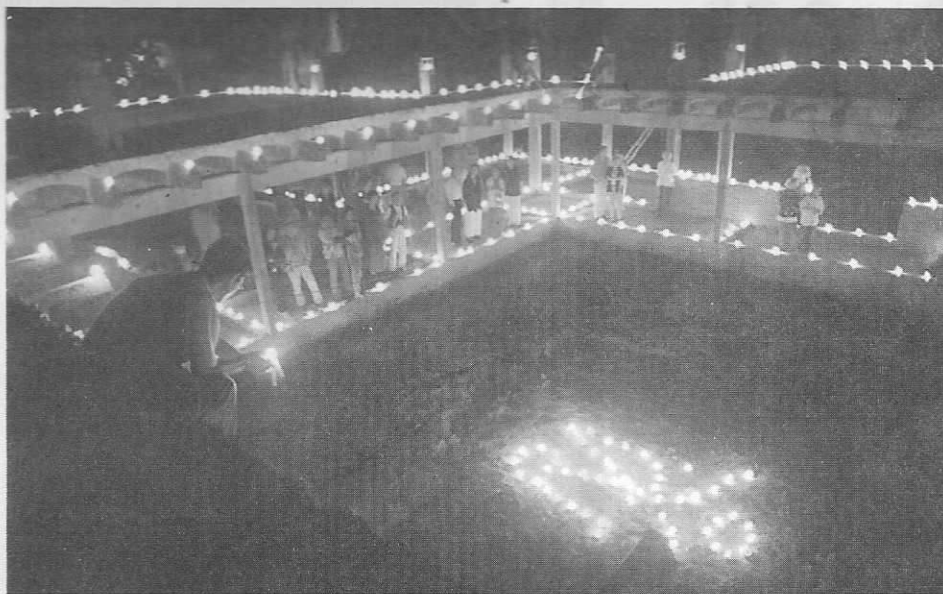
Sucheta Chapeker danced Bharat Natyam to Hindustani music instead of to the prescribed Karnatic music in a unique and breathtaking performance on December 23rd.

The Christmas Fair held at the Information Centre, besides drawing the expected hundreds of Aurovilians, also drew unexpected crowds of tourists and villagers.

Sonal Mansingh once again displayed her elegance and artistic abilities in a dramatic dance performance on December 28th. The theme, inspired by Mirabai, was the suppression of women.

A 1000-light Kalachakra Mandala was created on New Year's Eve at the construction site of the Tibetan Pavilion, followed with a prayer for world peace led by two Tibetan lamas.

Hastri Devi graced Auroville on New Year's Eve with an intense and dramatic Odissi dance performance, the highlight being her rendition of Yashoda's attempts to make the baby Krishna go to sleep.



1000-lights celebration at the Tibetan pavilion construction site. Photo: Ireno

Johnny's play "Varagu" was performed on New Year's Eve at the Information Centre. With only 3 days to rehearse the mainly young actors put on an energetic though rather incomprehensible performance.

At midnight, New Year's Eve, people silently listened and meditated to Sunil's 1965 New Year

music in Pitanga.

Matrimandir was visited by a record number of 2030 people on Christmas Day during the visitors hour. In December, a total of 17,081 people visited Matrimandir during that hour, on average 500 a day. Another 30 visitors a day took the opportunity to meditate in the Chamber.

The Governing Board met for its bi-annual meeting in Auroville on January 9th. This meeting was only attended by the Chairman Dr. Swaminathan, Mr. Krishnan, Shri Mohan Francis (on behalf of Shri Sudhir Nath), Roger Anger and Ashok Chatterjee. Dr. Karan Singh and Mr. D.P. Singh were prevented from attending as their planes could not leave New Delhi due to fog. Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan and Smt. Shantadevi Malwad could not attend. The term of office of the Members expired on January 22nd, 1999.

The International Advisory Council met in Auroville on January 10th. Dr. Kireet Joshi, who could only come to Auroville for about three hours, was elected Chairman of the Council by the other attending members, Dr. Ariyaratne from Sri Lanka, Ms. Mary King from the USA and Dr. Norman Myers from the U.K. Nobel Prize Laureate Dr. Amartya Sen could not attend.

On New Year's Day at dawn Aurovilians, guests, visitors and many others gathered together at the Amphitheatre for the traditional New Year's bonfire. Unfortunately, fewer Aurovilians attend this event nowadays because of the noisy atmosphere created by large numbers of outside visitors and school children. The Working Committee has called upon the community to find a solution for the problem.

