

# Auroville Today

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Auroville's monthly news magazine since 1988

## Matrimandir completed

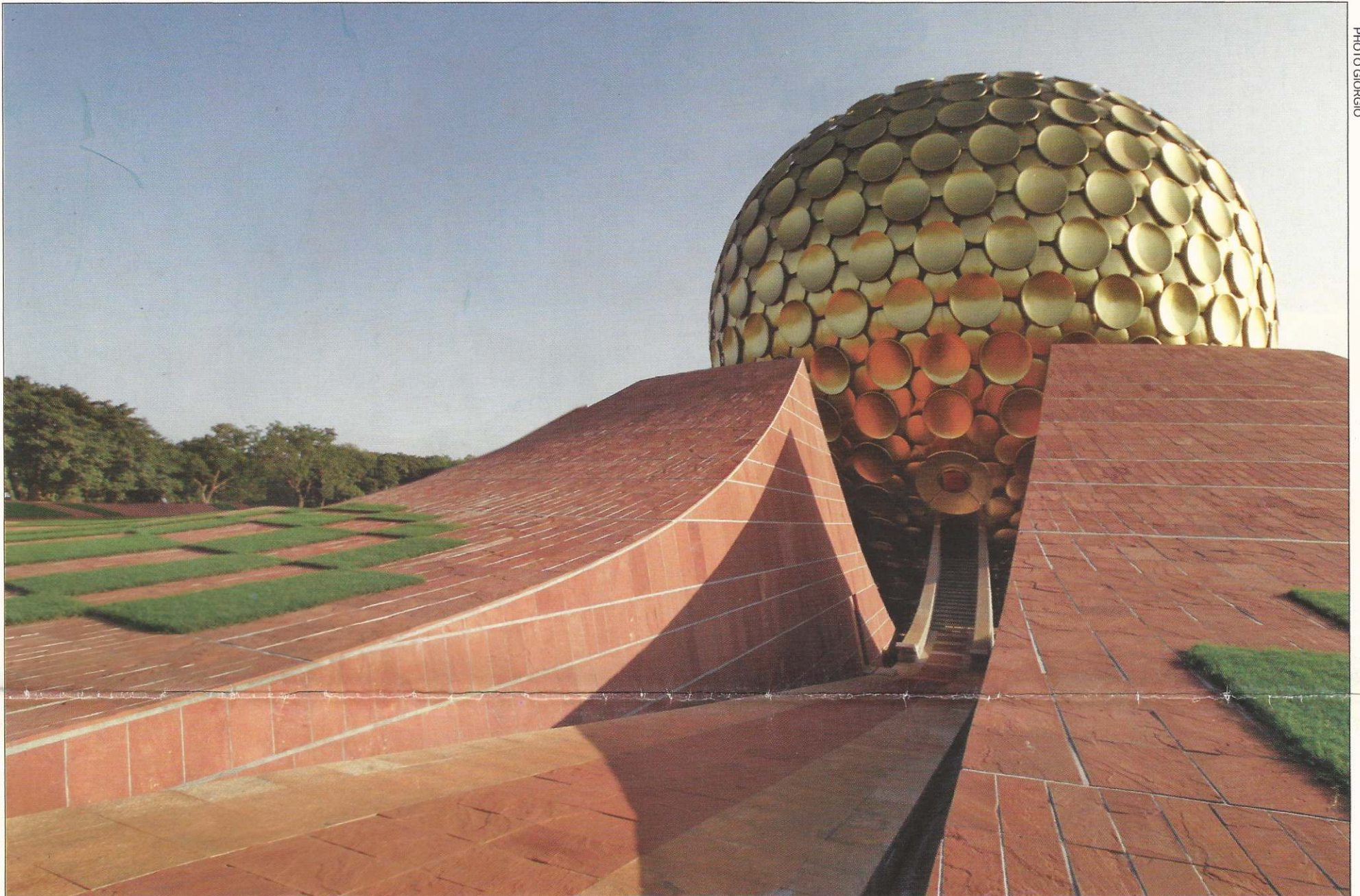


PHOTO GIORGIO

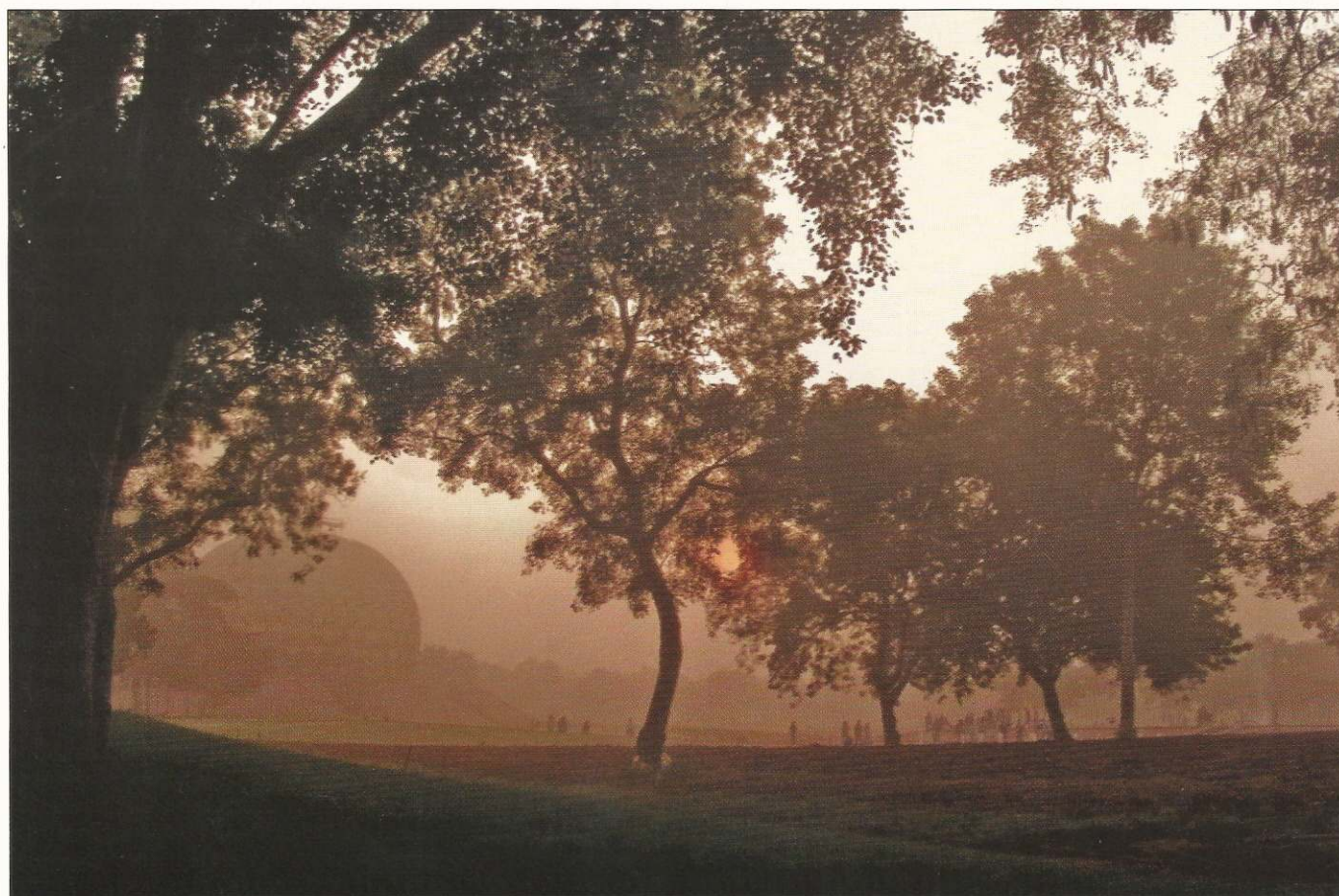


PHOTO PAULETTE



PHOTO GIORGIO

This month, Auroville is forty years old. This birthday coincides with the completion of the Matrimandir, which has been under construction for almost as long.

To celebrate this double event, *Auroville Today* – which will itself mark twenty years of publication this year – is publishing for the first time an issue in colour so that we can show both the soaring lines and the beauty in detail of the Matrimandir. It is our tribute to the thousands who, through the years, have either worked on or supported from afar this unique project for humanity.

"The Matrimandir," wrote The Mother, "will be the soul of Auroville. The sooner the soul is there, the better it will be for everybody and especially for the Aurovilians."

- Auroville's chief architect Roger Anger passes away
- Auroville: an emerging spiritual township

pages 2-3

- Workshop: Consecration as a way of life
- Talking with the body - the masseur Goupi

page 6

- "Contributing something new" - Introducing the University of Human Unity
- Letter from a reader

page 7

- Exhibition on the art of *Kirikane*: a prelude to the Japanese Pavilion
- Auroville's *kolam* festival

page 8



# Roger Anger

Roger Anger, whom The Mother appointed as the Chief Architect of Auroville, passed away on 15th January at the age of 84. He had been ill for some time.

Roger graduated in 1947 from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris. He belonged to the avant garde of the modernist architectural trend. Among his early projects, he designed a remarkable apartment structure in Grenoble, which was awarded the Brussels Premier Prix International d'Architecture in 1967.

In 1965, The Mother asked Roger to design the future city of Auroville. Together with Pierre Braslawski and Mario Heymann, he developed what became known as the 'Galaxy' concept. He also worked on the design of the Matrimandir, as well as a number of houses and schools in Auroville.

In the 1970s, frustrated by the slow pace of development, he left Auroville for almost a decade. When he returned, the 'space frame' of the Matrimandir had been completed, thanks to the dedication of Piero and the collective efforts of many Aurovilians, and Roger felt there were new possibilities in the air.

While Piero and his team were given the responsibility of finishing the inner chamber, Roger and his partner, Jacqueline La Coste, supervised the completion of the rest of the Matrimandir project. This huge task, complicated by design challenges and resistance to some of his proposals, is only now reaching its conclusion.

Roger also worked hard on realizing an urban environment for Auroville based upon the fundamental principles of the Galaxy



Roger Anger

## A selection of tributes:

I am deeply distressed to learn of Roger's passing away. He was indeed a remarkable architect and a true servitor of the Mother. The way he presided over the translation of Mother's vision of the Matrimandir into a reality was a truly monumental achievement. I had often expressed the view that with the completion of Matrimandir his life work had been completed, but I did not realize that he would go even before the date of the formal event.

His particular place in Auroville will be virtually impossible to fill.

**Dr. Karan Singh (Chairman of the Governing Board)**

When the idea of building up an international township of Auroville began to be conceived by the Mother, a letter was written by Her from the Ashram at Pondicherry to Roger, who was at that time in France, asking him if he would like to build up Auroville as its architect. When Roger answered the letter in the affirmative, the Mother was greatly pleased, and when She wrote to him in appreciation of his positive response, the Mother commented that his response was not a surprise to Her, because She had already known him as the "Man of the Project"! [...]

