

AUROVILLE TODAY

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Reaching Out

After a news 'black-out' — or at least a lengthy period of low voltage communication — *Auroville Today* was started to provide more regular information to Auroville centres abroad, to friends of Auroville and to Aurovilians. The information given concerns Auroville's growth and development. In this sense, *Auroville Today* is not an internal publication per se, but a mirror reflecting outward. Nonetheless, we would like, as far as it is possible, to tilt the mirror inward as well, and at times reflect something of our internal debates and self-questionings, to present the distilled essence of our dialectic process — shorn, that is, of the heated overlays characteristic of the compressed, steamy, eclectic and volatile atmospherics of our group meetings. But like juggling on a high wire, a sense of judgement and balance is needed. Not everything can be transposed to the printed page.

Communication is an important element in activating the vibratory network that is the greater Auroville. At the outset we felt like a performer facing, reaching out to an unseen audience with which he has to establish a rapport. Responses — both from within and outside Auroville — to our first four issues have been positive and heartening (we are presenting in this issue a selection from the many letters we have received). Slowly, as the lights come on, we are beginning to realize that that greater network, on which much of Auroville's future depends, stretches from California to Quebec, from France to Russia, from Britain to India, from Holland to Singapore.

The editorial team

"The basic thing is not just dance. The basic thing is to build up your consciousness, to be aware, be tuned. I think this is what I'm all the time talking about."



Chandralekha

Photo: Susan

"If you're dancing, how can you be tired?"

She stands alone on stage, a small figure with deep, fiery eyes and an electric presence. Chandralekha is not only a poet, writer and illustrator, but a renowned dancer who has broken with tradition both in her life and her work. A few years ago she brought us "Angika", a performance which celebrated the power and poetry of the body. "Dance means freedom", she says. "We dance, not to entertain but to learn about ourselves."

Recently she returned with "Lilavati", an interpretation, through dance and music and poetry, of a celebrated text on Indian mathematics. During rehearsal, Auroville Today talked to her about her work — its relationship to the classical tradition, to life, to consciousness.

An interview with Chandralekha

Auroville Today: How do you relate your work to the dance tradition?

Chandralekha: I don't know, I can't separate dance from life and work, from one's attitude in day-to-day life. So it's very difficult to say how I relate to this or that. You live your life every day, and every day you make values, every day you do whatever work you happen to be doing. Well, sometimes it happens to be dance, sometimes it happens to be some work with women's groups, sometimes it is work with some development groups, sometimes it is writing, painting, drawing something, sometimes women are discussing questions from their life and their conditions of life, so I feel it is a question of being open and available to whatever happens around you.

AVT: I get the impression that you work

very closely with the whole group. How much are the group, the dancers, the musicians influencing what is going to be performed?

C: From the dancers and the musicians I ask for a certain openness. Basically the dancers are young dancers, they have had no experience of taking on a responsibility of any kind of creative work or conceptional work or taking an idea and visualizing it. They have very good skills, they have all learned in our group. In the "Angika" group, each member had worked 7 to 10 years with their body, so the body is tuned. They come with that preparation. After that, one begins.

When they come to my house I ask "Why are you looking so tired?" They say: "Oh we have been practicing, we've been dancing, today the class was long". If you're dancing,

how can you be tired, it's against the principle of the body, it's against the principle of energy, it's against the principle of dance to be tired. "How can you be tired?", I ask. And this is how the dialogue happens. If you are dancing, then my experience tells me that when you are dancing, the first half hour, the first ten minutes you are tired, you're tired maybe 15 minutes to half an hour. After half an hour, the body begins to generate energy, you're not so tired. After 40 minutes of dancing you're free of fatigue, you're no more tired. After one hour of dancing, two hours of dancing you feel light, you can fly, because your body is generating energy. So I question this, I tell them "How can you be tired, there's something wrong in what you are doing. What you are doing is cosmetic. Maybe your lips are getting tired too, because if you give false smiles all those muscles will pain, but if you're dancing from the spine and generate energy, then you cannot be tired." I try to take this principle from the dance to the women's groups. They tell me: "We have so much work, we work from morning to evening, we don't need exercise." Then I say — this is the kind of dialogue I learned to make with them — I say, "What you are doing is not exercise, it is spending energy. It is not generation of energy." As a dancer I know what it is to create energy from the body. And expenditure of energy and generation

of energy are two different things altogether. There are hundreds of things like this about the body and about energy, so many things about the distances in the body, about the unity in the body, about the coordination in the body, about the alienation in the body. One begins to understand lots of things. I can read a lot about people and their bodies, about their spines, about the way they are sitting, about whether they are tuned or not tuned. They usually do not understand the simple principles of how to sit, how to move in a way they can be stronger and not de-energized by the end of the day, scattered by the kind of demands the whole day, or life, makes on us. It is possible to create that energy you need to cope, even with 50 people coming to see me plus my work load, with having to meet deadlines etc. one can create that time, that energy. If you sleep for four hours the quality of sleep can be enough to last you, every day you can sleep for four hours for years, and yet you can be full of energy. The basic thing is not just dance. The basic thing is to build up your consciousness, to be aware, be tuned. I think this is what I'm all the time talking about.

AVT: What does it mean, exactly, "to be tuned"?

C: It is just like... in order to create music with an instrument, you tune the instrument, don't you? One has to experience

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what it means to be tuned. If you tune yourself, you can be aware of many things that happen around you. For example, you can tune into sounds, you can tune in with your eyes, with all the senses. Most of the time, I feel, we are scattered, we are not tuned. If you're tuned, you create. You must be very tuned to do any creative work.

AVT: Can you speak about how to unify your body, the principle of unifying the body?

C: Take for instance the sports people, like somebody who just throws, with the hand. Suddenly you see that the man is world famous, but if you look at that person, you see that the rest of the body doesn't go with the kind of perfection that he developed. I don't believe in that kind of work. You develop one part exclusively or one capacity, and the rest does not get developed. I think there is something wrong about that kind of specialization, where the specialization leads to treating the body as spare parts. The understanding of unity is very difficult. Visually you see two people doing exactly the same thing, like sitting or standing, and still there is a difference. The one is truth and the other is falsehood. Why? It is the whole energy principle. It is a relationship of the centre with the circle, circles of energy. Our dancers get, after 2 or 3 years of work, maybe half to one centimetre more stretch of the spine, not more, but that is the truth. That gives them a sense of dignity, a sense of power. The gain in terms of the spine or stretch is maybe this much (she indicates one centimetre), but the moment you do this, the whole thing, the whole body changes. Your relationship to the body, the centre, everything changes. And I think this has become of great interest to the whole group, to understand their spine, their centre, their energy circuits, about how the energy begins and how it returns. These things are not abstract, they are very tangible experiences. In our group everyone has begun to get a glimpse into this area of the body.

AVT: Chandralekha, have you developed your own kind of exercises to bring this out more, or are they based on traditional movements?

C: We are doing some traditional exercises, just what we learn from martial arts, or from Bharat Natyam or from Indian gymnastics, but we are not following any particular set of exercises. Generally the stress is on togetherness. Before we perform, we need to be together and to feel that we are not performing.

AVT: If you are interested in coming and working with us, how would you see that?

C: I am very keen to work with Igor and his music, that kind of abstraction where he reaches out to the pure sounds. That music that he has done, "The Winds of Shiva", that

kind of music is very valuable for us. I feel it is a universal quality of music which can make that link of music and movement.

Igor: For a long time we have been wanting to work together and I think now is the time.

AVT: When you build up a new piece, when do you know that you are ready to perform? How long does it take you to prepare a piece? Do you fix your deadline beforehand?

C: The programme that we are bringing now has been worked out very recently. Over a time it will grow. In the meantime we are presenting three mathematical questions, but I had many questions in mind that I want to work with. They are questions of mathematics and calculus and geometry which I have not worked out as yet. But we had already started working on one so I asked our group, "Look, Auroville is just like a home, they are not people who come with a measuring tape. If something is open and nice work, they will respond to it. So do you think you are ready to present this work as work in progress?" It was difficult for everybody to say yes, everybody is frightened because they have not rehearsed, not practised. It is difficult. But with a thing like that, I wouldn't mind if it was not ready to perform.

