

AUROVILLE TODAY

August 1992 Number Forty-Three



PHOTO DOMINIQUE DARR

DECLARATION OF THE SACRED EARTH GATHERING—RIO-92

The planet earth is in peril as never before. With arrogance and presumption, humankind has disobeyed the laws of the creator which are manifest in the divine natural order.

The crisis is global. It transcends all national, religious, cultural, social, political and economic boundaries. The ecological crisis is a symptom of the spiritual crisis of the human being, arising from ignorance. The responsibility of each human being today is to choose between the force of darkness and the force of light. We must therefore transform our attitudes and values, and adopt a renewed respect for the superior law of Divine Nature.

Nature does not depend on human beings and their technology. It is human beings who depend on Nature for survival. Individuals and governments need to evolve "Earth Ethics" with a deeply spiritual orientation or the Earth will be cleansed.

We believe that the universe is sacred because all is one. We believe in the sanctity and the integrity of all life and life forms. We affirm the principles of peace and non-violence in governing human behaviour towards one another and all life.

We view ecological disruption as violent intervention into the web of life. Genetic engineering threatens the very fabric of life. We urge governments, scientists and industry to refrain from rushing blindly into genetic manipulation.

We call upon all political leaders to keep a spiritual perspective when making decisions. All leaders must recognize the consequences of their actions for the coming generations.

We call upon spiritual and religious leaders to teach the people their responsibilities and obligations towards caring for Mother Earth.

We call upon our educators to motivate the people towards harmony with nature and peaceful coexistence with all living beings. Our youth and children must be prepared to assume their responsibilities as citizens of tomorrow's world.

We call upon our brothers and sisters around the world to recognize and curtail the impulses of greed, consumerism and disregard of natural laws. Our survival depends on developing the virtues of simple living and sufficiency, love and compassion with wisdom.

We stress the importance of respecting all spiritual and cultural traditions. We stand for preservation of the habitats and life style of indigenous people and urge restraint from disrupting their communion with nature.

The World Community must act speedily with vision and resolution to preserve the Earth, Nature and humanity from disaster. The time to act is now. Now or never.

The Road from Rio

An interview with Ed and Mindy

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) which took place in Rio de Janeiro in June had been billed beforehand as the greatest political event of the century, and the last chance for the politicians to cooperate to prevent a global environmental catastrophe in the 21st century. At the same time, people from all over the world assembled in Rio to make their voices heard and to explore their own agendas on issues like preserving the environment. At the latter gathering—known as Global Forum—Auroville was represented by Ed, Mindy, Marti, Forrest and Paulo. They ran an Auroville information booth, made many contacts and attended some stimulating events. Auroville Today interviewed Ed and Mindy soon after they returned to Auroville.

Keepers' Convention and other such events whose main purpose was to serve and stimulate the spiritual needs of the Summit. Symbolically these two people represented the male and female, political and spiritual energies of the international convergence in Rio.

Was there much interaction between the politicians and the NGO's?

Ed: The preliminary process to set up UNCED involved NGO's from all over the world. But at Rio it was difficult for the NGO's to attend UNCED freely because they were only allocated comparatively few seats. In fact, both gatherings discussed similar issues, but my sense is that the NGO's were perhaps more idealistic in their approach, because they were less influenced by powerful 'outside' vested interests than the politicians. For example, the U.S. participants at Global Forum took a line that was quite different from the one taken by the Americans at UNCED. In fact, the whole atmosphere of the Global Forum was different from the succession of set speeches and formal dinners which marked UNCED. Global Forum was like a huge fair with a 60's flavour of grass-roots idealism and enthusiasm. On the spiritual level there was much awareness and energy generated by various groups, such as Auroville, Findhorn, and many others, to support the concept of inner work as well as the outer work necessary to promote a sustainable and viable future for our planet and species.

continued on next page

Auroville Today: To an outsider reading the newspapers, many different things seemed to be happening simultaneously in Rio in June. Can you explain something about how it was organised?