"L'Homme de 'Projet'!" – These words of the Mother for Roger sum up splendidly and gloriously all that was so beautifully packed in that great artist, visionary, sculptor and architect. [...] The task that the Mother had given him for Auroville remained for decades and decades throughout his life the sovereign occupation. He tried to fulfil that task as an instrument of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Like all adventurers who have striven to participate in a new experiment that has universal dimensions, he had to forge ahead through enormous difficulties, internal and external.

Right from the manufacture of the crystal to the manufacture of golden leaves that shine today in the dome of the edifice, incalculable and meticulous care was bestowed on every aspect of the work by hundreds to whom the Matrimandir meant a mission. And yet the one factor that gave form to the Matrimandir, the one factor that guided Matrimandir's overall development, and the one factor that brought about the incarnation of surpassing beauty, majestic grandeur, and immortal glory, – that factor was Roger. Before he left his body, this

great genius had accomplished the mission of his life; he has left behind him a glory that will never fade.

**Kireet Joshi (former Chairman of the Governing Board)**

I will join you all in prayer for this remarkable, profoundly dedicated man. It was a great privilege to have met him and experienced his passion for the ideals we share. His drive to embody the Divine on Earth is a fundamental part of Auroville's DNA.

**Michael Murphy (member of the International Advisory Council)**

Following my latest visit to Matrimandir and the profound emotions I experienced, I was waiting for Roger's arrival to tell him of my admiration for what he had accomplished.

Now I learn that he has departed – all day Eliot's words echoed in me:

*"The nymphs are departed,  
and their friends have left no addresses"*

Creativity is linked to our infantile aspects and children are difficult to manage...

For realizing Her dream, the Mother in Her infinite wisdom put them to play, giving each one the role best suited to him.

Roger's role was the most difficult; right for his creative capacity, his energy and his courage – He played a marvellous game!

Now Mother holds him in her arms, giving him the rest and the peace that he deserves –

**Paolo Tommasi (the Italian designer whom Mother asked to work with Roger and who, together with Piero, supervised the work on the inner chamber)**

I am deeply saddened to learn of the passing away of Roger Anger, the chief architect of Matrimandir and Auroville, so far away from the place that was so close to his heart and where the greatest testimony to his creative genius and his devotion to Mother stands.

**Ajoy Bagchi (member of the Governing Board)**

plan, but in this he was less successful. "When it came to planning the city," he said, "Mother put pressure upon us to make the original concept more and more dynamic. In fact, as an architect I have simply been an instrument to express Her vision. Few people understand this."

Roger's touchstone was always beauty. For him, the aim of architecture was to manifest a high standard of beauty because "Beauty has the power of uplifting the consciousness, spontaneously". "My inspiration," he said, "was Le Corbusier. He was a genius in his use of form. He did not look to the past, only to the future, and he was single-minded, bold in his conceptions." Roger could have been speaking of himself.

Roger was also passionate about painting and sculpture. The studio below his house in Auromodel was full of artwork that he worked at for many hours daily. This, he said, was where he was conducting his research into beauty. (Anupama Kundoo, an Auroville architect, will soon publish a book on Roger's artwork. It will be released in May at the same time as a large exhibition in Paris of Roger's sculptures and paintings.)

Roger was a charismatic, inspirational figure. Many Auroville architects were trained by him or benefitted from his generous guidance. As Pashi Kapoor, a long-time associate, put it, "He was able to galvanize many architects to work in Auroville since he gave them the freedom to express themselves."

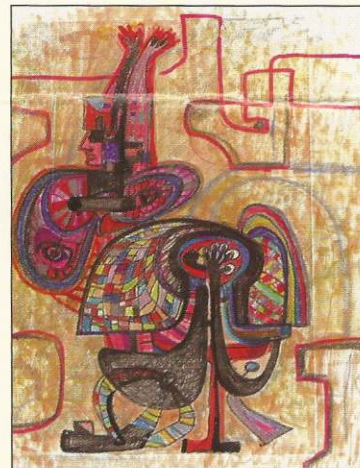
Above all, it was his uncompromising devotion to The Mother and to realizing Her vision which made him such a force. He had his faults – he could be dismissive of those who did not share his point of view, and he didn't communicate well with those outside his inner circle – but no one could deny his refinement, his courage, above all, his devotion to The Mother. And to serving Her future.

**Alan**

To you, Roger, with our love and immense gratitude  
For your long life of consecration to the mission that The Mother had  
Gracefully put over your shoulders. For putting all your consciousness,  
your work, your life at Her service;  
For being the receptor of Her Dream and for carrying it like a torch  
through so many dark passages;  
For keeping it alive in spite of adverse conditions, apparent impossibilities  
and recurring resistances;  
For your uncompromising attitude  
towards the highest ideals of Auroville;  
For your love for beauty and your constant call to the forces and  
forms of the future; For your courage, your indefatigable labour and  
your patience and endurance;  
For being such a faithful warrior;  
For your endurance through all the incomprehension you received;  
And for maintaining always your smile and  
your sweetness.

Because you drew the lines of the Galaxy, giving  
birth to the concrete manifestation of the  
Vision;  
Because you reminded us constantly that it was  
not 'yours' but Her Dream and Her City;  
Because you cared for the design and execution,  
up to the minutest detail to attain the highest  
levels of beauty and perfection.

You have given this immense gift to all of us, to  
Auroville, to the world, a city with a soul, a city  
like no other. Now that this Soul, this dwelling  
place of the Divine Mother is built, Her city will  
be manifested. We can only feel an immense  
gratitude towards you, and our prayer that we  
are worth of this gift.  
*(L'avenir d'Auroville – Auroville's Future)*



A sketch by Roger

For me, he has been an intriguingly rare personality who could maintain the widest of visions and simultaneously pay attention to the smallest of details. A refined and heroic being, straight-forward and courageous, who led a disciplined balanced life, and rarely skipped his afternoon game of chess, "it's one game, where nothing can occur by chance, you create everything."

**Anupama (from an article published in 'The Hindu')**

Among Roger's qualities, I would like to illustrate how he achieved Beauty for the Matrimandir gardens.

The construction of the pathways started in July 2003. Roger and Jacqueline came with a design for a pattern of agra and granite stones to be laid at the crossing of two pathways. They asked for a prototype of these stones to be laid on sand at the crossing.

Balaraman and myself did not know that we were entering a process of preparing many prototypes. Roger would relentlessly modify each design, asking for a parallel prototype so that he could see both prototypes side by side in matter. Jacqueline would continuously create new designs with him. In fact, for each design there must have been five to ten prototypes since Roger would take into consideration the shape, volume and harmony of the agra, granite and marble stones, as well as how they fitted in the Matrimandir environment.

Each time I admired and enjoyed how the modifications proposed by Roger improved the overall beauty and I was glad to collaborate in perfecting the work.

**Alain Grandcolas (who worked with Roger on the Matrimandir from the very beginning)**

I first met Roger in 1968 when Auroville and the Matrimandir were inaugurated and Mother asked me to work with him. I learned a great deal from him. Roger was an architectural genius, a fine visionary. He created a sense of unity in all that he did while manifesting a great diversity in the details, and this gave his creations harmony and beauty. In the exceptional atmosphere of those early years, many were inspired by him.

**André Hababou**



Roger in his studio at Auromodel



# Auroville: an emerging spiritual township

Spirituality, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not a high intellectuality, idealism, an ethical turn of the mind, moral purity, religiosity or exalted emotional fervour. 'Spirituality,' he writes in *The Life Divine*, 'is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into contact with the greater Reality pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being, to be in communion with It and union with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature.'

The Mother, in describing the nature of a true Aurovilian, said the first step is 'the inner discovery by which one learns who one really is behind the social, moral, cultural, racial and hereditary appearances' and finding that "at the centre there is a being, free, wide and knowing, who awaits our discovery and who ought to become the acting centre of our being and our life in Auroville." For to live in Auroville, 'one must be the willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.'

Is this awakening to the inner reality happening in Aurovilians? Are Aurovilians inwardly aspiring to contact a greater Reality beyond? Can Auroville be described as an emerging spiritual township?

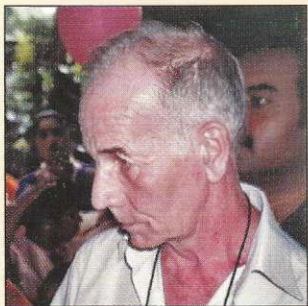
To find an answer to these difficult questions – for those who have a contact with their inner or higher reality don't usually shout it from the rooftops – *Auroville Today* spoke to Bindu Mohanty, who is doing a Ph.D. at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, U.S.A on the topic of the social psychology of Auroville. Part of her thesis deals with nascent spirituality in Auroville. Based on the responses of 130 Aurovilians to her research survey, she explains why she considers Auroville to be an emerging spiritual society.

## Gauging spirituality

"Spirituality is a very difficult thing to gauge, especially in terms of the Integral Yoga," says Bindu. "We are not talking about achieving *siddhis*, we are not talking about showing spiritual powers, but we are talking here about being 'willing servitors of the divine consciousness' and letting things work out in their own way. That is a very individualistic process which makes it very difficult to speak about how spiritually-engaged people are in Auroville."

The yardstick Bindu used to gauge the presence of a spiritual society is whether there is a spiritual orientation to the society and its members. This appears to be overwhelmingly present in Auroville. "The vast majority of my respondents mentioned the importance of integral yoga while delineating their path. Asked 'What do you like about Auroville?', spirituality was the overriding factor in most people's lives and many expressed their belief in the work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother," says Bindu. Though most Aurovilians do not seem to follow any regular spiritual practices, there is a commonly-accepted view that through their work and by choosing to live in Auroville, Aurovilians participate in the spiritual evolution of humankind.

## Passing: Guustaaf Carton



Dutch Aurovilian Guustaaf Carton who lived in Sri Ma left his body on January 19th in Pondicherry. He was 63 years old.

Guus joined Auroville in 1995. He worked as caretaker of the Quiet Healing Centre, gave foot reflexology massages and worked for the Auroville Health Centre as a social worker in Auroville's surrounding villages. His friends knew him for his fine, dry humour and attention to detail. His body was interred in the burial ground at Adventure.

Faith that through The Mother's Force things will work out in the proper manner and time is widely prevalent. About 50% of the respondents talked about spirituality in a language that indicated that the spiritual was personally experienced. Writes Bindu, "While attitudes towards the Mother vary greatly even amongst those Aurovilians who specifically believe her to be a Divine being, what is common is that individuals, in their own personal ways, seek a relationship with her presence."