AVT: Do you relate to modern classical Western dance?

C: I respond to many dancers, their work, like Martha Graham, to Mary Wigman, to somebody fresh and strong like Pina Bausch in Germany. I respond to that very strongly. Susanna Link in Germany, I like her very much. Many dancers, Merce Cunningham—just sheer quality of line and power of line. Personally I work in a different way. I don't work with ideas. My entire work is not based on story, it's not based on narrative, it's concepts. I think as Indians we are so rich in concepts, and a conceptual way of thinking. I feel I have a mind like that, just like the ancients who think conceptually. So my way of working is more with a concept. I feel that with Western dancers who are working with an idea, the dance becomes very dry, very technical, there's a lack of sensuality. But saying that I think it also reflects the way of life in the West. They are the expression of the life around them. They are responding to it and projecting. I don't judge that, but I see a certain dryness.

The very modern kind of people, from John Cage to people who use electronic sound and use science and technology, those people, I feel, are bringing science and art together. It is an interesting statement of contemporary realities. I don't belong to those people who think only India and nothing else. I don't say that.

Interview by: Yanne, Tineke.

Auroville Yesterday?

By Gilbert

"Here is the place which belongs to no prince, to no god. No one owns it. Here is the place for all of us... The earth will find joy in it. Here the hearts will be happy."

Does this sound familiar?

You may have heard about the beautiful queen of Egypt, Nefertiti. She was born in 1388 BC and was married to the Pharaoh Amenophis IV, later known as Akhnaton. Akhnaton was a daring reformist. He opted for a monotheist cult, in a time of polytheism. He only worshipped the LIGHT, pure and free.

In 1369 B.C., this "modern" couple founded the new city of Amarna, which means Horizon. It became the capital of Egypt. It was situated midway between Memphis (Cairo) and Thebes (Luxor), on the eastern bank of the Nile.

At this place, the cliffs of the high desert shift away from the river and form a wide semicircle of fertile soil, some 12 kms long and a bit less than 5 kms wide. Big steles (flat pillars) were put around the area, bearing the story of its foundation:

"Here is the place which belongs to no prince, to no god. No one owns it. Here is the place for all of us... The earth will find joy in it. Here the hearts will be happy"

At the centre of the city, Akhnaton and Nefertiti built a temple to the Light. Inside, there was no picture of any god and no image of traditional worshipping.

In this new city, Akhnaton wanted everybody to be equal: Egyptians and foreigners (many of whom were attracted there), king and common people, men and women. Artists and craftsmen received support and encouragement to express their skills fully. Money was not the sovereign ruler. Soldiers did other jobs than war.

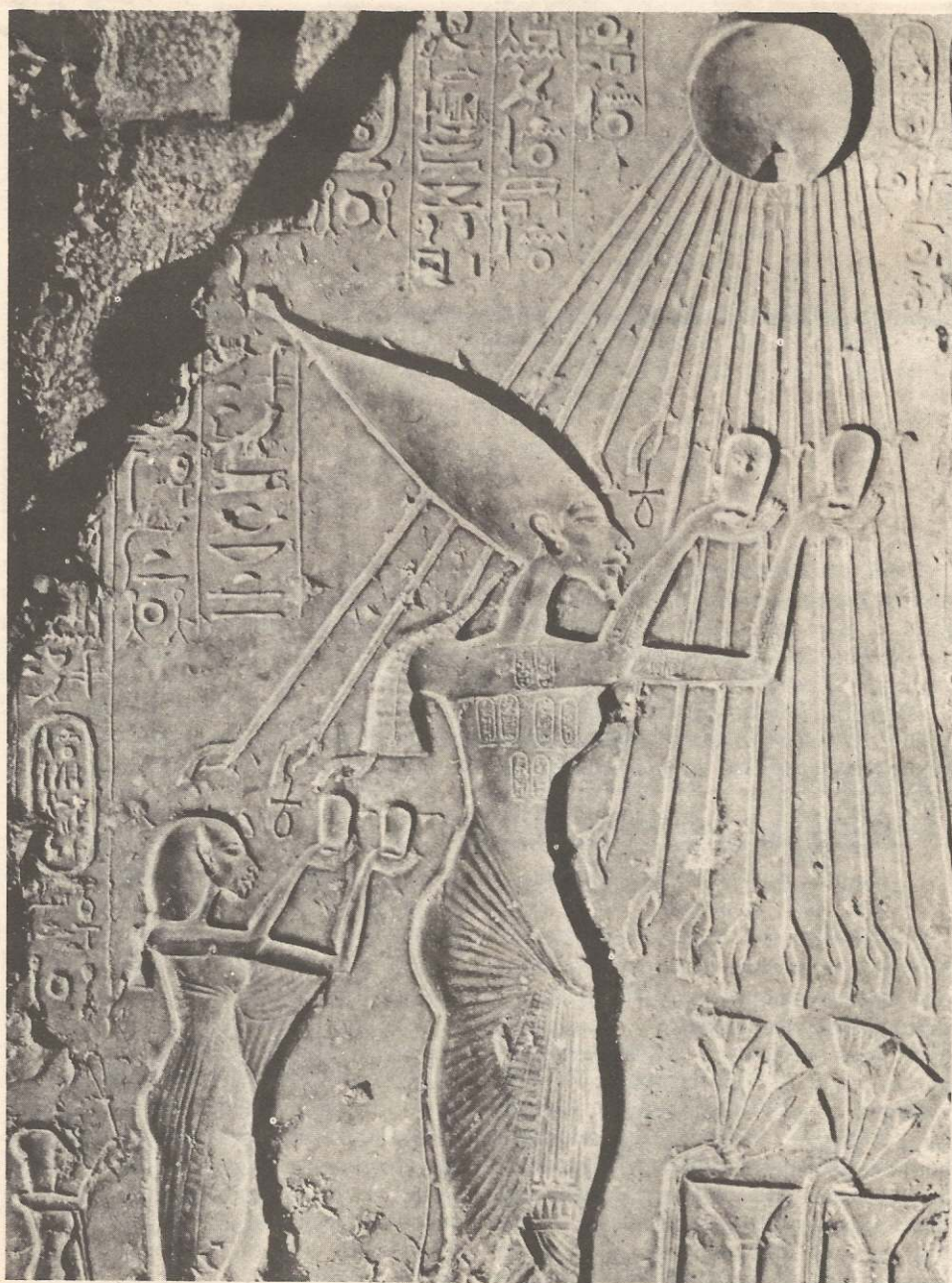
It went on for 22 years, amidst growing discontent of the traditional ruling classes: the army chiefs and the polytheist high priests.

When the general-dictator Horemheb seized power in 1347 B.C., he revived the old capital Thebes and sent thousands of troops to Amarna with one goal: total obliteration. Graves were mutilated, buildings demolished, the names of Akhnaton and Nefertiti were frenziedly chipped from the walls. The city was virtually razed to the ground. A layer of cement was spread over the ruins, as if to make sure that no contamination from this cursed place could ever occur.

Only the upper Castle remained untouched. The queen Nefertiti, who helplessly witnessed everything, found refuge there with her scribe Bubastos.

This story perhaps gives Auroville a new dimension; was it the same spirit that passed unscathed from Egypt through the centuries to be materialized again here in India?

Reference: "Nefertiti et le rêve d'Akhnaton", by André Chédid.



Akhenaton and Nefertiti, followed by one of their daughters, present offerings to their god Aton, who is represented by a solar disk the rays of which terminate in hands. Stela of the Eighteenth Dynasty, 1580 to 1350. Cairo.

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Central Ground Water Board: "Planning of water-supply schemes by ground water development on scientific lines is a must."

Water is our life-blood, a precious shared resource. But for many years, our use of it in Auroville has been extremely individualistic: everybody, it seemed, wanted to sink their own well to water their own plot. As the wells proliferated, a number of people became concerned about our haphazard approach and lack of knowledge regarding our water reserves. In 1984, the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) surveyed Auroville, due to a grant from UNESCO. They concluded that 'moderate' development of our water resources was feasible if schemes were designed to take account of our local hydrogeological conditions. Above all, they stressed that if Auroville was to be a township of 50,000 people, "planning of water-supply schemes by ground water development on scientific lines is a must".