Mindy: Before the main events began, there were a lot of preparatory happenings in Rio. For example, there was an indigenous people's conference between 15th and 28th May, and then there was a two-day Sacred Earth Gathering at which religious and spiritual leaders from around the world met and came up with a Declaration (see box—eds). The idea behind this was to clear and prepare the atmosphere for what was to come, and to establish some spiritual vibrations along with the political ones.

Ed: For two years prior to Rio, a number of preparatory conferences were held to prepare the ground work for the Earth Sum-

mit. The culmination of all these meetings took place in the first two weeks of June. UNCED was the 'official' conference at which politicians and world leaders gathered to work out and sign major agreements on the environment and a sustainable future. 'Global Forum', which ran simultaneously, was a coming together of non-governmental organisations (NGO's) interested in similar issues. Together, the governmental and non-governmental organizations comprised the Earth Summit.

It was interesting to note the roles of two of the key people of the Earth Summit. Maurice Strong, who is a member of our International Advisory Council, was the main organizer and responsible for the political and official aspects of the conferences. Hannah Strong, his wife, organized the Sacred Earth Gathering, the Wisdom

(continued from page 1)

Mindy: Global Forum was centred in a place called 'Flamingo Park'. Over 7000 different NGO groups participated; there were almost 700 information booths—including the Auroville booth—and all day there were lectures, panel discussions and workshops happening on topics like forestry, agriculture and sustainable development, education, health, women's issues etc. And all this for 14 days! It was very intense.

What was your experience at the Auroville booth?

Mindy: We were surprised by how much people seemed to know about Auroville, Sri Aurobindo and Mother, and how much goodwill there was towards us. People's interest in Auroville tended to fall into three categories—the environmental aspect, the community aspect and the spiritual aspect. I met a number of students who would like to pursue projects here, and we made contact with two Brazilian groups who are devotees of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, and who would like to come together to establish Auroville International Brazil.

What were the highlights of the Rio experience for you?

Mindy: The Dalai Lama was one. He had a lovely vibration, and spoke movingly about the relevance and role of religion in our society today. His point was that religions have to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the people which they serve, and therefore in our current crisis of overpopulation religion must be willing to support birth control methods. Later, he amusingly pointed out the contradictions in his own position, as he was telling his own people not to practise birth control as he wanted the Tibetan population to grow!

Another highlight for me was a talk given by some African women. They spoke about the greenbelt project, primarily based in Kenya, where village women are involved in tree-planting. In four years, they've planted 5 million trees. It happened because traditionally in that part of the world, the women grow the food, collect the firewood and cook the food. They had to deal with the fact that there was less and less firewood, so they decided to take action. What's interesting is that not only are there more trees now, but the health of those involved has improved, their home gardens have improved, the birth rate has dropped and the women feel confident and empowered. During the talk, an Indian gentleman beside me asked them why it had been a women's project without men. "Because we wanted to get the job done!" they replied.

Finally, I heard about a small nursing home for severely malnourished children in another part of Brazil. Here they work not only with the children to make them strong and healthy, but they also teach the mothers about nutrition, as well as herbal remedies. The nursing home has a large garden of medicinal plants and here the mothers are given the knowledge that, in cases of sickness, they do not have to depend on their local health centre; they just need to plant the right trees and plants in their own gardens and then make their own natural remedies. It was so simple, but so inspiring.

Ed: There were some very powerful people around. For example, we heard Hazel Henderson talking about the economics of environmentalism. This was one of the big topics here, because you can only get the mass of people in the world involved with environmentalism if you can show them that it makes sense in terms of their pocketbooks. Ms. Henderson pointed out that assessing a country's productivity and efficiency in terms of its Gross National Product (GNP) was no longer valid. If the GNP is the scorecard for economic success, then we not

only have to find another scorecard, but we must change the game as well. We can no longer look only at the bulk financial turnover and productivity of a country; we must assess the real costs of our actions, at present and in the future. We need to draw up new criteria which take into account the intrinsic sustainable and environmental value of the natural resources and products of a country.