Bindu warned about the shadow side of 'professed' spirituality, which she terms 'spiritual bypassing': "When people blindly trust the words of a spiritual leader without it being backed up by direct experience or by an insight arrived at through deep introspection, there is always a danger that people regress into religiosity... Also, by shifting the responsibility for a spiritualised future to a posited divine force, people limit their own ability to participate in the work of the divine reality." She notes this becomes particularly evident whenever Aurovilians engage in attempts to reorganise the economy or the organisation or the town planning. "The ability to have rational debates on the interpretation of 'sacred texts' or even on intuitive norms of a divine reality is a salient characteristic of constructive modern spirituality. It should be a hallmark of Auroville."

## Spirituality as part of everyday life

Bindu found that spirituality is individually interpreted by Aurovilians, yet with a common nominator: there is an insistence on engagement with daily life – in other words, Aurovilians are mainly involved in *karma* yoga.

Spiritual search is also directly responsible for the fact that Aurovilians have consciously chosen a lifestyle in Auroville which is considered 'abnormal' elsewhere – particularly in Western countries. "There is an amazing work-ethos in Auroville which does not depend on earning an income," says Bindu. "Most people have just enough to get by, but they often work harder than in the West. Respondents among other things, mentioned that all work is for the divine, not for a pay-check, and that they are happy to take up whatever work is offered and needs to be done."

Bindu sees this attitude as a sincere attempt to live by Auroville's Charter. "This aspect of attempting to understand the Divine's will and surrendering one's interest to the Divine was surprisingly often mentioned by the respondents," says Bindu. "They also mentioned the work of the Divine Force in Auroville which puts you in challenging situations and forces you to grow. There is a widely prevalent belief that, when one does not voluntarily surrender to the Divine's will, one gets knocks and blows that teach one to go within and to detach oneself from egotistic motives."

## Freedom

Auroville's path of spirituality is marked by the freedom of individuals to realize their being in whatever forms are most suitable to them.

Bindu mentions that such freedom, without the discipline of an ordained practice, can lead to unrestricted hedonism of the egoistic self and may even lead to the surfacing of the worst traits of someone's personality. She argues that in this yoga, which aims at integral transformation of the personality, such surfacing of character deformations is necessary so that they can be worked upon rather than suppressed. However, not all Aurovilians underwrite this idea. Bindu quotes one Auroville psychologist who says, "Aurovilians can delude themselves into thinking that they are participating in a collective yoga of transformation when, in reality, they are embedded in psychological pathologies."

## The Matrimandir

"One cannot emphasize enough the importance of the Matrimandir in the collective life of Auroville," writes Bindu. The Mother described the Matrimandir as 'the central cohesive force of Auroville' and this is experienced as such by many Aurovilians. "It is not unusual that in the early phases of a community's development, the construction of a building should take on such a symbolic significance," says Bindu, pointing out that throughout history many religious groups have promoted material symbols, such as specific buildings, to foster commitments and allegiance amongst their members. But the spiritual significance of the Matrimandir was indicated by The Mother herself. Many respondents talked about



Auroville children with Mother's flag on the roof of Bharat Nivas

'the experience of concentrating in the Chamber', or described it as 'a place for individual initiation' or 'the Matrimandir, being the soul of Auroville, is my home'. Yet, Bindu found that not all Aurovilians regularly concentrate in the Chamber – "a couple of Aurovilians mentioned that they find the atmosphere too sterile and artificial" – which, she says, is no indication that they are not engaged in a spiritual search.

## Education

One hallmark of a spiritual society is the way it provides an integral education for children, allowing them to develop and honour all the different dimensions of their being. "Auroville's attempts to provide such an education are common knowledge, even though here Auroville is in a transitional stage," says Bindu. One of her respondents was born and brought up in Auroville and then went out to Europe for further studies. "She said that because of her upbringing she was a happy person with a positive outlook on life, while many people in Europe she met seemed content to just live, work and go for holidays without ever questioning what life was all about or taking a deeper look into themselves."

## Economics

Though Aurovilians haven't yet found an economic structure in accordance with the ideals, which is that one works for the joy of expressing oneself or serving the community and not to earn a living, economic experiments to realize the ideals have been going on for the last decades and show no sign of abating.

"The present capitalistic phase in Auroville," writes Bindu, "could well be a transitory stage in the evolution of both the human being and society." Here she refers to Sri Aurobindo who spoke of how capitalism institutionalised the French revolutionary goal of liberty, while communism institutionalised the second goal of equality. But neither of these ideals can be perfectly achieved till the human consciousness truly embodies the third revolutionary aim of fraternity which, wrote Sri Aurobindo, can only 'exist in the soul and by the soul; it can exist by nothing else.'

To establish such a fraternity is one of the ideals of Auroville. Auroville's social structure, then, is constantly being experimented upon to allow for the embodiment of these ideals where one sees each person as a unique embodiment of the Divine – a realisation that fosters tolerance and acceptance of all people, irrespective of race, nationality or cultural differences.

## Organisation

Aurovilians seek to do away with the need for rigid, organisational structures, believing that the organisational structure of Auroville should be determined by something higher. This is in accordance with the ideal expressed by The Mother where 'organisation is the expression of a higher consciousness working for the manifestation of the truth of the future' and 'individuals should unite with the divine consciousness to organise themselves spontaneously without rules.' Bindu, however, observes that in direct contradiction to these ideals, Auroville has moved to a more structured society in consequence of the Auroville Foundation Act. "Auroville has developed

structures that govern all aspects of collective life such as housing, town planning, economy and entry. Over the years, these structures and governing bodies have become increasingly complex, clumsy and bureaucratic – the shadow of the flexible organisation foreseen by The Mother," she writes. This, she believes, is a direct outcome of the collective level of consciousness of the Aurovilians.

## Sense of community

While quite a few Aurovilians express a spontaneous, inner connection with other individuals, even with those they do not know well, others lament the lack of communal life. It is too early to speak about doing a collective yoga. "If by collective yoga, we understand, as Mother explained, that there is a spiritual experience of the oneness of all, then clearly Auroville is not at this level. As an Aurovilian woman said: if there is at all a collective yoga going on in Auroville it is largely unconscious." Bindu explains how, for many years, the focus has been on the development of the physical base, taking care of and revitalizing the lands; then came some 'vital' developments, which started culturally; for the last six to eight years there has been a gradual switch to the mental level, with study programmes becoming widely available. "Some Aurovilians believe that with the completion of the Matrimandir, Auroville will take a giant leap towards expressing a collective spirituality. From my research, I can definitively conclude that Auroville is an emerging spiritual society."

Carel

## NEW BOOKS

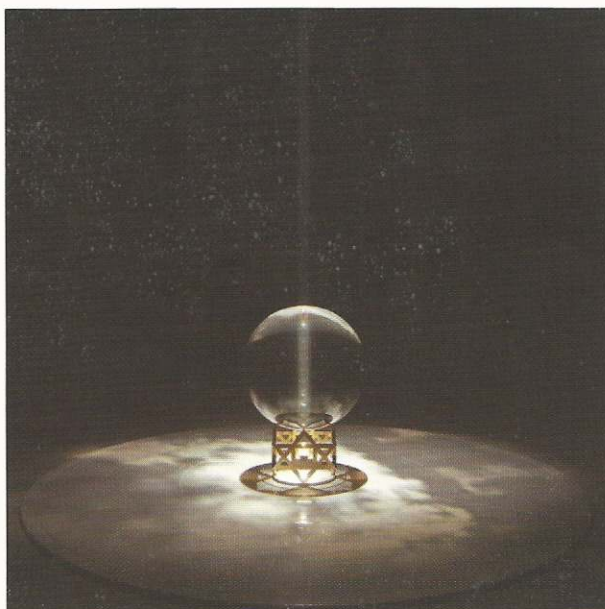
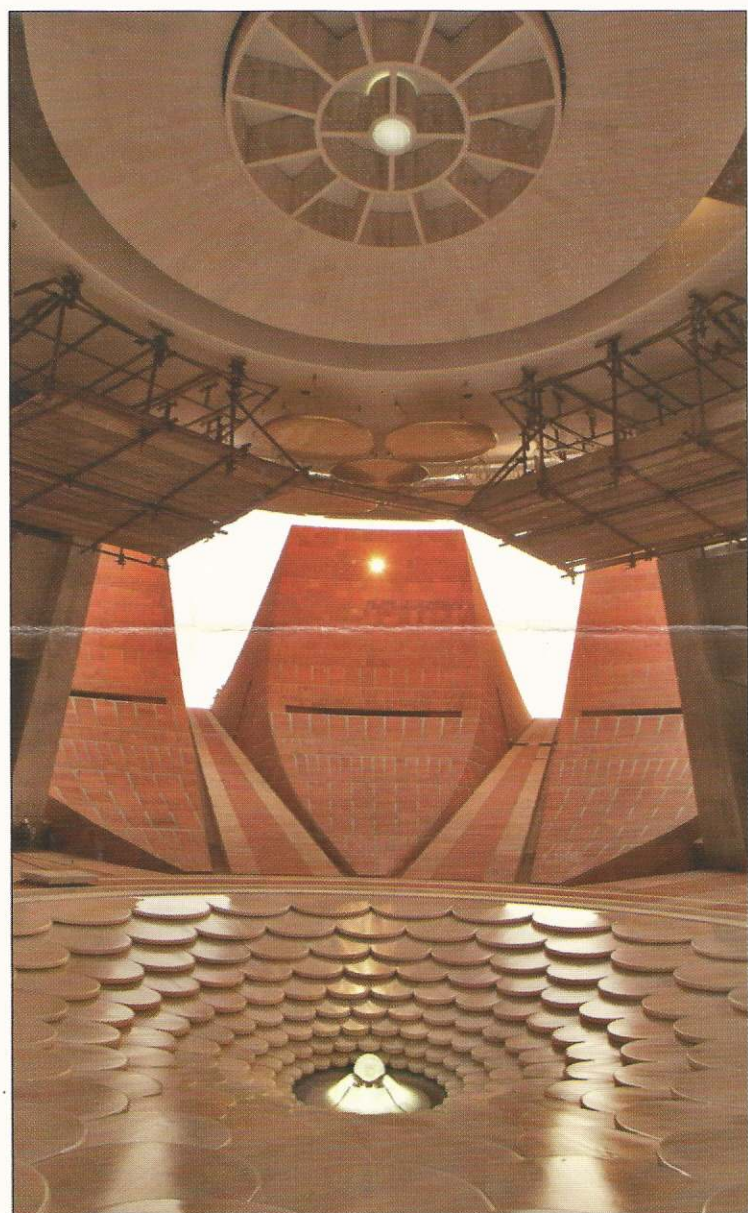
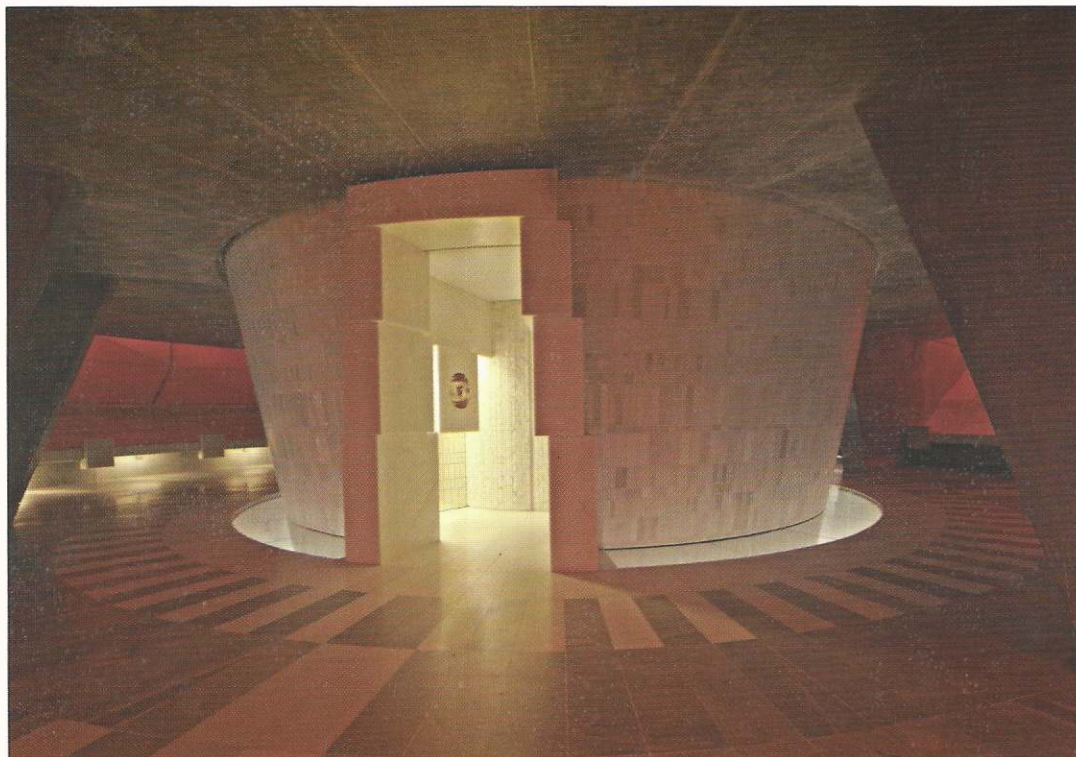
### India and the Future of South Asia