Tom runs the Auroville Water Service. Tency has for many years coordinated the drilling of deep wells in Auroville. Auroville Today spoke to them about the present state of our knowledge and expertise, and in particular about how we can best manage our water resources in the future and in 1989—a year that promises to be a tough one.

The aquifers

Auroville Today: Like most Aurovilians, I'm almost completely ignorant about what's happening beneath my feet regarding water. Can you give us a simple introduction to the Auroville hydrological situation?

Tom: Let's begin with the wells. Basically, we have 3 types of wells in Auroville. Firstly, open wells sunk to a depth of between 10 to 15 metres. Then the shallow borewells—which are between 20 and 50 metres deep. Next are the deeper borewells down to about 100 metres—and we have four now tapping down to about 250 metres. We have one very deep borewell—Charlie's—which is sunk to 350 metres.

Tency: These wells are tapping 3 different aquifers [water bearing strata—eds.]. Each aquifer has different characteristics regarding the quality and quantity of the water.

Tom: The first aquifer is at about 20 to 30 metres, depending on location. Since the water reserves at this level are not large—only a maximum of 3 cubic metres an hour—these wells can only service a small area. The majority of Auroville borewells (about 65) are tapping this first aquifer. This level depends almost entirely on local rains and is depleted the quickest.

Tency: After about 30 metres, we reach a limestone strata, sandwiched between clay. This makes it impermeable. Once you get through this, you tap a completely different quality of water. It's less acidic than the upper aquifer, and there's more of it. But once depleted, it takes longer to replenish.

Tom: There are about 24 wells tapping this aquifer, which goes down to about 100 metres. The yield is certainly bigger than that of the first aquifer, but it's still not sufficient to service a large area. The exception is on the eastern side of Kulapalayam where the famous Cuddalore aquifer is tapped. Here the resources are almost limitless—but we've been warned to be very careful here because of the danger of salt intrusion into the water from the sea. This is why we have this prohibition on drilling new wells 6 kms. inland from the coastline.

Tency: The next aquifer—the 3rd—has a huge potentiality in terms of water reserves. A few of our wells—the Institute and the Matimandir wells for example—are tapping this aquifer which lies between 100 and 250 metres deep. The problem is that this water has been trapped so long underground that minerals have leached into it from the rocks. This may make it unfit for drinking. And once this aquifer has been depleted, it takes a very long time to recharge it.

AVT: Where does the water come from?

Tom: This is important. Some, of course, comes by rain percolating through the Auroville surface area. But the deeper aquifers depend on more than local conditions. The aquifer that Charlie is tapping (at 350 metres) is a continental one that one day will have to be replenished. And if we don't begin now to reafforest the mountains, hundreds of kilometres away, we could be affected one day. There will be no

magic for Auroville. We are not an island.

Tency: We tap Kaliveli Tank [a large lake to the north of Auroville—eds.] below about 350 metres. At the moment, it's no real use, but in the future it may be important.

AVT: How much detailed knowledge do we have about the water situation under Auroville?

Tency: It's quite well documented, since we've drilled 24 deeper borewells and had the CGWB report. What we have to do now is to monitor the situation, to check flow and recharge rates. And for that we need to drill some observation wells and have some specific tools.

Tom: We need weather stations to collect meteorological data and a laboratory to analyse water samples. For example, if the salt level increases, we'll know we're pumping too much.

AVT: But aren't conditions very localized? Can we pinpoint exactly where we need to drill to get the best yield?

Tom: One thing the CGWB survey discovered was a fault running right through Revelation, Centre-Field, Edayanchavadi, Good Earth and on to Morattandi. Now the eastern slope of this fault yields much better reserves than the western slope. So, our old Revelation well was on the western side, but the new one—close by—is on the east. And there's a tremendous difference. So we can be quite specific.

The situation today

AVT: It looks as if this may be a very difficult year as the monsoon has failed once again. What's the present situation?

Windmill Blues

(To be sung plaintively to the refrain of "Okee Cokee" - an English dance hall song.)

You pull your well pipes out,
You put your well pipes in,
You pull your well pipes out,
And you change them all about.
You drop your largest spanner
Then you bandage up your toes,
That's how the morning goes!

You pull your green sails in,
You let your green sails out,
You pull your green sails in
And you tie them all about.
You stumble in the darkness
And a rod digs in your back,
And that's when the bearing cracks!

You paint your new tower blue
You paint your new tower red
You paint your new tower blue
Then you stagger off to bed.
Your fingers feel like sausages
Your hair falls out in clumps
While you dream of 'lectric pumps!

Alan

"The challenge is to move from a very individual use of water to something more interlinked."

Tency: The first aquifer is affected the worst. People depending on this aquifer will have a difficult summer.

Tom: We finished the monsoon with a level that was about the same when we began it. That means there's been no recharge this year. We're tapping the reserves of previous years now.

Tency: Out of the last 10 monsoons, 6 have been insufficient, unable to recharge our water table. So it's urgent. And the 2nd and 3rd aquifers are definitely also down.

Tom: We don't know what will happen. We've never had such a situation before. And we can't expect any improvement until the next big monsoon in November. Even then, if we get big rains, recharge will take some months.

AVT: What can we do to cope with this situation? Let's take short term action first.

Tom: Firstly we should become conscious of how much water we use every day and how much we really need. Just observe. Gardens, for example, are often over-watered. Plants can be mulched and watered more appropriately. Leaking taps should be fixed. We have to reduce our consumption.

Tency: We can also look at recycling waste water. We have a system in use here where waste water is collected and passed through a pond containing soil and semi-aquatic plants which purify it. Afterwards it can be used for irrigation etc. We calculate that a household of 4 people can have 5000 litres of reusable water a week using this method. And it's not a huge investment.

Tom: We should also do some research into good quality taps and valves.

Tom: It's coming. We have 3 integrated systems in Auroville now—Auromodel, Certitude and the Hand Made Paper Factory system—and people are willing for the Auroville Water Service to take over responsibility and run them for them. This is a big step. And it gives the Water Service the opportunity to study more, to design something leading towards the future. It's a matter of consciousness—for example putting in a bigger pipe than is necessary at the present stage, planning for the future.

Tency: And we'll need more borewells—there's no escaping this. And we'll also need to pray a lot for better monsoons.

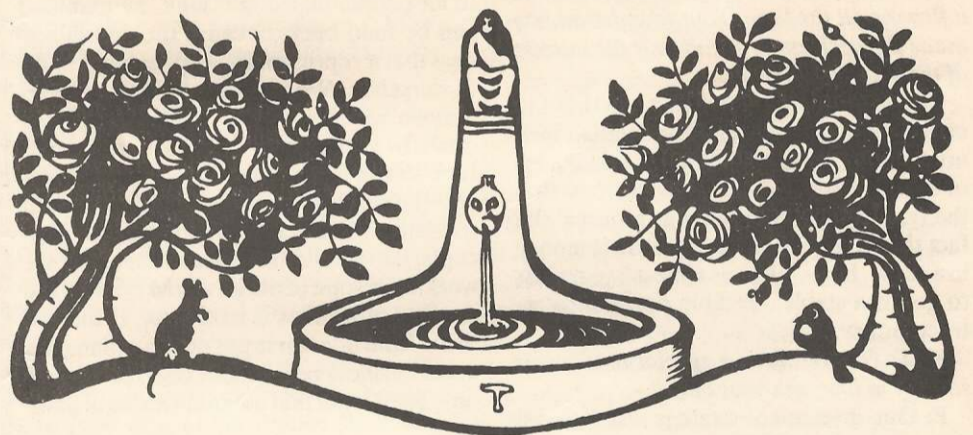
AVT: Do we have enough reserves for a city of 50,000?

Tom: At the moment, we are producing about 3,800 cubic metres of water per day. If this was properly managed and distributed, this would be enough to support 10,000 people. For the future, we have to study other methods to augment our supply. For example, large-scale recycling and desalination. At the moment, however, the latter is still too energy-intensive to be considered. And we'll have to come up with real conservation techniques so that wastage is kept to a minimum—otherwise we won't make it.