On another day, I managed to get into a press conference given by World Watch Foundation, during which the ex-Minister of Environment for Japan, Kazuo Aichi, was asked what the Japanese were willing to do to change their deplorable environmental record. He replied that in a recent survey, a large part of the Japanese people said they would be willing to revert to the life-style prevalent 13 years ago if it would help. That's pretty astounding!

Before the Earth Summit, there was quite a lot of cynicism and scepticism regarding what could be achieved at Rio. Was it worth it after all?

Ed: If you look at UNCED in terms of concrete results, it was disappointing. The northern industrialised nations and the southern developing nations were deadlocked over issues such as who was to pay for preserving or harvesting the remaining rain forests, compensation for the exploitation of genetic resources in these forests by large Western drug companies, technology transfers, etc. The result was that all the final agreements were so watered down that they didn't mean much; and the U.S. even refused to sign the crucial bio-diversity treaty. But if you look at it in terms of all these world leaders being together at the same place at the same time you feel that something very important happened, at least on an occult level, and that some change has to result from it. At any rate, environmental issues have been put on the global agenda in a very open and powerful way—they can't be swept under the carpet any more.

Global Forum, in which we were involved, also had its down side. There was a lot of commercialism, and there were some power plays, just like at UNCED. It was ironic that an environmental gathering generated so



At the Global Forum: the Auroville booth. From left to right: Forrest, Marti, Paulo, Mindy and Ed.

much waste and pollution; the sewage systems were overloaded and fouled the bay even more than it already was. But overall, it was definitely worth it. There were so many interesting people, there was so much information flying around, and we made so many contacts that it was a fantastic opportunity just on the networking level. It was also very good exposure for Auroville. And it was fun!

Are you bringing back any new ideas or enthusiasms for what can be done here in Auroville?

Mindy: After I heard the African women talk, I wanted to come straight back and get all the village women around here planting trees! And it makes me see the importance of these village garden projects that Auroville's 'Village Action' is involved in. On the other hand, returning to Auroville I'm aware that our environmental consciousness here is far behind the times, particularly if you compare it with somewhere like California. There, pollution control standards are very high and there is a tremendous movement to make available environment-friendly products and organically-grown foods. California is by no means pollution free and environmentally sound; however, we could implement or use as an example some of the standards they have set or are aiming towards. The main goal is to reorient our thinking towards environmental issues and take a stand; for example, we could insist that all of our motorvehicles run cleanly; we could continue to support projects and people who grow organic foods, and look to the future by offering incentives to research and develop products that are safe for our environment.

Ed: I and others want to follow up on the Environmental Restoration Corps. This grew out of an idea of Hannah Strong's to have a world-wide corps of people working on environmental issues and projects. Actually, a number of us in Auroville had already written and submitted to UNDP a project on these lines before going to Rio and we expected that the larger umbrella project called the Earth Restoration Corps (ERC) would be more advanced. A number of meetings were held specifically about the ERC and finally a core group was set up to organise the project, and further meetings are planned later this year in the U.S. to finalize and present the project to the U.N. and other international agencies.

It's clear that we in Auroville are not a sustainable community yet, and in Rio we had to explain this to people who were tending to idealise us as a model environmental project. On the other hand, people were telling us, "O.K., you've got problems, but so

does everybody. And what you've achieved is still fantastic." And it's true that when you look at our ideals, at what we're striving for here, they are pretty fantastic even in a global context. I think what Rio gave me above all was the fuel, the energy, to take up the challenges here with renewed and renewable energy.