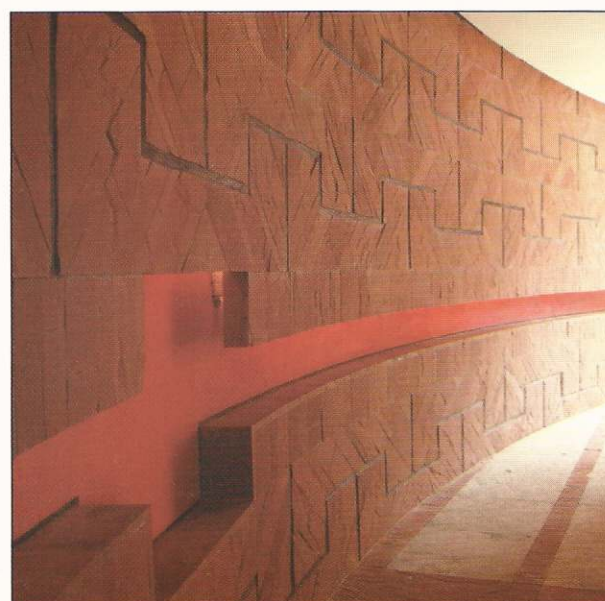
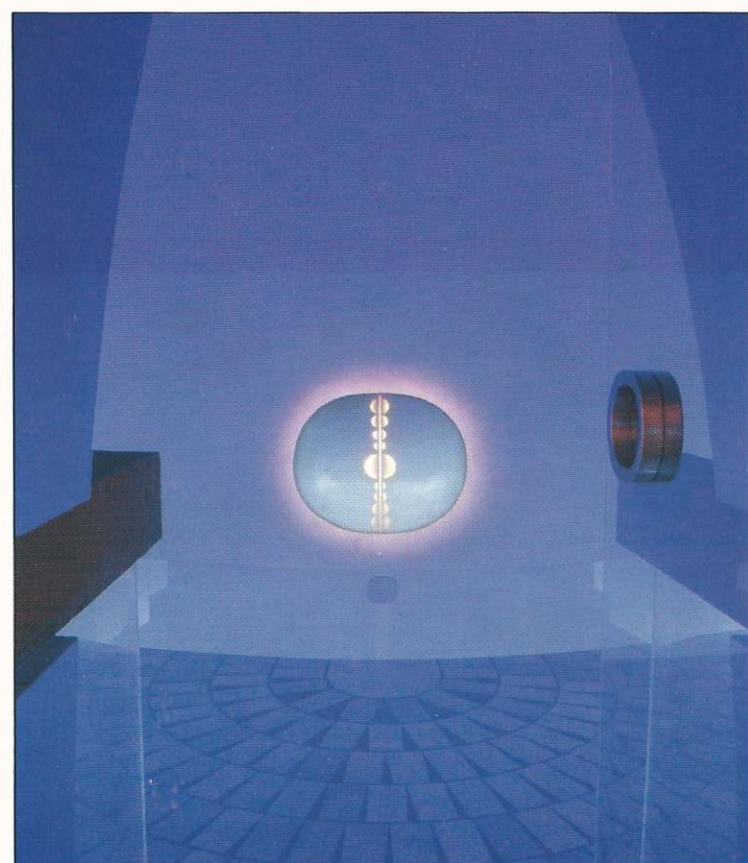
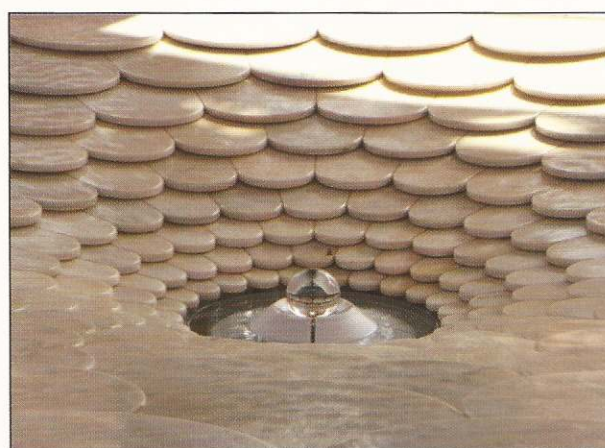
South Asia needs to take a decisive step forward to crystallize its identity. What are the problems it faces today? What is the deeper truth of South Asia? What could India's role be in the region? Is it possible that, like the European Union, South Asia becomes an economic or political union?

In the essay *India and the Future of South Asia* Aurovilian Koshi Shah attempts to take a look at some of these issues from the perspectives offered by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, proposing a possible way to arrive at a confederation within the region. Available from Prisma, Aurelec, Auroville. Price: Rs 80. Email: [prisma@auroville.org.in](mailto:prisma@auroville.org.in)





Clockwise from top left: first level entrance; staircase to the second level; staircase seen from above; beginning of the ramp leading to the Inner Chamber; Sri Aurobindo's mantra *Om Anandamayi Chaitanyamayi Satyamayi Paramam* in the western pillar; the ramp; the ray of light descends from the chamber onto the symbol of The Mother in the centre of the staircase; the same seen from above; the ray of light striking the crystal in the Chamber; the corridor connecting the meditation chambers in the petals; the Peace meditation chamber; the lotus pond underneath the Matrimandir; close-up of the crystal in the lotus pond; close-up of the crystal in the Inner Chamber.



## 40 years of Aurov

Order out of chaos, the extraordinary emerging from the jaws of disaster – the pattern was there from the very beginning. The weeks before Auroville's inauguration were messy, chaotic. Meetings, arguments, bruised egos. The delegates turning up in dribs and drabs, some only intent on having a good time.

And then comes the morning itself. Beautiful – of course – the buses lined up neatly, everybody getting a seat. The convoy toils across a dusty plateau until, “Look, look” – a large orange balloon floating high above a banyan tree. Beside it, at the centre of a depression circled by temporary awnings, a small white marble urn shaped like a lotus bud. Around it, the ashram students, sentinels in spotless white. The crowd seats itself, quietening, beginning to realize they have stumbled into something extraordinary. At 10.30, the sound of a gong. Silence. A snatch of organ music, then Mother's voice crackling through the tannoy, “Salut d'Auroville à tous les hommes de bonne volonté...”

75 minutes, that's all it took. Then there were refreshments, a small exhibition to look at round the banyan, and soon everybody was clambering back into the stuffy buses and clattering back across miles and miles of shadeless laterite towards cool showers and an Ashram lunch.

For many months nobody returned. The banyan grew dustier and goats wandered past that lunar bud sprouting improbably in the midst of a tawny desert...

Dawn. The canyon wall burns vermillion, red, green, as the sun slides across its face. She's on a high ledge, practising dance steps for tonight's performance (everybody's invited), while a young boy, splay-footed, swishes his goats up the track below.

As the sun climbs higher, the day densens, the silence broken only by the crack of copper-pods and the whine of tiny flies. Evening will bronze the laterite before the cold, clear stars wheel up into the darkness.