AVT: What about the effect of wells sunk by villagers? Won't this affect our situation?

Tom: On the beach side, 10 to 15 new bore-wells have been sunk in the past two years, and they're pumping out a lot of water with submersible pumps. If we reduce our pumping and they don't, it won't help us.

Tency: There's nothing we can do about this. Even the ban on drilling within 6 kms



Long-term planning

AVT: What about long-term action?

Tom: We have to make better use of our resources. In the past, we've often drilled as close as possible to the place where we want to use the water. In the future, we should locate the best points in terms of hydrogeology and drill there. We should have an integrated water system connecting all Auroville. There could be underground storage around the 'Crown' [a road or network linking the four zones of the projected city—eds.] and the water service would then be able to distribute it to different areas according to need. This implies centralization. But each area would have its storage and remain independent. It simply creates a situation with the potential to allow us to help each other better with water resources.

Tency: The challenge is to move from a very individual use of water to something more interlinked, less personalized. It's a very difficult step because you lose control of your water supply. It needs a total change in consciousness. I don't think we're there yet.

from the coast line is ignored by many people.

AVT: And the general quality of our water in Auroville?

Tency: The Pondicherry hydrogeologist told me that our first and second aquifer yield some of the best quality water in the area.

AVT: Finally, what about the immediate future, the next 5 years. What would you like to happen regarding our water situation?

Tency: We'll have to drill more wells and distribute the water over a much wider area. Also, I'd like to see Tom's Water Service get the funding it needs to enable it to provide a good service for the community.

Tom: During the past 21 years, we've made great efforts in bunding and afforestation to help conserve water. Now there's a slight tendency to slacken off, to allow over-grazing in certain areas, for example.. We have to keep up our awareness and our efforts to catch the rains. Conservation is a day-to-day business.

Interview by Alan on 13.3.89

The Foundation for World Education

The main objective of the Foundation for World Education, based in the State of New York, U.S.A., is to support the vision of a transformed humanity of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. The President of this foundation, Mr. Rudy Philips, visited Auroville for the first time recently. These are extracts from an interview on 3 January, 1989.

Auroville Today: The small brochure that the FWE issues mentions that the international township of Auroville is one of its priority interests. Why is this?

Rudy Philips: Auroville presents a new model of the world. It is hard to imagine anything of higher priority in the long term. Many of the board members and many of the people closely advising us have visited or lived in Auroville for various periods of time. There is a belief that what is going on is of such importance that it earns significant support.

AVT: What is your funding priority?

P: The foundation has no fixed lines. There is a certain flexibility on a year to year basis. For some years it was most appropriate to emphasize publications, such as completing a volume of Mother's Agenda in the English language, and publications related to Mother's trilogy. The thought behind it was Mother's words that from the USA will come much of the resources for Auroville, and with that kind of thinking in mind, it was clear that this work was necessary.

In another year the emphasis seemed to be on centres and networking. We supported Auroville International U.S.A., Sri Aurobindo centres in the USA and to some degree in Europe, and we supported attempts to bring all those 'displaced' devotees in the USA together. Such things as the All USA Meeting (AUM) came into being, which brought together a lot of people.

AVT: Mother never saved money, she kept it flowing all the time. Your foundation has made the decision to spend only the interest of the capital. Why?

P: The decision concerning whether the capital should be disbursed immediately or not or used in another way has taken a lot of time and deliberation. It came to us that the task given was to build a resource: the fact that you need money to attract money in a sense. It has taken us almost 3 years just to get to a stable, credible position to attract money.

AVT: Do you have a special investment strategy in line with your aims?

P: Our investment-strategy was worked out meticulously. There are many organizations in the USA that provide investment possibilities in companies that are socially conscious, and have high standards on items like their chemical waste disposal, their air treatment, their treatment of employees and about every other critical question you can imagine. We chose the Calvert fund, which is one such organization.

AVT: What was your feeling about AV in the short week that you were here?

P: Almost unbridled enthusiasm. I have to use various analogies and parallels to talk about it. One was Auroville is nine months pregnant and is about to deliver a very big, bouncing baby. Another was that Auroville is on the threshold of explosive growth. Delivering a baby has to do with an overall sense of rebirth: the ability to sing aum around the Banyan Tree, the ability to hold hands and hug on New Years Day, those are heart openings, new to Auroville and so I call that a rebirth in the community sense. A bhakti force is allowed which I think was lacking or at least was submerged in the face of all the adversities that had to be faced before. The explosive growth I think of is the move towards self-sufficiency, as symbolised in the businesses, the commercial efforts of the community. The things that I saw on the positive side were

tremendous.

The good news is that Auroville is on the verge of really becoming the city of tomorrow; the bad news is that it really has to deal with all the problems and issues of being a city of tomorrow.

AVT: There was a period in which we were much more in-tuned, and now there is the sense that Auroville is opening much more and going into the world. In connection with that there is a kind of fear that Auroville will become diluted. What are your feelings about this?

P: Well, my first day in Auroville turned out to be a day by myself. I turned up inconspicuously among dozens of other tourists at the Matrimandir, feeling somewhat resentful of tourists. After all, I wasn't a tourist, I said to myself, being here less than a week... but sure enough I was a tourist.

As I filtered through my judgments and criticisms I realised that the Matrimandir is Auroville's gift to the world, and that the level of visitors that it will generate will be thousands and thousands and thousands. It will make the Taj Mahal look dim in the 21st century.

AVT: The concept of thousands and thousands and thousands of people is not one that pleases many Aurovilians right now!

P: The practical reality is that you are going to get a very high number per month, except in the monsoon of course, and it is going to be such a number that the actual access may be moved out to the coast road and you'll have to provide a shuttle service to let people in. I don't think the numbers can be held back, because the consciousness that it represents is seeping out in spite of ourselves. We can sit here and pretend that we have something to do with this, we don't. In a sense we are just tools. If we really believe in the supramental consciousness and the descent and the overmind and all the other wonderful philosophical concepts, you should understand that they are working in spite of ourselves. My view of the number of tourists is irrelevant. If the call to the Matrimandir is put out on a planetary consciousness beyond our control one can only guess what that means in terms of numbers.

Matrimandir is like the fountain of youth. There should be something like a corridor to that. It is Auroville's gift to the world, but it should not disrupt the community.

The other reason why you should expect many people is because of all the other values Auroville stands for, whether it be ways to boost up Indian villages in the 21st century, the application of alternative technologies, the more holistic approach to Mother Earth or whatever. In the practical sense you are already handling many aspects of know-how transfer: you are going to have engineers and students of all subjects in high numbers.

That is a global impact of this little microcosm.

And then there are all the people who are coming here for a short experience, for whatever reason. They will experience Auroville, and through the Aurovilians the values Auroville stands for, which is a very subtle way of making the work of Sri Aurobindo and Mother known.

All that is a pretty full outreach. You'll have many mechanical problems (traffic and so on), but I do not think that any of that has to undercut the community's life. But the community will be challenged to double or triple their response possibilities.

AVT: Mother has spoken of the different characteristics of various nations in the

world. For the USA she spoke about the power of organization. What are your views on this in relation to the work done in the USA for Auroville?

P: Where Auroville is struggling with organisation, it should be understood that Aurovilians in the USA are struggling with organisation as well. To find the right balance between community and all the things that life needs is very difficult. This is so for a protected community like

Auroville, it is even more so in the crazy, stressful world of America. Isolated by distance, by job, by lots of things, organisation becomes much more difficult. The bright spot for me is the All USA Meeting (AUM) which is growing in effectiveness and the fact that a network of people is coming out of that. The answer is not simple. But whatever the problems are, we are working on them.