POPULATION OF AUROVILLE

Statistics on 31st December, 1998 (as published in a recent AVNews)

Breakdown by age group

Age	Female	Male	Total
Below 5 years	35	55	90
5 to 10 years	61	40	101
10 to 20 years	93	98	191
20 to 30 years	92	117	209
30 to 40 years	136	157	293
40 to 50 years	132	167	299
50 to 60 years	84	96	180
60 to 70 years	24	21	45
70 to 80 years	11	10	21
80 to 90	2	2	4
90+	1	0	1
(Births in 1998)	19	13	32

Breakdown by nationality

Indian482 (33%)	Swedish18	Irish1
French257 (18%)	Ukrainian17	Japanese1
German215 (15%)	Argentinian10	Moroccan1
Italian63 (5%)	Brazilian10	
Dutch61 (4%)	Austrian9	
American50	Tibetan5	
Swiss43	Hungarian4	
British36	Estonian2	
Spanish33	Korean2	
Belgian25	New Zealander ..2	
Russian24	Slovene2	
Australian22	Sri Lankan2	
Canadian18	Colombian1	

Increase in population

Year	total no.
1974	322
1979	394
1990	673
1992	932
1995	1173
1998	1434

The incompleteness in Mother's work (continued from page 3)

absolutely sure how everything is known and nothing is hidden because it cannot be. Yet I have acted as if my thoughts were my own secret. Pretty dumb. How can there be secrets in spirit—aren't we all spiritual beings?

The evolutionary change is not waiting for me to wake up. The Earth is changing now. Becoming fully conscious is my evolutionary change. I have to "contaminate" the mass consciousness and not continue the other way around. Mother spoke often of this "contagion" as she called it. It is how I transfer body to body all my feelings, all that I hold in my body to everything that is around me because that is the nature of our reality. It is not solid, it is a vibratory field. My feelings, my body are totally public and the pollution or salvation of the earth comes from this fact. Everyone is sensitive, psychic, but more or less blocked by an ego shield, the individual "iron block" or the "black armour" of the milieu as Satprem calls it. The iron block is my self-image which Mother exposed as a block to moving from the Old World to the New World:

The obstacle is the "concentric" vibration, a sort of concentric vibration, meaning that instead of being part of an infinite eternity, things are considered in relation to oneself. That's the obstacle. The ego-centric stupidity!

I thought I would cease to exist without that. The "loss" of my self-image, my ego, felt like real death because what else is there beside who I am, what I do, all my things, my history, my projected future, my fantasies etc?

Mother repeats this often, but I was very slow to get it. She always simply returns to the Divine, usually with a gesture of her hands rising in an offering. It always comes down to: "Lord, only you, your will." My important "me" was in the way because I thought and felt without it I am lost.

That made it so clear to me. "The Divine alone." To really want that inner soul state as a priority, to live in that New World, to create this physical life as the life divine, yes. My death is not something that happens at the end of my life, like I always thought, but happens now in every choice I make. I was simply making a habit of death by every choice to fulfill desires and wants rather than a life of my real need for "love and oneness".

My old habit toward death used the speediness in my mind, the tension, to cover up my battle with the truth of who I am, but all I really needed to do was to go home to now. Then I can actually feel everything falling into place. My scale of values turned upside down. Watering the flower pot, washing the dishes and all that sort of thing that had so little care or importance for me, has another significance when in partnership with the Supreme.

That's quite a change of perspective. Yet this is actually the real state, where I can be myself and natural, a sublime state.

The glimmer of a bright future is calling in my present, the "now" which is where I am creating my future. Now I can walk peacefully along the "ascent to truth" path and feel whatever comes in each moment, accept it, whether it is something I used to judge positive or negative: bliss or the void, abundance or deprivation—all of it, equal and important. Hey, those are only reminders for that little inner shift, and that is the "cry", the "call" that cuts it all away—in that clearing, there's room for the Divine to be, eternally. It is a beautiful path. It is the sunlit path.

B

Letter

The Bharat Nivas

We seem to live in a period of our evolution in which subtle movements in the different worlds—as ideas are, for instance, are seeking more and more the possibility to establish a concrete shape in the world of matter, above all a shape expressing a certain wholeness. We seem to be pushed into the direction of having to learn to think and see in totalities.

In this regard it struck me as a crippling impoverishment that in the design for the finalising of the Bharat Nivas (see the previous issue, p.7), the essential idea, Unity in Diversity, is hardly recognisable any more.

In the original design, approved by Mother, this essence of India's being had found a for everyone immediately recognisable, clear, simple, true and beautiful concrete expression.