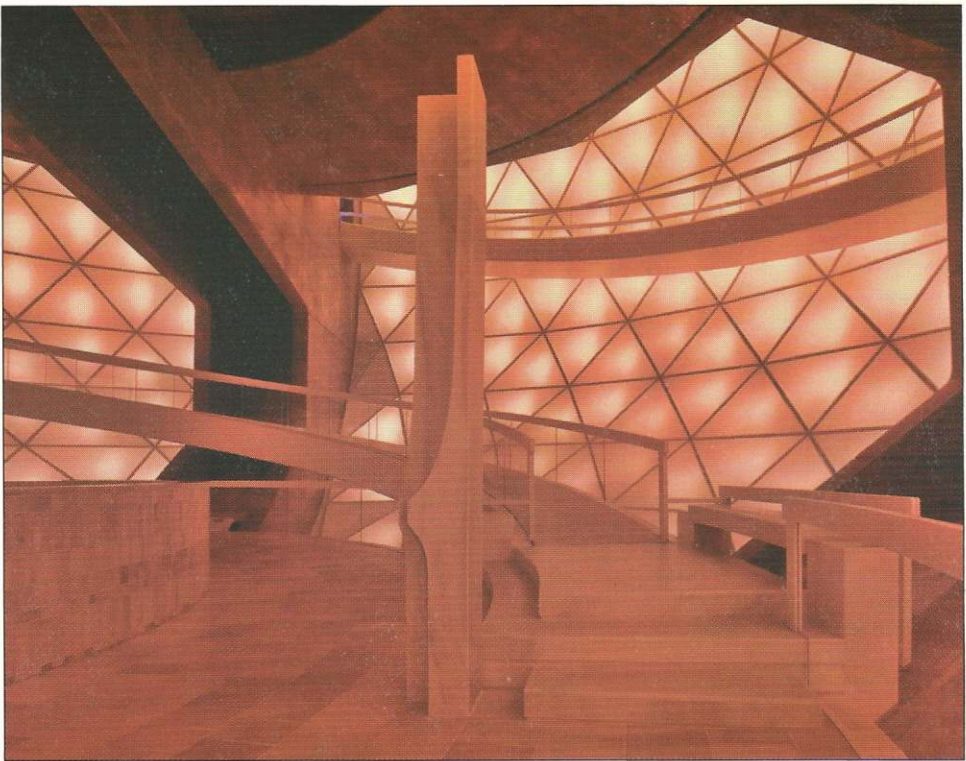
While the adults dug, carried water, planted, built, swept out community kitchens, for the kids it was an endless playground. Clambering, dirty-fingered, on the bus to rattle down to the sea, riding ponies across forever, buzzing through the bazaar. And always safe because always held close by the old lady in Pondy who smiled, and made you feel warm inside.

One day her door closed. Some time later he saw her again, under lights and whirring fans, surrounded by the crowd. Afterwards he walked to the sea: monsoon breakers, a slate sky. Everything was thinning out, trickling through his fingers. Nothing made sense any more...

But at the centre the her Matrimandir was arcing higher and higher. The workers still only a small group, arriving at 10, stubbing out beedies, retying tundu, before clambering up the structure. Simple stuff. Unclamping, clamping pipes, fixing rods, preparing shuttering and, on the big days, pouring cement for







## ille: an impression

another section. Sometimes the students came at night from the Ashram, slung chetties from hand to hand within that cathedral of scaffolding, then slept out under the stars. Building Mother's temple.

But a rent had opened and slowly, slowly, the knife entered, turned. Separating those now moving to the long, deep rhythms of the land from those stirred by visions of a futuristic city. Separating the loin-cloths from the dhotis, the harmonisers from the warriors, the long-haired *deracinés* from those embedded in one of the world's oldest cultures.

And so it whirled along: meetings, alliances, closures, new alliances, the metallic taste of fear, violence, prison, everybody suddenly dashing off to another emergency, living on their nerves. But beneath it, for some, a joy, an exultation. A bond, a mutual recognition, born out of wildness.

When the Society left, the urbane justices entered. Now Bharat Nivas mornings begin with tea and *The Times of India*, visas are regularised, a Master List of Aurovilians drawn up. The schools reopen, a more 'rational' economy is discussed, new groups form to lay new foundations.

But the head of steam is too great. The Society defeated, the knife now turns to explore our entrails, searching out 'impurity', dividing one from another, separating those who, till now, have journeyed so far together.

And so begins the great in-turning, the drawing in to family, unit, self. Meetings, movements, passion, suddenly all are suspect. Individual creativity, so long smothered, shimmers and spurts as new branches form, but the trunk is weak now, hollowed-out.

And so come the testings. A lush forest, lush lives, the hard, hot breath of modern India, a government offering protection, big brothers offering guidance and advice.

Reason promises to temper the solar flares, the daemons of dust and spirit which drive us over the edge; which drive us to exceed. Normality settles like a great, grey cloud.

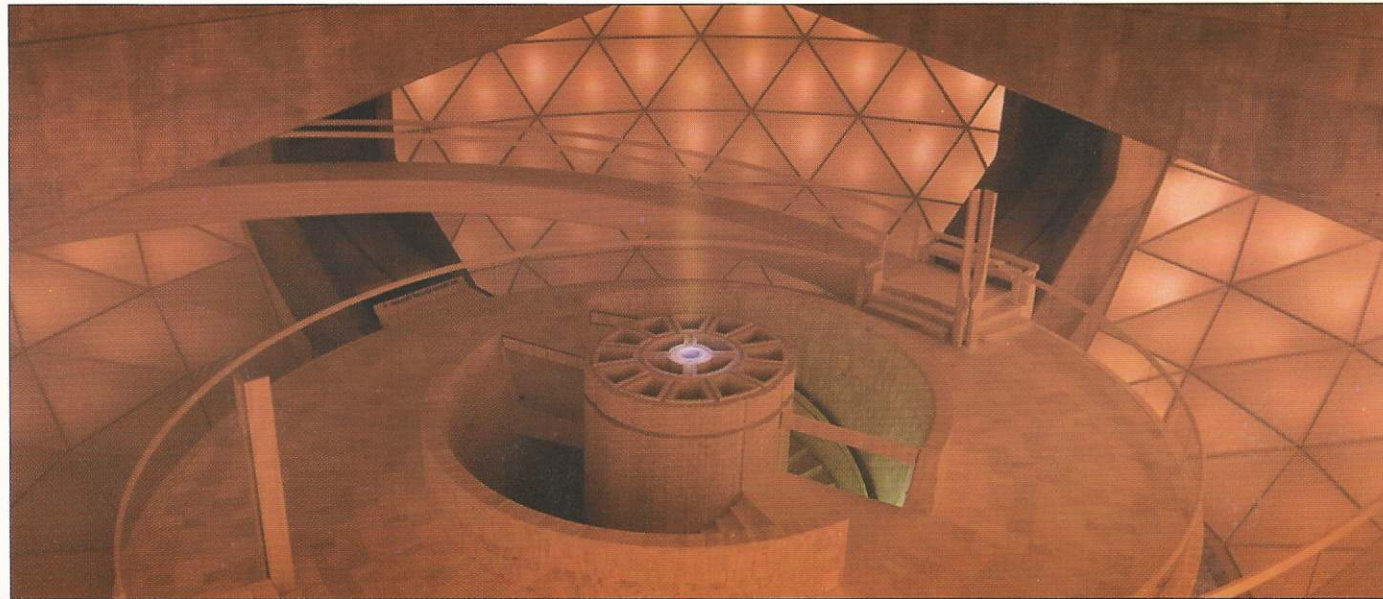
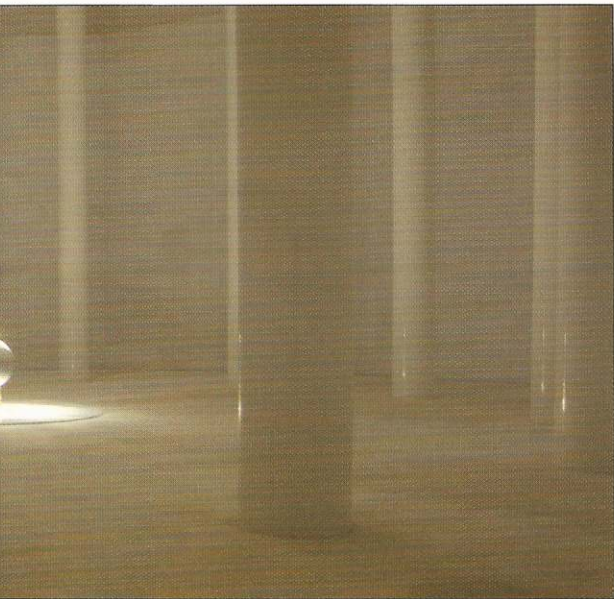
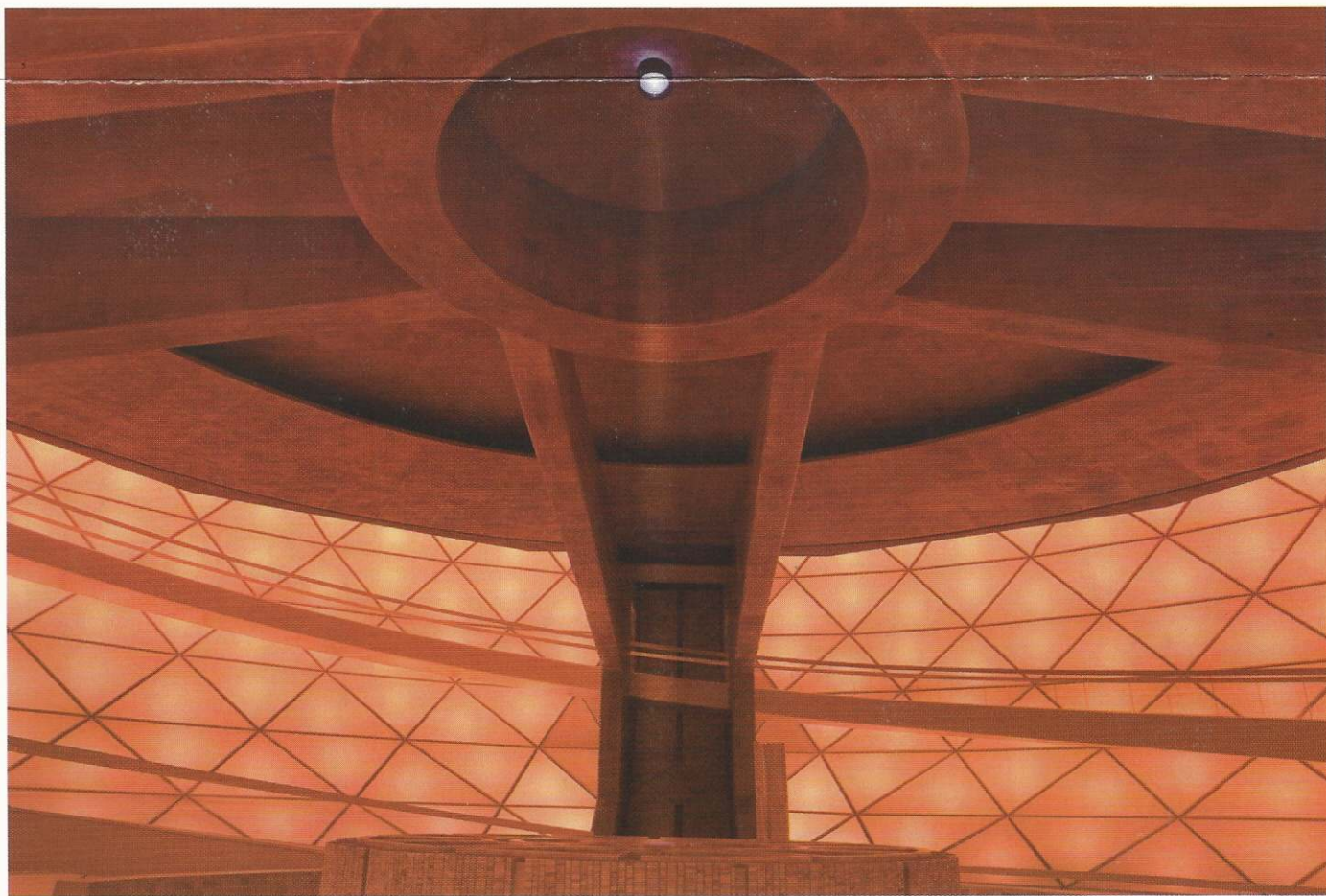
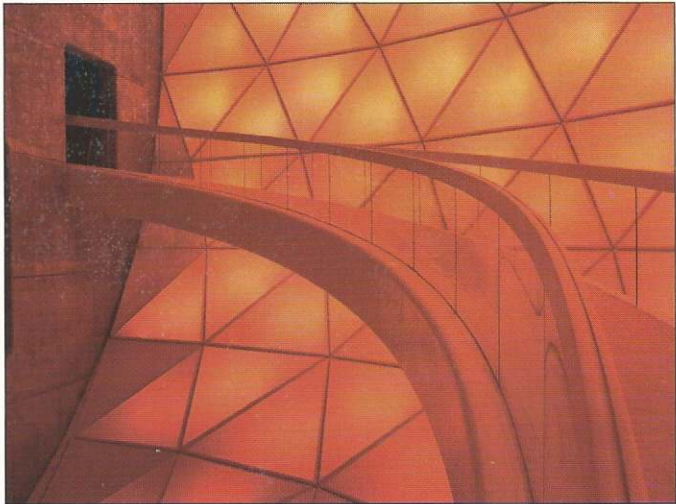
Some leave. Others hew to their work, seeking beauty in miniature, abandoning the larger canvas. Few now labour at community's rock-face.