Interview by Alan, Carel



Photo: Jan (Newlands)

MARBLE NOTES

At Matrimandir, the work of mounting the pure white slabs of marble—quarried eleven years ago from the mountains of Lasa, near Bolzano, in northern Italy—has begun. As one enters the inner chamber, slabs of marble can be seen stacked, angled on A-frames, as the humming diamond-toothed saw blade in the hands of a concentrated worker spews marble dust, and the smell of bleach and acetone fills the air. Elsewhere, under the subdued glare of neon lights, small groups of people can be seen clustered intently over spirit-levels and plumb lines, while others—palettes and spatulas in hand—apply marble adhesive and white grout to joints and walls. Slowly, under the expert supervision of Chris Gray, the lower reaches of the 12-sided chamber are changing colour—from gray to dazzling white. Work, delicate, precise and exacting, proceeds presently on the second of twelve rows of marble that will eventually line the walls of the chamber, making 1240 slabs in all.

'Self-knowledge'

—A report by Charles

We came on earth to know ourselves. And for S.A.I.I.E.R. members—engaged upon a series of publications on 'self-knowledge'—it is opportune to create a certain dynamic, the right atmosphere, so that we may share more with one another this voyage of inner discovery. During the birthday week, twenty of so people gathered to experience what is planned to be the first of many cross-cultural explorations; and the opening celebration—using textual recitation, devotional music, slides, and silence—concentrated upon the message of India.

Aster and her team invited us for two morning sessions in the Centre of Indian Culture, followed by a wholesome lunch. We met around a miniature lily pond set on a platter of brass—and united in the chanting of 'Om'. The journey took us through selections from the Upanishads—notably from the Isha, Katha, and Mundaka Upanishads, the former of which was recited in Sanskrit—and passages from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, culminating in Mother's reading from *Savitri*. The musical aspect included Sunil's composition for Sri Aurobindo's centenary and the chanting in Sanskrit of the many names of Vishnu. The

slide show portrayed a kind of story, the adventure of our quest, beginning with the sculptured magnificence of the corridors of Ramanatheswary Temple, Rameshwaram, and closing with glimpses of Matrimandir and its crystal to be.

Initiated by S.A.I.I.E.R., the experience enabled members to reflect upon the path ahead; and invited others, especially westerners, to explore the intangible richness of the East, and examine the process of unmasking that Mother speaks of vis-à-vis how to be a True Aurovillian:

'The first necessity is the inner discovery by which one learns who one really is behind the social, moral, cultural, racial and hereditary appearances.'

At our inmost centre there is a free being, wide and knowing, who awaits our discovery and who ought to become the acting centre of our being and our life in Auroville.' (The Mother)

PARIS, LONDON, NEW YORK, AUROVILLE

In Auroville, the week between the 21st and the 29th of February was filled with happenings, cultural activities and an atmosphere of celebration. It is no longer necessary to expatriate oneself back to the world's capitals in the summer months for cultural nourishment. It can now be found within our own boundaries — it even comes to us. The residents of Auroville did not restrain their enthusiasm, and attendance was high at all the performances.

Paulo and Coni's dance show, structured around Igor's very beautiful music, brought home to us and made us appreciate the research done in group movement by the troupe of twenty people. A symbolic work, "The Invocation and the Call", took us on a journey back into ancient times, and then carried us forward again, led as if by a charming thread, from symbol to symbol. From the first spark of consciousness to the fire(s) of inspiration. A particularly strong element of the work lay in the link between various experiences in which man, in a timeless intensity, reconnects to his true self.

Last School was the venue one night for a variety ensemble, "The Waltzing Vundi Review", that had Francis as its Master of Ceremonies. At last some of the hidden talents of Aurovilians have emerged from our cultural underground. The evening was unconventional and I will only mention a few of the fifteen performers who appeared on stage. Ten year old Savitri gave us a beautiful demonstration of her talents on the violin accompanied by Udo on the guitar, who was something of a one man back-up orchestra throughout the show. There was Serge, magician and guitarist, there was Roger with his poems, and the charming Anneke on her enchanted flute — and let us not forget the Swiss farmer looking for his cow. Fifteen minute sessions of improvised music alternated with jazz and classical pieces, folk-music, ballads and laments. The strains of guitars and violins, saxophones and drums, voices and flutes drifted gently out into the night. With Ivar and his Tabla player and the children of Isaiambalam, the barriers of language and nationality crumbled, merging into music, the language that unites. The show lasted two and a half hours, but ended too soon,

and despite the cool nights of February, few felt like immediately leaving an atmosphere that was fraternal and warm.

For the second time in a few years we have had the great honour of having Chandralekha in our midst. Following on the heels of her splendid success in Bombay, Chandralekha and her troupe were here to perform her new show for us. We were able to appreciate and admire the rigorous and perfect execution of movements whose origins reach back far into the arcane troves of tradition. The way she relates movement to numbers is fascinating and this work — like all her works — blows like a fresh wind down the temple corridors of Indian traditional dance.

Towards the end of the week a street-theatre group was in Isaiambalam, where a workshop with the actors was held in the afternoon. They were an astonishing group of actors playing strange and unsettling roles difficult to define or situate within traditional canons. Later, to the joy and enthusiasm of the villagers, a zestful performance lasted far into the night.

Krishna Kumar and his wife wound up this festive and exceptional week in a great evening of Bharat Natyam, beautiful and moving in its simplicity. It was an evening revelatory of a deep interaction of east and west and the potential that lies in the artists and children of Auroville.

I hope I haven't forgotten anybody or anything even if I haven't mentioned those who, in the shadows, were the organizers and technicians, and without whom the events of the week could never have happened. It is difficult to describe a show or performance, and I have no pretensions in the field of criticism. I have tried in a few lines to share an impression of richness, of artistic diversity, and potential talent, of the happiness performing artists provide in offering us the results of hours of work, their hesitations, doubts and enthusiasm, their anguish and fatigue. For a week we experienced the heart of an artistic world. Auroville, at the crossroads of multicultural expression, is alive and well!

Yanne



Photo: Jan (Fertile)



Auroville children prepared for Bharat Natyam dance.

Photo: Jan (Fertile)

'The Invocation and the Call'

A dance-event, performed on the 21st and 22nd of February, 1989, at the Bharat Nivas Auditorium.

Choreography: Paulo, Coni.

Music: Igor

We drive into the Bharat Nivas parking space; a boy waves at us with a printed programme and joyfully runs a few metres with us to hand it over. It is the evening of the 21st February: the dance-performance by Paulo's dance group is about to begin. Amazing, the number of new faces... Many people have come from outside Auroville to attend the event.

The dance, titled "The Invocation and the Call" has been the result of "a research on movement and music, based on texts of different times and cultures which represent certain moments in the evolution of the Psychic on Earth." These texts, printed in the programme, are the starting point for the various dances and musical compositions.

I'll mention a few: it was delightful to watch how all kinds of primal beasts came out to look at a great, female Bear with beautiful silky fur, sitting by a lake in contemplation. The beasts were attracted, somehow, for in the Bear there was a first psychic spark to be felt... Mother had told Satprem about this vision of hers which she found very amusing. (Mother's Agenda, vol. 10, p.343) The dancers moved with extremely slow, reptile-like movements, to the strong and rhythmic sounds of Igor's music.

Taken from one episode into another, we could then witness Egyptian paintings come alive and go in procession all the way around the audience, worshipping the Sun and singing the "Hymn to Aton" (the Sun-God). Some were doing acrobatics. Pharaoh Akhnaton initiated this monotheistic cult in the 12th century B.C. in Egypt.

Paulo danced an intensely concentrated

solo — "At the Threshold of the Black Door" — expressing the content of an anonymous poem found in an orphic initiatory tomb (4th century B.C.): "At the threshold of the black door, to the left, at the foot of a poplar tree, flows the water of forgetfulness. Pure soul, abstain from drinking of it." ...

After an age-old Tamil Hymn had been rendered into dance, Meenakshi (our renowned poet) read it out in her clear voice, making the Tamil language sound ancient and beautiful.

Sri Aurobindo and Mother were present (if not also covertly in the above mentioned works) through their writings: Lines from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* (IV,2) and *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* and Mother's Prayer (15.6.1914): "O, Seigneur! Quoi?... Ce que Tu voudras, ce que Tu voudras..."

The dancers used, throughout the performance, extremely slow, concentrated movements — which look simple but are not easy to imitate — and the music, last but not least, was alternately powerful (sometimes literally deafening) and subtle — composed and recorded by Igor, whose musical capacity on the synthesizer I and many others have known and enjoyed for many years.