Knowing the history of this unfinished building for thirty years, having experienced during the first years a happy glimpse of truth while walking in the compound, having also experienced the essential occult falsity of pervading the area with a completely other atmosphere, I cannot but regret this ultimate outcome of this building's destiny. We seem to completely underestimate the strength and influence and power of the vibratory forces emanating from a concrete building.

India, in her recent struggle against division, would have been better served, it seems, by a clearly defined and pronounced expression of her true spiritual unity, directly understandable for Indians and others alike as the expression of the soul of the country and a promise for her future realisation.

Wil, Sri Aurobindo Ashram,
Pondicherry

OMISSION

In our book review in the last issue, of Ann Riquiers *Paroles Tibétaines*, the publishing house, Plon in Paris, had been inadvertently omitted.

Eds.

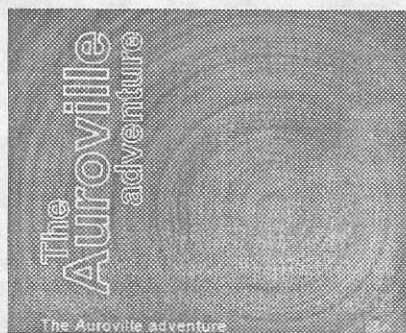
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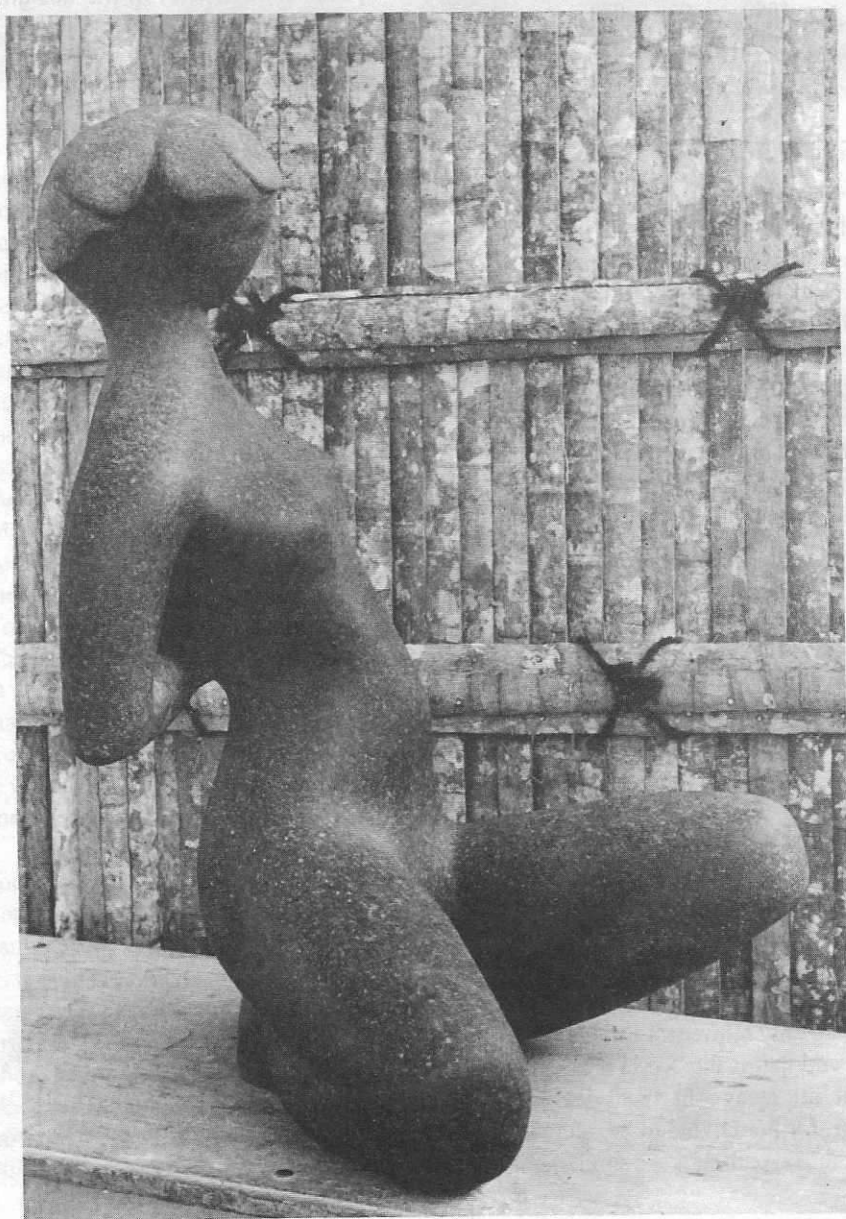