And all the time, now flowing, now stumbling, now seduced into long and wayward diversions, the work at the centre continues. The chamber emerges pristine from years of dust and sweat, the crystal arrives from another dimension, and the still space at the centre builds and builds.

And now that density is streaming out far, far beyond a dusty plateau, recalling us – refractory, smut-nosed children of the Dream – to an adventure we embarked on long ago.

May it irrigate our deserts, submerge the bunds that divide us and dissolve the fortresses of our hearts. May it sweep away our sureties and deliver us, once again, to the Unknown.

Alan





# Consecration as a way of life

A ten day workshop at Vérité showed us how to consecrate our daily lives to 'remembering and offering'.

“One of the simplest instructions Mother and Sri Aurobindo have given for practising Integral Yoga is ‘to remember and to offer’,” says Bhavana who ran the course. “As Aurovilians striving to become willing servitors of the Divine Consciousness, it is what we should be doing before every action of the day, before and during every effort we make for building the City, for building our lives together, for building our own being in the world. But it is so difficult to remember to remember!”

This is the third Consecration Workshop Bhavana has run. They are designed for busy Aurovilians and guests. They meet in the mornings, meditate and do some yoga together, eat breakfast in silence then set off for work. They meet again at lunch time to eat in silence and to renew their intention, then go back to work. At supper time they again silently share a meal, followed by a ‘sharing’ with each other of the inner and outer experiences of the day’s attempt at consecration. Readings from Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and other teachers, on consecration are made available.

Says Bhavana, “Often the effects are magical – for is it not said ‘Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I amongst them’? We gather in the name of the Divine and the Divine must and does manifest.” There were 18 people on this course, 13 guests, two Aurovilians and three Tamil children from Udavi school. “The presence of the children was a joy. They brought us down to earth when we became too serious and introverted, and when they were tired they just lay down and went to sleep.”

A German participant who is a long-term guest at Vérité describes her experience of the ten days. “For me the most striking thing about the course was how similar it was to an



At a shared meal: 'remembering and offering'

intensive *Vipassana* retreat I had been on. The process works on a very deep level – it goes on invisibly. We spent most of the day going about our normal life, yet the seeds we had sown in the morning sessions blossomed throughout the day and were cultivated by the lunch and evening sessions.

“Several of us were not clear what ‘consecration’ meant and we were encouraged by the facilitators to develop our own interpretation. I must admit it often brought up a lot of resistance. A lot of sadness and anger came up and I often felt the only thing I wanted to do was go back to my hut and read a silly book. But after those difficult days I often experienced the sparkle of heightened perception, just like I had experienced on the intensive *Vipassana* course.

“Silently sharing the meals served on banana leaves while listening to a reading was very beautiful. I must add that the

food prepared by Anandi was remarkable.”

Anandi describes her experience; “For me and my helper the experience of cooking, sharing and consecrating the food was a powerful process of learning to give with an open heart. Several of the participants found our daily routine of meditation, yoga and silence stirred up sickness or resentment and they began to miss a few sessions. Our group presence supported them through these sticky times and inevitably they came back to join us.”

Bhavana says she would like to see the next Consecration Workshop have a slightly different format in that there would be a “solid weekend” of coming together at the beginning and at the end. During the week the participants would only meet at meals to consecrate and remember, and this would cut down the amount of coming and going. Also she would love to see Consecration weeks set up in communities. “It is very easy to

do; all you need is the commitment of a few people, and a quiet place to meet. You could have meditation, *Savitri* readings, yoga or dance sessions; it all depends on who is there. You could meet in the mornings and evenings, share a meal in silence then have a “sharing” in the evening. It really does have a deep effect, even in the middle of a working day.”

All the participants agree that it gave them a deep sense of connecting with Auroville’s real purpose which is easily lost in busy daily life. It showed them how the separation between spiritual practice and the day’s activities need not be so wide. Indeed, someone suggested it could be called ‘The Ultimate Auroville Workshop’ for its simplicity and authenticity of purpose and form.

Dianna

## HEALING

# Talking with the body

Goupi has been offering massages in Auroville for thirty years.

“Come at five and bring your body”, Goupi tells someone who wants to have a massage. It is not easy to make a booking with the humble Frenchman who is generally dressed only in shorts. He is often fully booked, and when he is working in his pyramid-shaped capsule – “I built it like this because of the special vibration it gives” – he does not pick up the phone. Even those who have an appointment may have to wait for over an hour. “A body is a being with consciousness and sometimes it needs more attention than expected,” explains Goupi.

Goupi originally studied Tibetan Buddhism in France. When he was a youngster, he wanted to live in the Himalayas. But then he came across some writings about Sri Aurobindo and all this changed. At the age of 24 he set off to Pondicherry where he met The Mother. The year was 1966. Goupi was allowed to stay in the Ashram where he taught French at the Ashram school. At that time he was called Guru Prasad, but later people started calling him ‘Goupi’ for short.

Two years later, in May 1968, Goupi revisited Paris. There he met Mother’s son André and assisted him with the task of playing Mother’s recorded talks for French devotees. When he returned to Pondicherry, The Mother was very interested to hear about the student revolution in the *Quartier Latin*. “She wanted to hear it directly from me,” recalls Goupi. He lived in the Ashram for eleven years.

Goupi had been present at Auroville’s inauguration ceremony on February 28, 1968. Later, while still living in the Ashram, he helped in the tree planting work in Auroville. In 1977 he decided to move to Auroville. “At that time everybody seemed

tense and tired, and I felt there was a great need for massages.”

Goupi’s interest in massage was encouraged by his guru Biren-da, a masseur in the Ashram. Biren-da, whom Goupi loved as an elder brother, passed away a few years ago, but a photo in Goupi’s capsule keeps the memory alive. It was Biren-da from whom he learned to “talk to the body”.

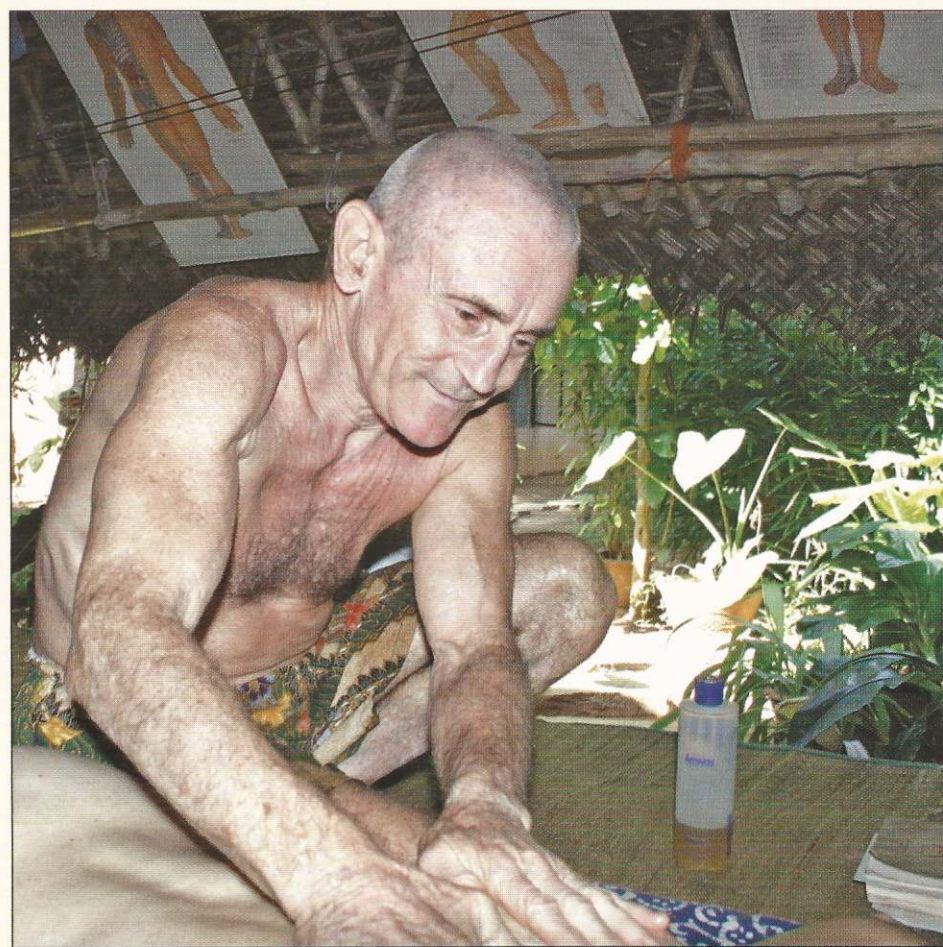
What does ‘Talk to the body’ mean? Goupi explains: “First of all you must get rid of the idea that you are giving the massage. I prepare myself by being quiet. Then I put my hands and heart on the other body and listen to its needs. Finally I let Mother do her work”.

For many years Goupi has done nothing but give massages – from eight in the morning often till seven at night. “This work has taken more and more of my time,” he says. “Sometimes I even ‘do’ ten bodies a day.”

Goupi feels he is Mother’s instrument. “She does the actual work, that’s why I am never tired,” he says. While massaging one can listen to his constant chants of “Aum” or “Jai Ma”, which he says keeps him in continuous contact with Her.