The performance was definitely an ambitious one and — as somebody formulated it afterwards — was an attempt to involve the audience in a sustained act of concentration. Yet another Aurovilian felt it demanded perhaps too much.

In any case, I think it was a worthwhile experience, not only for the audience, but for all who were there that evening.

Annemarie



letters page - letters page - letters page - letters page

"When thou hearest an opinion that displeases thee, study and find out the truth in it."

(Sri Aurobindo, Thoughts and Aphorisms)

And, remember... "Brevity is the soul of wit".

Exchange

Good afternoon, my dear newspaper, *Auroville Today*!

I am one of the participants of "Peace Trees-Teamwork '88" and I want to say that travelling to India and living in Auroville was one of the most excellent times in my life. I love Auroville as my home and the people who live in Auroville are my parents, sisters and brothers. I am very happy that I have received the newspaper *Auroville Today*. This material is very interesting and important for me as a member of the Youth Ecological Centre of the Latvian State University.

If it's possible, I and the Youth Ecological Centre of the Latvian State University want to exchange ecological information about our countries. If it's possible, please let me know, give me an answer!

Iлона Берзиня
"Aboltinios" S.N. Malupe
228758 Aluksnes R.
Latvian SSR, USSR

Madras-gas in Auroville

Some two years back, during my visit to Auroville, one evening I had a very despairing experience while walking on the Auroville roads. I was enjoying the quiet and serene country side atmosphere, when suddenly I began to feel that I was not in Auroville but in Madras. The reason? A motorcycle had just passed by, spewing out the gas. I call it horrible. Auroville feeling like Madras! It would be excellent if Aurovilians concern themselves with minimizing the use of all that pollutes air, water or soil. Johnny's proposal (*Auroville Today*, no.2), if implemented, will certainly decrease the use of automobiles within the "Dawn".

Aryadeep, Ahmedabad.

More on pterodactyls

Dear Sir,

Having read L.T.C. Smytthe-Buckfast's singularly uninformed epistle (*AVT no.1*) I feel it can only be construed as sciolism or downright charlatanry. But it is in fact Sir Hero's reply in Issue 3 which makes it casuistic for me to put finger to typewriter.

It has been said that a little learning is a dangerous thing. This certainly appears to be so in Sir Hero's case. I find it quite inexcusable that he should claim to speak for Science on a subject that he obviously knows little or nothing about.

That there has never been a creature such as the Pterodactyl Indica is a relative statement. In science it is hardly ever possible to give absolutes. Therefore Sir Hero's statement should be amended and read as follows: There is no evidence to support the theory of the existence of a Pterodactyl Indica or indeed any other member of that species in the south of India.

I, personally, would have questioned Mr. Smytthe-Buckfast's story because he claims that the Pterodactyl carried off the bush (meaning, one assumes, the hibiscus bush) as it "flapped" into the sunset. Generally Pterodactyls are known to have been 20 centimetres in size and no more likely to carry off a bush than a Brainfever bird would be.

As for the statement made by Sir (?) Hero that it was in fact a Dimorphodon which was spotted, this is the most amazing malapropism. The Dimorphodon, measuring 40 centimetres, has been discovered in Northern Europe, particularly Great Britain, but there is no support in fact that

it can be found alive and gliding off the Matrimandir, South India, in 1988.

On consultation with my learned colleague Professor Stephen R. Read of Edinburgh University, a formidable scholar and author of the acclaimed book "My favourite Dinosaurs" (Shraddalu Press, Kodaikanal 1983), I would like to suggest that it was in fact a Pterodactyl (pron. POH-DOP-TUR-ICKS), meaning "footwing" which was sighted. This early gliding Archosaur has been found in India prior to this date and is therefore a more plausible theory. As it is of a size in approximation with that of the Pterodactyl it is understandable that a lay person with the sun in his eyes could have mistaken one for the other. This small Archosaur is thought to have lived in trees and could therefore be looked for in the Banyan.

Yours obediently,

Stefanie von Damm, b/tech, B.A. Hons
Founder of the Scottish Society for recognition of Ancient Monuments and Fossils.

Bravo

A l'équipe d'*Auroville Today*,

First of all: "Bravo!" Si le premier numéro de votre journal-revue, mise à part la présentation originale, m'avait laissée indifférente, le numéro de décembre me remplit d'enthousiasme. Je crois pouvoir affirmer sans peur de me tromper - et d'autres ici sont d'accord avec moi - que "ça sonne juste". Après plusieurs années de divagations en tout genres, de redites endormantes, de "petites nouvelles" que seuls les "vieux combattants" peuvent comprendre, j'ai l'impression d'avoir entre les mains autant d'information valable, honnête, en contact à la fois avec la Terre et le Ciel, la réalité et l'idéal, le présent et l'avenir. Surtout, continuez!

Monique,
Montréal, 24.1.89

La Ventura I

Dear Meat-eaters in Auroville,

Alan's article on the new La Ventura Restaurant in the first issue of *Auroville Today* has brought it home to us that meat-eating is common practice in Auroville.

Why not eat meat?

The fact is that to become a vegetarian is an event that belongs to a certain stage in our spiritual search. It may happen gradually or all at once.

In Auroville this realisation is linked to or is identical with our endeavour to reach a unitive consciousness through a truly collective yoga. Auroville's ideal and aim of human unity, therefore, cannot but be based on the realisation that life is both sacred and one. It appears that at a certain point in our yoga, the body itself, its cells, turns away from consuming its own kind, other 'bodies'. This is part of the process of raising our consciousness to a more collective and unitive level.

The bringing into life of a truly collective Yoga throughout Auroville is after all the beauty and the great challenge of Auroville. It is its raison d'être.

Edith, AVI UK

La Ventura II

A gift of an excellent cook-book will be sent to La Ventura containing recipes from "Cranks", the best vegetarian restaurant in London.

Joy, AVI UK

La Ventura III

Dear Friends,

As a member of Auroville International UK I have just received the first issue of *Auroville Today*. I was lapping it up with great interest until I got to the end of page 3, in the middle of the story about the new restaurant 'La Ventura', opened recently in Auroville.

I like a good meal as well as the next person and was pencilling in 'La Ventura' in my diary when some of the items on the menu began to stick in my gullet. I do not know what crepes is, but shrimps, chicken, beef etc, are mouth watering I think not. As a callow youth, rebelling against everything, I did try meat but I have long since seen the light.

Trying to convert anyone to any particular way of life is a useless exercise but why actively encourage such ignorant practices within Auroville?

One does not have to be of any religion to understand that the ancient sages in India pointed the way to yoga and meditation and being a vegetarian is an integral part of living a sane, wholesome life, at one with the whole universe.

Yours sincerely,
Jiten Bardwaj, England

La Ventura IV

Bonjour,

Suite à un article signé Alan et intitulé "La Ventura", je souhaiterais pouvoir exprimer l'opinion, parmi tant d'autres possibles, d'un simple touriste.

Dégager les critères qui font le "bon restaurant" n'est pas un exercice qui contentera également les lecteurs français, anglais ou américains, il s'en faut... Toujours est-il que c'est en voulant passer



un Dimanche après-midi à Auroville que, sans aucune idée préconçue en la matière, j'ai eu LE CHOC: Imaginer qu'après avoir traversé toutes ces routes poudreuses et désertes pour aboutir au chantier quasi fantomatique du Bharat Nivas j'allais émerger (avec le soleil en plein zénith et 2 ou 3 chiens autour de ma bicyclette) en face d'un spectacle aussi surréaliste que celui de "La Ventura" en pleine activité... est une chose qui surpasse tous les pressentiments (positifs comme négatifs) que je pouvais inconsciemment héberger à l'égard du projet global!!

Une scène de pur Bunuel plantée en pleins tropiques: des hommes et des femmes entre deux âges endimanchés et un peu fatigués (aie les rides dues aux ultraviolets!) attablés sagement à la queue leu leu et en rond, comme dans un wagon-restaurant échoué en plein désert... Ouh, le

choc! une gaieté plus que compassée... une serveuse au petit tablier inoubliable... un style bâtarde de bistrot à nappes bordeaux blancs marié à des fantômes de chic hollywoodien (les fameux plis des rideaux blancs en éventail) etc. etc. Certes la nourriture fut excellente et le prix modéré, mais je suis néanmoins reparti avec une véritable d'appréhensions dans le coeur. Que leur arrive-t-il donc? D'où viennent ces évidentes frustrations? cette nostalgie de "bonne société"?