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AUROVILLE ARCHIVES
C/O KRISHNA T.
BHARAT NIVAS
AUROVILLE

February 1999
Number 121



Sculpture made at Ramalingam's workshop to a German design

Mind the Gap

Recently, a member of the Findhorn Community in Scotland visited Auroville. Among other things, he observed that intentional communities the world over seem to have difficulties in translating their ideals into action. A cynic would say that this proves how very adept some people are at paying lip service to ideals while continuing to behave in the same old way. Perhaps. But there is another possibility. And that is that there is a disjunction, a rift, between the world (or, rather, worlds) of ideas and ideals and the world of practical action. That both worlds have their own dynamic, their own characteristics, and it is this that makes it so difficult to move from one to the other without losing something essential in the process. It is clear, for example, that the world of mind tends to be far freer, mobile and creative than the gravity-bound, trammelled sphere of physical action. So that the experience of passing from the former to the latter is akin to that of a spacecraft re-entering the earth's atmosphere: there is an immediate and potentially destructive increase in friction and distorting forces generated by the denser atmosphere.

Why is this? Why do the worlds of mind and physical action so often seem to collide rather than mesh? In a fascinating conversation in 1963, Mother explained that *"the physical substance has been so mistreated that it finds it hard to believe that things could be other than what they are at present. I have this experience: when the concrete and utterly tangible intervention of the supreme Power, the supreme Light, is experienced by the physical substance, it's a new wonder each time; and in that state of wonder I perceive something like: 'Is this really possible?...' It's like a dog that has been beaten so often that it expects nothing but beatings. It's sad. And the physical substance feels a kind of anxiety towards mental energy: whenever a mental force manifests, it cries out, 'Oh, no! That's enough! Enough!' As if that were the cause of all its torment...It seems to be considered as the Enemy."*

How many first-class projects, how many idealistic ventures have foundered on this invisible reef? "Invisible", because when individuals evaluate failures they tend to ascribe them to everything except this antipathy between mind and matter. It must be one of the most influential yet least researched phenomena in the world.

Is there any way of bridging the gap? The scholastic philosophers of the West doubted it. Mind and the higher realms, they believed,

belonged to God while matter was the devil's domain. Hence the only option for the virtuous was to endure this vale of tears in the expectation of entering the heavenly city after death. Mother, however, discovered something else, namely that what we normally perceive as the resistance, the "deadness" of matter, is not its true quality. For when she descended to the level of the cells, *"that kind of heaviness disappears: it starts being fluid and vibrant again. Which would tend to prove that heaviness, thickness, inertia, immobility is something ADDED on, it isn't an inherent quality of matter—it's false matter, that which we think or feel, but not matter itself, as it really is."* If true matter is "fluid and vibrant", then the so-called laws of nature are also "added on". Nothing in the material world is immutable, nothing is inescapable. *"It's WE who decide that it's 'inescapable'!"* adds Mother.

This is all very well. But most of us continue to live in a world where tables have sharp edges and walls are not exactly easy to walk through. How can we translate Mother's experiences into our everyday lives? The key seems to be in developing a kind of double-vision. To be aware, for example, that the material world we deal with is not as immutable as it appears: that, as sub-atomic physics also teaches us, it is a world of potential rather than of givens, a world where the observer influences the observed, where consciousness—in other words—is the moving force. But also to see that 'surface' matter has certain characteristics which differentiate it from other spheres, like that of the mind, and that as long as we are unable to penetrate and consciously influence matter's deeper structure, we should investigate these differences and take account of them in our planning and action.

One thing is clear: that matter can no longer be seen as anti-divine, as the bar to change. In fact, it becomes the key vehicle of transformation. *"Nowhere can a more unshakable resolve and aspiration be found than here (Mother taps her body). That's the very characteristic of matter. And when it has surrendered and has faith, the aspiration is absolutely stable and constant: it is ESTABLISHED, and established effortlessly, spontaneously, naturally, once and for all. So we can foresee that when matter becomes truly divine, its manifestation will be infinitely more complete, more perfect in its details and more stable than anywhere else, in any other world."*

Alan

NOW AVAILABLE:

"THE AUROVILLE ADVENTURE"

A selection of articles from ten years of *Auroville Today*

As its name suggests, this compilation provides a unique and in-depth look at the "adventure" of Auroville that continues to unfold. The book, 22 x 28 cms., is richly illustrated with black and white photographs, drawings and cartoons, and has approximately 175 pages. It consists of eleven chapters highlighting a particular activity or aspect of Auroville life. Price: Rs.250 (India) or \$15 (all other countries). Postage (airmail) and packing are included.

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