Some years ago Goupi read the book *Somatics* written by Thomas Hanna, a German who lives in the US. Hanna had been sick and was told he needed an operation which he refused. Instead he started to do special exercises adapted from Moshe Feldenkrais’ techniques, which cured him. “These somatic exercises have to do with awareness,” says Goupi, who now includes them in his own massages, together with some of the Feldenkrais techniques.

Goupi has had remarkable results. Sixteen years ago, Christel from France had a terrible car accident in which she broke her neck in two places. Her spinal cord was also compressed and she could only move her head. After surgery and physiotherapy



Goupi at work in his hut

she was able to use her hands again, but the doctors in France gave her no further hope. They told her that she had to get used to living in a wheelchair. Then Christel heard about Goupi from a friend, and began coming to Auroville every year for five months at a time to be treated by him.

Now Christel can bend and move her legs, and can even walk in a swimming pool; further improvement is expected. All this, she says, she owes to her “body brother”. “The strength of Goupi is his endless giving to others,” she says. “He is totally in the present, and is always positive. This I have not found in France. He also makes

you aware of each part of the body, and how one has to go through all its resistances.”

Now and then Goupi takes apprentices, “for it is nice to share”. One of them is Romain, who is also effusive about Goupi’s positiveness and energy. “He cuts through the patient’s discouragements.” Romain feels that Goupi’s method of “talking with bodies” is therapy for the masseur too.

Goupi is happy living in Auroville. “The dream of The Mother has become true and real. For me, life here is a realisation of how to live differently on the planet. I am grateful that Auroville exists.”

Robert



# Introducing the University of Human Unity

"Perhaps we can contribute something very new to the world"

Just over a year ago, a small group of Aurovilians felt inspired to explore the possibility of developing a University of Human Unity. The group has continued to meet regularly and, together with friends from Pondicherry, recently organised a series of seminars exploring different approaches to knowledge. We spoke to some core members – Ananda Reddy, Grace, Rakhal, Rod, Rudy and Vladimir – to find out more.

**Auroville Today: Why does Auroville need a University of Human Unity?**

**Rudy:** On 1st Feb, 1969, The Mother asked Roger to go to UNESCO and present the concept of a Université de l'Unité Humaine (University of Human Unity) for Auroville. She added that the permanent university "will be the key to the *raison d'être* of Auroville."

**Did She give any indications concerning what it would be like?**

**Rudy:** She told Roger that She would like the four dimensions – the physical, vital mental and spiritual – to be studied in the university, as in a laboratory. She also suggested that international scholars and Nobel Prize winners could meet there, to brainstorm about various issues and then spread the results all over the world.

**So why has it taken Auroville forty years to get this university?**

**Rudy:** Different attempts have been made before, the most important being the Centre for International Research in Human Unity (CIRHU) which was Roger's initiative.

**Rakhal:** In fact it was the University of Human Unity which came into his mind because he knew of Mother's statement. But Kireet Joshi, former Chairman of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation, told him that the term 'university' would not be recognised in Indian law, so they thought of another name. But the work that's been going on in CIRHU is inspired by the same spirit.

**Rod:** The main difference between our project and CIRHU is that we started on a very practical level, to try to explore how we could serve the needs of Auroville, whereas CIRHU was very idealistic and for a long time the practical level of it didn't manifest.

**Ananda:** Actually, this concept of a university had been in The Mother's mind for a long time. In the early 1950s She wanted a Sri Aurobindo International University in the Ashram, but because the government objected to the name, it became the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education instead. But now things have changed and the government no longer has any objection to new universities being set up.

Why has it taken so long? I feel Auroville had to pass through various stages of self-development on the physical, vital and emotional levels and these have now found sufficient self-expression. On the mental level Auroville is ready to share with the world all the experience it has gained over the past forty years. Now we can contribute something very new to the world.

**Rod:** The University is also a response to a request from the new President of the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). He met a group of us in 2004 and said he would like Auroville to provide solid, coherent programmes for visiting CIIS graduate students. Also there are more and more university

students coming, for whom new resources need to be developed.

**Vladimir:** Another reason for Auroville to have a university is that there are no higher education possibilities here. We should provide our youngsters with the opportunity to grow in a new way without them having to go outside.

ed people from Auroville and around to present different approaches to knowledge, then we began to see if an integral vision would emerge.

**Vladimir:** We were learning from each other, deepening each other's knowledge. There were no teachers and students any more, simply learners on the path.



From left to right: Rudy, Vladimir, Grace, Rod and Ananda (not in photo - Rakhal)

**What would this university offer?**

**Rod:** We are still exploring this. We've held a number of sessions to discover how we could be a university that would be a key to the meaning of Auroville, that would open up new possibilities for learning and that would coordinate other projects in Auroville that are geared towards learning. But we're still in a very preliminary phase.

**Ananda:** One thought is, if we acquired the status of a university we could attract many Indian scholars and it could be a good meeting-point for Aurovilians and Indians on an intellectual level. Indian universities are bogged down in their approach, they could get many fresh ideas from the University.

**Isn't there a danger that this university could become just another academic talking-shop?**

**Rakhal:** We've had some very interesting sessions so far but, for me, the intellectual approach has been predominant. I'm very eager this university does not fall into this trap. There are many ways of learning. While some focus on the intellect, others deal more with the emotional level or with action. We should take all these forms of knowledge and learning into consideration if we are to succeed.

**Rod:** So far we've always had in our seminars a diversity of interests: they haven't been academic per se. We've had presentations by musicians, artists, philosophers, teachers, social workers, most of whom are Aurovilians. If we can preserve that balance, I think we can integrate the academics.

The Mother emphasised that Auroville should develop a simple way of living that would enable further research in consciousness; that would make it possible for Aurovilians to develop an integral approach to knowledge, where spirit and matter and all the levels in between are the focus. The integral approach needs to be discovered, so we made this the central focus of our first series of seminars. We invit-

**Rod:** This 'discovery learning' is based on the idea that knowledge is not ready-made but discovered. If a diverse and aspiring group enter into a process of discovery learning, they can open up unlimited possibilities of further exploration.

**Rakhal:** We definitely experienced something that was new. At the end of each session a sense of unity was felt among us. But some processes were more effective in creating this. Deep listening was very important, and when the morning was not too full of ideas, people had more space to breathe and experience something beyond a mental reality.

**Ananda:** While I sat there, listening to different approaches I made a very definite effort to be connected with The Mother's consciousness because I'm aware that it's only Her consciousness which can bring in this sense of unity. I'm clear that unless we, the group, have this inner unity, we can't speak of human unity. So while, on an intellectual level, we learned a lot from each other, above all it was an exercise in consciousness. I gained an inner experience of oneness: I felt I could truly be myself and, at the same time, be united with the others.

**What part can the University website play in this integral learning process?**

**Grace:** My biggest challenge has been to create a cyber structure that is flexible and not in the traditional university style. I want participants to feel they are embarking on a new approach to knowledge, and therefore need to share their perspective in a way that is more integral – from the heart rather than from the head.

**Rod:** When people participate in this process, it changes the quality of the research. The website can provide a point of connection for those who would eventually come and participate here. We all agree that being here is essential because when people come here something happens.

**Can you say in what concrete way the University would benefit Auroville?**

**Rod:** There are two areas in which I foresee it making an immediate contribution to the practical development of Auroville. Firstly, we can help link together the different opportunities for experiential learning that already exist in Auroville.

zone. Through exploring these perspectives, we hope some new picture could emerge which would bring integration among the players and give the project a new impetus.

**Rudy:** We also envisage setting up a programme later this year, hopefully in collaboration with Ananda's University of Tomorrow and Matthijs Cornelissen's Indian Psychology Institute in Pondicherry, to introduce Aurovilians and outside students to this integral learning process.

The main point of the University for me is to find another way of being with each other and to help people on the way of self-discovery and transformation. My feeling is that the university will be a place that will lend expression to the ineffable; it will help people explore something that is beyond.

**Ananda:** I remember when we were students The Mother said the time had come when we have to go beyond the mind and into intuition. This could be one approach of the university. Moreover, when you go to higher levels of intuition, that automatically brings in a greater sense of human unity: the sense of oneness is one of the primary benefits.

**Rod:** Today the challenge for Auroville is to realize human unity exists so that we can develop a society and a world based on unity rather than division. Auroville is not going to discover human unity by randomly building houses and creating new financial structures. The development and expression of human unity in Auroville requires a deliberate concentration on discovering it and disseminating that knowledge. The University could play a key role here.

*From an interview by Alan*

visit the website at:  
[universityofhumanunity.org](http://universityofhumanunity.org)

## LETTER

Dear Auroville Today,

I enjoyed the interview with Abha and Claude in the November 2007 issue. I would like to add to Claude's comment on the question of teaching Buddhism at the Tibetan Pavilion.

As Claude says, Buddhism has a lot to offer. In particular it is rich in knowledge about how to purify the Mind. The Mother's '*Commentaries on the Dhammapada*' (a Buddhist collection of verses) begins with this comment: "Every Friday I shall read out to you a few verses of the *Dhammapada*, then we shall meditate on that text. This is to teach you mental control. ..."

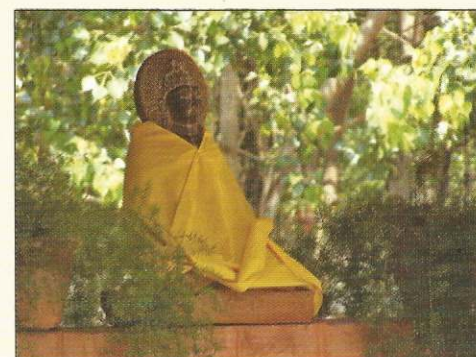
When The Mother said that we must not make a religion of Integral Yoga, she was surely referring to the making of a fixed body of rules and regulations that exclude all other ways and means and that focus on external forms. She wanted inner development to come first and be executed uniquely and flexibly to each individual via the Divine *Shakti* in each.

Her acceptance of the practices and wisdom of all sorts of schools of thought (see for example her book '*The Lesson of Life*') is evidence that all wisdom, wherever it is to be found, is acceptable to us in our integral development.

I have used Buddhism in this way. In helping me to achieve mental peace i.e. mental purification, it has been of immeasurable help to my practice of Integral Yoga. Its advice has been fitted into my own goal, which is not the Buddhistic *Nirvana*, but Transformation as outlined by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. For, Integral Yoga's Transformation, in common with other Paths, requires the disciplining and purification of the Mind.

So to avoid confusion, perhaps the Tibetan Pavilion or those who conduct courses there, could take a little time to explain how Buddhist knowledge fits into the aim of Integral Transformation. A single sheet distributed with each course may be a simple means to achieve this.