Interview by Alan, Jill and Roger
6.7.92



Drawing by Chantal

Harvest Hill

The hawk on high-air rides
Horizons hidden hills,
Herald of the heart's uprise
On a wing of prayer,
And the soul's release
From barren years of doubt
And stranded disbelief.
Guardian of the heart's intent
And its mysteries,
Two hooded flames its coal-dark eyes
Seek out a soul that sees.

From Harvest Hill I watch it rise
I watch it glide and fall,
On Harvest Hill I feel her wind
And in my blood her call.

Roger



Maurice Strong and his wife, Hanna Strong

THE REBIRTH OF NATURE

by DR. RUPERT SHELDRAKE

The way we think about nature depends at the deepest level on whether we think of the natural world as alive or dead. There's essentially a split attitude in modern civilization. From Mondays to Fridays most people assume that nature is simply a mechanistic, inanimate system, that the world is a storehouse of natural resources to be exploited by Man. However, at weekends and holidays most people tend to revert to a quite different attitude. On Friday evenings roads in the West become clogged as millions of people try to get back to nature in a car.

I don't think there's one lot of people who believe in destroying the natural world and another lot who believe in preserving it. Generally speaking, they are the same people on different days of the week. I think we have to face up to the fact that the 9 to 5 Monday to Friday attitude is one of the principle causes of the present ecological crisis.

The changes going on in science today are leading us beyond the mechanistic world view to a quite different view of living nature, a view in which phenomena like crop circles* seem to make more sense, at least to me. Indeed, I think the crop circles may be omens that are helping to shift our consciousness in this direction.

In all traditional cultures, people take it for granted that nature is alive: the cosmos, the Earth, the animals and plants are animate; rivers, mountains, oceans and so on have their own kinds of spirits. This kind of view was held by our ancestors all over Europe. The ancient Greeks shared these assumptions. Their philosophers took it for granted that the cosmos was a living organism.

In the Middle Ages, Greek philosophical animism - a belief that the world was alive - became the orthodoxy of medieval Europe. Also taken for granted was something inherited from the pre-Christian cultures of Europe: not only the sense that nature is alive, but also sacred. Sacred places were venerated in the ancient world, and many of them were Christianised as Europe became Christian.

However, an enormous discontinuity was introduced in England and other parts of northern Europe by the Protestant Reformation. The veneration of ancient sacred places and the cult of the Holy Mother were suppressed by reformers who saw them, quite rightly, as relics of paganism. There followed

* Footnote: Mysterious formations and patterns have been appearing, with remarkable regularity and a growing complexity, in the wheat fields of England for the last fifteen years. The highest concentration of circles has been occurring in Wiltshire and Hampshire in S.W. England, close to ancient burial sites such as Avebury, Stonehenge and Silbury Hill. The phenomena, despite many theories as to what causes the phenomena and a few well-publicized hoaxes, remains as yet unexplained.

Introduction

In an age of crumbling orthodoxies and sudden change, dramatic shifts in many fields of perception and consciousness have been paralleled by a growing awareness of our interdependence and interconnectedness with all things and the delicate ecological balance that maintains the web of life on our planet. There have been fascinating new developments in the field of physics as regards the nature of reality, and groundbreaking theories of biologists such as those of Rupert Sheldrake.

Sheldrake was Director of Studies in Biochemistry and Cell Biology at Cambridge University from 1967 to 1973, then joined the staff of the International Crops Research Institute in Hyderabad, India, where he worked on the physiology of tropical legume crops until 1978. He wrote his first book *A New Science of Life* while spending a year at Father Bede Griffith's Ashram in South India. Its publication, in 1981, caused an uproar in orthodox scientific circles, and an editorial in the influential scientific magazine *Nature* declared it to be "the best candidate for burning there has been for many years." The debate that ensued in articles and letter columns for many months still makes fascinating reading.

A detailed biological understanding of how a species actually develops and how major evolutionary breakthroughs occur remains to this day elusive—despite the amazing successes in science, genetics and modern molecular biology that have revealed the structure of DNA and spawned the revolution in antibiotics.