Un peu de civilisation réelle, please, Mr. Alan. Un bon restaurant est avant tout un lieu où la fonction de manger est si bien honorée que le décor, si raffiné soit-il, triomphe par son naturel et sa discrétion, laissant toute la gloire à l'art d'être seul ou ensemble, d'une manière avant tout VIVANTE, spirituelle (= avoir de l'esprit), ou bien tout simplement BANALE (qui est le non plus ultra dans le genre, tous les poètes vous le diront).

Ressaisissez-vous! A défaut d'innover des réunions gnostiques dans un décor futuriste, refaire un petit tour dans le classicisme du vital traditionnel n'est pas un luxe. On y apprend au moins la joie de n'être rien du tout par un beau Dimanche dans le calendrier ordinaire mais néanmoins irrésistible de l'évolution.

Patrick

[For our non-French readers, here follows a brief, freely translated resumé in English:

It is not easy to find criteria to define what is a 'good restaurant' which will equally satisfy French, English or American readers... But to arrive at the unfinished buildings of Bharat Nivas one Sunday, having cycled dusty roads at midday, and to find, with 2 or 3 dogs around my cycle, a surrealistic scene like 'La Ventura' in full swing was something which surpassed all (positive as well as negative) inklings I might have had regarding this global project. What I found there reminded me of a Bunuel scene in the middle of the tropics! (...) Though the food was excellent and the price reasonable, I left with an apprehensive heart. Whence this nostalgia for 'high society'? A bit of solid civilization, please, Mr. Alan. In a good restaurant the decor is as important as the food, but it should be natural and discrete, leaving all the glory to the art of being alone or together in an, above all, very LIVELY and spirited way, or even in a quite BANAL way (which as all poets will tell you, is the nec plus ultra of the genre). Pull yourselves together! If gnostic reunions set in a futuristic decor aren't yet feasible, it isn't overindulgent to return to a sense of traditional vital classicism. One learns from it at least the joy of being nothing at all on a nice Sunday amidst others in the ordinary but nevertheless irresistible calendar of the evolution.]

A far dream

Auroville Today was extremely interesting for me since I could find in it some details about the Auroville Foundation Bill and about the history of Auroville.

Unfortunately, we all, living in so-called socialistic countries (though now they in Russia seem to have understood that nobody knows what socialism is and hence it has never been built), have no possibility to take part in this marvellous and difficult adventure called Auroville. (...): living in such countries, the only thing one can do is to grow within, neglecting any social activity; Auroville remains a far, marvellous and abstract dream.

Andrei S., Czechoslovakia

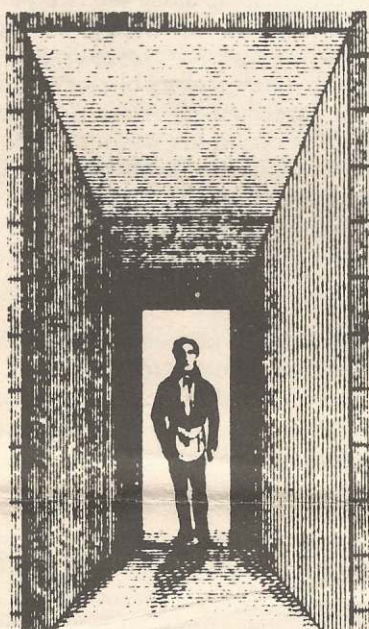
Enthusiasm

Cher Roger,
Quand, en 1984, parut *Invisible Ships*, j'avais témoigné de mon enthousiasme par un petit mot (d'ailleurs publié) ...avec la seule réserve que, étant donnée la propension humaine et naturelle des groupes à évoluer par contradictions... Je m'attendais à ce que, ultérieurement, la tendance 'audacieuse' devienne elle-même 'conservatrice'.

Hélène, Repos, Auroville.

Openness

Thank you for the touch of openness in the first 'Editorial' (AVT no 1)... "Wherever you live, within or outside Auroville (whatever 'outside' means!)... Especially the 'whatever 'outside' means' I felt as a reference to our oneness. If your "...send us your information, your views, your visions..." means that Auroville and the Aurovilians are ready now to understand that "the evolution that Auroville draws its meaning from is not confined to one place on earth", we all make a real jump forward in the mentality of acceptance that Auroville's growth and development are the mirror of and for humanity's consciousness' evolution.



Let us try to put Auroville and the world in perfect parallel and work on both sides with the same energy and consciousness.

Erik Vanhelsuwe, Belgium

Not the Same Thing

Dear Friends,

One morning shortly after returning to Auroville, I received the first copy of *Auroville Today*. The same afternoon, I was given the October newsletter of *Auroville Review*. I read them one after the other that evening, and was left with one overwhelming impression: "But it's the same thing! Why can't they put it together?"

It took me a few weeks of contact with the diverse reality of Auroville today, to review the situation and realize that, no, although the view expressed in the *Auroville Review* on the new Foundation and the state of Auroville in general seemed to me still to be the perfect and necessary counter-balance to the views expressed in *Auroville Today*, it was *not* the same thing at all. And thank "That" for that!

The fact that Auroville has *two* public voices rather than one is a very positive development, and I look forward to even more diversity in the future. The more the merrier, I say—at least where "public voices" are concerned!

Love, Namas,
Auroville, 30.12.'88

Yes

Dear Bill,

Congratulations to all you guys who finally got it out, after how many frustrations! We like it a lot. Very much what is needed: unpretentious, well-written and "without resorting to cheapness or personal attack". What one would expect from a place aspiring for human unity!

Robert Orton, USA

YES!

Dear, dear *Auroville International* and *Auroville Today* groups,

I haven't been so enthused, excited, delighted, thrilled like this in a very long time. This is the best thing since sliced bread, or even ice cream. This *Auroville Today* is fantastic; absolutely fantastic!! It's marvelous, stupendous, colossal; the answer to a prayer, a dream, a king idea. What more can I say: IT IS MAGNIFICENT!!! BRAVO!!! HURRAY!!! AUTHOR!!! YEAHH!!! ENCORE!!! It defies words to say how I felt after seeing the previous *Flame* go out, and to be faced with doing a newsletter over here on our own etc. etc. and then to open this today, (or shall I say Today) and be filled with YES!!!!!!!!!!!! Soooooo goooooood!! More!!! More!!!

Jack Alexander, AVI USA

Singapore with halo

I have seen the February issue [of *Auroville Today*]-the paper has been a great help to me. I can ensure that the news reaches a wider readership through my own newsletter which will carry features on Auroville on a regular basis.

I was amused by the comment in Yanne's letter (*Auroville Today*, February issue): "Let us not allow Auroville to become a Singapore with a halo of holy spirituality over it." Amen to that, but I also think these two 'new' cities have a lot to learn from each other. A Singapore with a halo (provided the light emanated from within as a true 'lumière de vérité') is a very attractive proposition... so it seems to me!

If I might make a suggestion - could you include an up-to-date feature on education in Auroville? I have been unable to answer some of the questions I have been asked. Many people are very interested in how children experience growing up in Auroville.

Sonia

Singapore, 10.3.'89

In one of the next issues we plan to have education in Auroville as our main theme.

Eds.

Auroville Aujourd'hui?

Bonjour,

Votre nouvelle publication *Auroville Today* est vraiment la bienvenue. Un seul regret: elle n'est pratiquement écrite qu'en Anglais et lorsque l'un n'a plus l'habitude d'utiliser cette langue, c'est vraiment trop difficile. Pourquoi, à l'exemple des Nouvelles de Matrimandir, ne préparez-vous pas les deux versions - Anglais et Français?

Je m'abonne de tout coeur dès que vous proposerez un exemplaire écrit en français.

Avec mes pensées fraternelles et mes remerciements.