With best wishes,  
Girija Shettar (London, UK)





# The Art of Kirikane

Every year, the fine arts of Japan seem to be making their presence felt in Auroville. Last year it was a compilation of old works of *Yamato-e* at Kalakendra. This year, there was a more unusual exhibition at Savitri Bhavan – the *Kirikane* art works by a master craftswoman, Sayoko Eri (1945-2007). In homage to his mother's life and prolific creativity, and as a prelude to the future Japanese Pavilion, Aurovilian Jyoti offered this exhibition to the Auroville community.

The image is exquisite – a deep brown wood surface embellished with a sunburst of gold amidst a spray of a thousand white and silver blossoms. It is a close-up of a *Kirikane* work of art by Japanese master Sayoko Eri. Like a never-ending fractal, a hypnotic world within a world, the pattern endlessly repeats itself, taking the viewer deeper into itself.

The artist is the late Sayoko Eri, who had bestowed upon her one of Japan's highest honours – National Living Treasure, 'The Holder of Important Intangible Cultural Property'.

*Kirikane*, also known as *Hosogane* or 'cut gold-leaf' is a decorative technique used on sacred Buddhist images and drawings. It was introduced to Japan together with Buddhism from China and the Korean peninsula in the Asuka era (6th – 7th century). The technique involves heat-fusing several sheets of gold leaf foil, or in some cases platinum, which have been laid on top of each other to form a thicker sheet. This is then cut into fine strips, or round, triangular or square pieces using a knife of bamboo. These pieces are then glued onto the surface of the artwork with the tip of a brush.

In October 2007, Sayoko Eri passed away of a sudden brain haemorrhage while on a museum tour of Europe. She was only 62. "She enjoyed travelling and was very often out with my father," says her son Jyoti, who lives in Auroville. "On this trip she was visiting cathedrals in northern France particularly to look at stained glass as a medium to do *Kirikane* work on, and to conduct research at the British Museum on the most ancient *Kirikane* work excavated in Alexandria, Egypt."

By the time Jyoti reached France, Sayoko had already left the world. He recalls the moment. "She was so luminous that I knew her leaving was smooth and peaceful." This last image of his mother moved him deeply. "I could feel a oneness with her."

Since 2005, Jyoti had been preoccupied with the idea of having an exhibition of his mother's *Kirikane* works in Auroville. "I had been thinking of inviting her to Auroville at that time." His only question had been where to hold the show. During the month-long funeral ceremony in Japan, he got his answer. "Even though my mother does not read much, on this trip she was carrying Sri Aurobindo's '*Savitri*'. So it came spontaneously to me that the exhibition had to be in Savitri Bhavan." January was the only time the exhibition hall at Savitri Bhavan was free. This meant that Jyoti had less than a month to put the show together. "But the process unfolded so poetically," says Jyoti. "What I had to do, what to exhibit as she has so many works, and how to present the space aesthetically – in everything I felt the help of my mother."

Most of exhibits in the show are photo reprints of Sayoko's *Kirikane* works. However, there are three original works exhibited in a sealed display cupboard – two incense holders and a lotus petal of carved wood decorated with the finest gold strips. Jyoti brought them back with him when he returned from Japan. "I am still not sure how the tropical conditions here will affect them," he says. He explains the delicate handling they demand – "only with white gloves".

Interspersed between the images are the thoughts of Sayoko Eri. In one, she describes why gold is used. *In decorating sacred images that represent eternal life, nothing seems more appropriate than gold, because it maintains its brilliance for ever. [...] Kirikane was probably born out of the wish to express somehow the 'sparkle' of joy that one feels when encountering salvation through a great teaching. [...]*

She also believed that tradition is about carrying forward the spirit of the past. *To feel our forerunners' piousness and touch and to pass their mind down is the most important thing* she wrote. *I would like young people to find their own potential and the joy of creation, and to be a power plant to generate their own energy.*

Sayoko's passing was seen in Japan not only as a tremendous loss to the *Kirikane* community, but also as a big loss to the Japanese cultural and art world. "But at the same time," says Jyoti, "many realized that she had done enough substantial work."

Besides her profuse creativity, in the last five years of her life Sayoko also became deeply involved in disseminating knowledge about *Kirikane* through lectures at universities and exhibitions for the public. Jyoti explains, "Ever since the status of 'National Living Treasure' was bestowed on her in 2002, her life became even more

busy and she was more in the public eye. In her case this honour was unique. Besides being the youngest artist to receive such recognition, she was also the first woman who was recognised as a living treasure in the field of *Kirikane*.

Sayoko was brought up in a family of *kimono* makers and embroidery artists from Kyoto. "I believe that the source of her art is genetic," says Jyoti. "When I was a child and we went to their family studio, we'd open the many boxes of silk thread. Looking at those coils we would be struck with wonder; it was so beautiful. "It was as if in the presence of this beautiful material, we could feel the infinite possibilities of creation. We felt ourselves as small beings in a vast universe... This kind of feeling I think is the source of her expression."

Sayoko's entry into the world of *Kirikane*, by tradition a male domain, began after her marriage. "Traditionally this kind of Buddhist art decoration technique was done only by men," explains Jyoti. "At the time she married my father, who came from a family of sacred statue makers, there were very few *Kirikane* craftsmen doing the decorative work on these statues. So both my father and grandfather encouraged her to get into the field."

Sayoko took up the task tentatively even as she raised her two children. In her reminiscences of her early days, Sayoko writes: *When I first made craft objects, I began with small items because I did not have much spare time since I had to take care of my children. Small boxes, small spheres and so on... Before I knew it, my works had become larger in size and my children had become grown up too.*

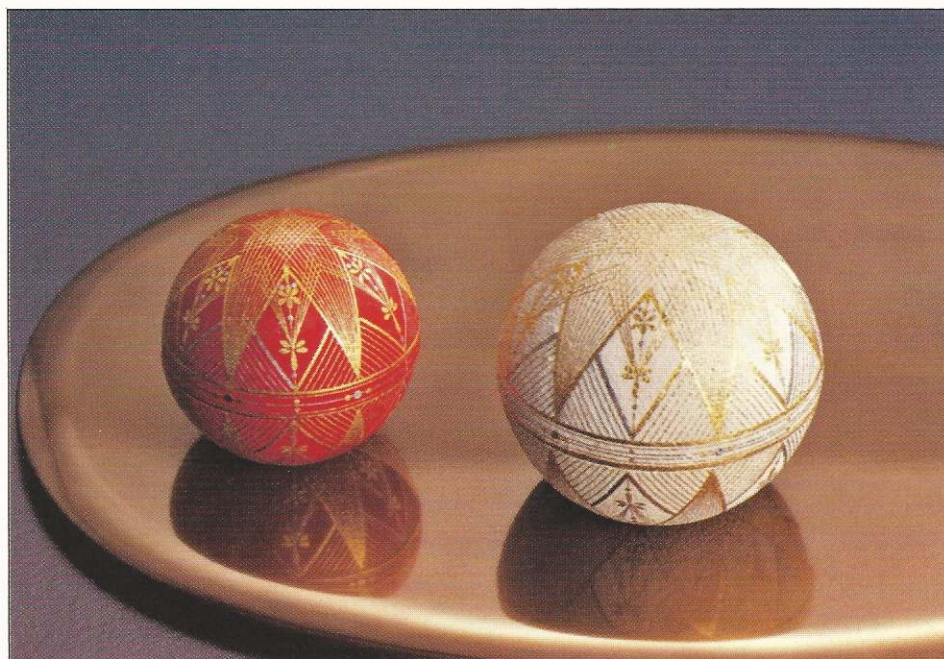
Sayoko did not restrict herself to decorating Buddhist images alone which are often hidden from view. She wanted *Kirikane* to reach "the people of the current era". This made her apply *Kirikane* to everyday craft objects like tea ceremony utensils, or household items, such as small boxes, folding stands, screens, decorated frames, and also larger objects like wall decorations and plaques.

What is striking about the exhibits is the absence of any artist's signature or seal. Jyoti explains: "In the sacred arts of Buddhism and Shintoism, the Masters do not sign their names. It is the same with Tibetan *thangka* paintings too. The tradition is that the artist remains humble and hides behind the work because people understand that inspiration does not belong to the artist but to the higher being. My mother does put a seal sometimes if there is a request from a customer, but it is almost impossible to recognize or identify; and it is always behind the work..."

For Jyoti, curating the exhibition has been a journey of rediscovering his mother and her creative expression. "I can see the changes she has gone through as an artist."

"In the beginning, there is so much freshness and also some kind of uncertainty in her works. It was as if she is just entering into the 'unknown' – not just technically, but also philosophically and spiritually. And slowly, her style begins to get established. Then a change comes from her search for the motive behind the ancient masterpieces of Japanese and Buddhist art. From this point she goes deeply into sacred art."

"In the last period of her life, one can recognize that she has found her own style. This was the time she was recognized as a National Living Treasure. And that's when the most interesting process of her expression starts. She is now established and now she seems to 'play' more in her



Nagomi – Peacefulness' – decorative spheres or *mari* with delicate *Kirikane* work

work with what she has learnt before... a kind of mastery of play."

The ten-day long exhibition received an overwhelming response from visitors and Auroville residents alike. For Jyoti, the exhibition has been a "symbolic dedication from the 'land of the rising sun' to the 'city of dawn' where the 'Higher Sun' emerges."

"As the Mother said, there were so many wonders during Her stay in Japan from an artistic point of view. She explained that for a long time, Japan has been the teacher of the beauty in the physical world; but that Japanese beauty was established under very strict traditions and also came through the mental approach. One of Her messages to Japan was: *Let Supreme Beauty be manifest in this land of beauty so close to my heart.*

"Now we have to face beauty beyond the mental understandings – beauty which is more spontaneous, less rigid, and is the direct inspiration from the Divine through the psychic. This is the way we have to move."

"I believe that with this exhibition an invisible seed of the Japanese Pavilion was sown in the atmospheric field of the International zone," he continues. "With many Aurovilians so fond of Japanese culture, I am sure this will happen in a unique way," he says. "First in spirit and then in matter..."

As the soul-searing notes of the *Sho*\* drop into the stillness of the exhibition hall, the air is palpable with the spirit of Japan. Indeed, the Japanese Pavilion has landed on our red earth...

Priya Sundaravalli

\* A wind instrument used in Gagaku, the music of the Japanese Imperial court

The March issue of *Auroville Today* will be delayed due to events in late February connected to the 40th anniversary celebrations.

## Celebrating the Kolam



On 27th January, the Auroville Women's Group organised a *kolam* competition in Bharat Nivas. Over a hundred women from many villages in the area spent the day drawing *kolams* – sacred geometric patterns – on the pathways inside Bharat Nivas. Every participant received a gift. The winning design (above) was drawn by Amsa from Kullapalayam village.

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