Richard Boyer, France

We are working on a French edition of *Auroville Today*, which might appear on a quarterly basis - Eds.

Incest

We applaud *Auroville Today*, even these incestuous articles of the Dutch interviewing one another. "Power to the people" as we say here. "Revolution" and "Electrifying" were other comments overheard.

Julian, USA



AGRICULTURE, MAN AND ECOLOGY (A.M.E) PROGRAMME

During October-November 1988 and January-February 1989, training courses in ecological agriculture were held in Auroville. More are planned for the future. Umesh, an Aurovillian and A.M.E. team member, introduces the programme and its objectives.

Today, ecology is in. Politicians mouth it, environmentalists swear by it. For most people, ecology signifies awareness of vanishing forests and wildlife and increasing pollution. Only a few are concerned about the ecological impact of the various agricultural systems. Fewer still are the people who are working to evolve ecologically sound agricultural systems that are sustainable over a very long time scale.

The A.M.E programme is set up to promote ecological agriculture—the various methods and approaches, as well as the underlying principles. At present, the emphasis is on conducting training courses for farmers and persons engaged in rural development work. From August 1988, the A.M.E. programme has been functioning from Isaiambalam School, Kottakarai, Auroville. In Auroville, the programme has conducted two courses in ecological agriculture. These courses had participants from Sri Lanka and Nepal besides those from India.

Is Auroville just a convenient venue for the A.M.E. programme to conduct its courses? Indeed not. Aurovilians have had a path-breaking experience in environmental regeneration activities and figure prominently in the cutting edge of ecological agriculture. For them, it is not just an exciting conceptual framework to be explored intellectually, but a way of life.

The course participants were able to observe and participate in the ongoing activities at the various Auroville demonstration sites they visited. All of them carried back inspiring impressions of a hard working, simple group of individuals who are open to share their expertise—and their mistakes as well!

Besides holding training courses in ecological agriculture three times a year, the A.M.E. programme has some innovative ideas to help promote ecological farming systems. One of these is to help village farmers to grow crops without using chemicals. If the rains are good, two Tamil farmers will grow paddy next January without chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Another proposal is to survey ecological farms and farms in transition in South India. This would aid understanding of the different problems faced during the transition from conventional to ecological farming, as well as problems unique to ecological agriculture. Based on this information, a sound strategy for introducing ecological farming methods under the prevailing socio-economic and environmental conditions in South India can be evolved.

Umesh

The next training course in Ecological Agriculture will be held from April 17 to May 5, 1989. For details contact: A.M.E. Programme, Post Box 11, Pondicherry 605001.



Registration as a newspaper in process

Erratum

In our previous issue we gave the incorrect reference under the extract from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. The book referred to is I, not II.

Apology

We regret that the paper used for the previous issue was not of the usual quality, due to a paper shortage.

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• • • To Receive Auroville Today • • •

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Inside: Chandrasekhar; Birthday Events; Water; Letters - letters...



- Drawing by Marti - "Earth-dragon Moon"

The Night Of The Lunar Eclipse

A short story by Marti

It was the night of the lunar eclipse, a vague angry feeling rising unexpectedly in the late day like an ominous shadow spewing sharp words amidst the uneasy whisperings of dusk. She cycled into town on a half-flat tyre, easing her way down the sand track and skirting the cool coconut grove, the night falling swiftly, too swiftly.

It was the night of the lunar eclipse, the first shadow of a celestial dragon creeping rust-brown across the minutely-defined craters of a moon that would soon lose all its luminescence, a moon overwhelmed by the shadow of the earth moving slowly across its pale illusive smile, across the half-illuminated faces of crowds of people pouring out of a village temple into busy streets. And the city was darkening now into a whirling pastiche of cows, carts, cars and bustle, mixed with the faint smell of coffee and masala curry drifting from open doorways. She watched a beggar's fingerless stubs reaching for worn thin coins, *paisa*, *paisa*...

It was the night of the lunar eclipse. A cripple with thin limp legs sliding back and forth in the filthy roadside as he worked to remove her cycle inner-tube from the wheel, to find the puncture. To find the hole in the universe that would restore the full white light of the moon from this dark red earth dragon that had eaten it, made it flow orange and phosphorescent above the black sea, the black night, the end of time. She remembered when she had last seen another dragon—the earth had nearly eaten the moon at *Tres Cruces* in the high Andes—as white misty clouds from the Amazon rolled slowly up the steep flanks of the *Cordilla Blanca*, thick clouds lapping up the slopes like ocean waters that crashed over ragged rocks on the western shores of Brittany.

It was the night of the lunar eclipse, crowds of Indians pushing through narrow dusty backstreets as they followed temple carts and temple gods, temple flashes of shining paint, sequins, black stone and dark tarnished metal, carved images of time's perpetual dance in space. Huge crowds of people returning temple gods to temple altars after bathing them in the polluted murky sea of the Bay of Bengal. For besides the lunar eclipse it was Shiva's day, when the blue Plutonian god of purity and destruction rises out of everlasting waters, protected by fire, clarity and the serpent of wisdom. And now, eclipsed by the earth's shadow on the moon, she watched ancient

temple carts rock and glide down narrow crowded streets like festive boats coming slowly into port.

And *Shiva, Shiva*, night of a long, long, once-in-a-lifetime lunar eclipse, huge throngs of people gathered near the traffic island bridge. Old women in ragged *saris* sitting in the dust, noisy roadside vendors hawking plastic toys and metal tools. Children rubbing red, yellow, and green balloons that screeched in humble protest. Long trays of dates and cone-shaped mountains of popcorn rising silently from tables lit by kerosene lamps. While above the crowds, the moon, gentle moon, a glowing ball of orange-gold, remained imprisoned in celestial prophesy.

She cycled home along the rice paddies, following the blurred shape of a friend, through dense palm groves and outlying villages with loudspeakers blaring and sleeping dogs stretched out oblivious across busy roads. She cycled her way up the slippery sand track, wheels of rubber and steel skidding, spinning, gasping on the old vandi road, now obscured and made even more difficult by the dragon's ever-present shadow.

Afterwards, the plateau was dark and still, the sky an immense teal blue, and above the dark palm groves, heaven was sprinkled with bright stars, the moon's deep orange pulsating light, like a mirror of the sun's fire at its very core.

Below a thicket of tall casuarinas, she watched the moon sigh with relief as the earth dragon slowly stretched and got ready to move to the exorcising beat of ancient dravidian drums that echoed across the desert from a seaside Tamil village.

The moon was expanding now, its blinding white light falling bright, so bright, over a dense cluster of trees near the forest clearing. Light falling now over the old brick pump, over the dark shadowy silhouettes of fallen angels again visible in a dry half-dead tree.

It was the night of the lunar eclipse.

This was written during the total lunar eclipse of the 20th of February 1989. The eclipse lasted 3 hours and was visible throughout India.

Marti Mueller is a photographer and writer living in Auroville.

A DIPLOMATIC VISIT

On 14th March, 1989, we had a visit from the Yugoslavian ambassador, the ex-Foreign Secretary of India, the eminent historian Dr. Gopalan, and a group of young men and women who are being trained for the Indian Diplomatic Service. They had been attending a 3-day seminar on "The non-aligned movement in our contemporary world" in the newly opened School of International Studies at Pondicherry University, and they had expressed a wish to visit Auroville.

It was an interesting encounter. As Aster Patel, the Aurovilian coordinating the visit put it, "We are going through an international experiment at a deeper spiritual level. We are like a field of experimentation from which the diplomats might draw some interesting conclusions. And we would benefit by knowing a little bit more about the pragmatic problems that face the world."

Mr. K.P.S. Menon, former Foreign Secretary of India, spoke briefly to Auroville Today about two different concepts of peace which the visit had focussed for him:

"Diplomats seek peace by certain arrangements. It is not a permanent peace. I think you in Auroville have a much deeper concept of peace. But perhaps diplomacy is approaching the Auroville concept a little more closely now because, before the Second World War, diplomats regarded peace only as an arrangement. Yet today they know that peace is absolutely fundamental for the survival of humanity. They've been driven to this by a process of negative reasoning, whereas for you in Auroville, I assume, it is the result of positive thinking."

Yanne