Sheldrake, in his *New Science of Life* hypothesis, maintains that the development of an organism is influenced not only by its genetic code but also by the behaviour pattern of the species, something he

an enormous orgy of destruction: holy places were defiled, sacred wells violated, shrines broken down, monasteries abolished, pilgrims banned, the cult of the Holy Mother suppressed. The whole of nature became effectively desecrated. This changed the consciousness of people in Protestant countries, producing a break from traditional attitudes. People now saw themselves as alienated from nature.

Sir Francis Bacon, among others, started talking about nature being there entirely for Man to exploit and subjugate. Soon after, the mechanistic revolution reduced Mother Nature to dead matter, moving in obedience to mechanical laws. Descartes, one of the founding fathers of the mechanistic world view, withdrew the psyche or soul from the whole of nature - so the whole of nature became inanimate, machine-like, with no inherent life, spontaneity or purpose. He also withdrew the soul from all animals, plants and the human body. They all became machines. All that was left in humans was the rational intellect, interacting in a mysterious way with the machine of the body. Essentially, this mechanistic theory of nature has come to be seen as the scientific view in the West.

The machine theory of the universe says that the universe isn't an organism, it's a machine. Machines differ from organisms in that their organising intelligence and purposes are not arising from within - from a soul or animating principle - but are imposed from without by a machine maker, in this case, the human being. This has led to secular humanism: the idea that the only form of consciousness worth speaking of on this Earth, indeed possibly in the whole universe, is human consciousness - everything else is blindly mechanical, unconscious or inanimate. Nature's made up ultimately of inert atoms with no internal dynamics, just bits of stuff of which matter is made. Everything in the original mechanistic theory was determinate; in principle, everything could be predicted. This is an example of the fantasy of mathematical omniscience.

The image of the universe as a machine has been effectively replaced as a result of the cosmological revolution that took place in the 1960s with the acceptance, within orthodox physical theory, of the Big Bang

model of the universe. This model says the universe began hot and small and it's been growing ever since. As it grows, new structures, forms and patterns have appeared in it - atoms, galaxies, stars and planets and so on.

This model of growth - with internal differentiation, with the progressive emergence of more complete structures - is nothing like any machine. It is like the way an embryo grows from a fertilized egg, or the way a tree grows from a seed. It's an organic metaphor. It effectively gives us an image of the cosmos as a developing organism. The Big Bang is remarkably similar in its general outline to the ancient myths of the origin of things through the cracking of the cosmic egg.

The idea that nature is determinate suffered a terrible blow with the development of quantum theory in 1927 and it became clear that at the atomic level nature behaved indeterminately, probabilistically. It now turns out that indeterminacy and spontaneity are evident at all levels of natural organization. Chaos theory, which has been much publicized in the last few years, enables mathematicians to come up with models of chaotic systems and the fact that such models are available has made it easier for many scientists to admit that much of nature is in fact chaotic, indeterminate, spontaneous. The old idea of determinism is now completely replaced by ideas of indeterminism and chaos. The solar system itself is a chaotic system.

The idea that nature is effectively knowable has suffered an additional setback recently. It turns out that something like 90 to 99 per cent of matter in the universe is utterly unknown to us. It's called 'dark matter'. It's as if physics has now recognized the cosmic unconscious.

The idea that the Earth is dead has been replaced in many people's minds - certainly, in my own - by the Gaian hypothesis: the idea that the Earth is a living organism. The hypothesis, put forward first by Lovelock, is of course a re-statement in scientific terms of an almost universal belief. The Gaian hypothesis makes sense to a lot of people and is highly relevant to the whole ecological crisis and our relationship to the Earth. But rather than thinking of Gaia - the living Earth - floating in an inanimate, mechanistic cos-

mos, I think we have to see the living Earth as part of a much larger living system. The whole cosmos is, in some sense, alive; self-organising, self-motivating and self-moving. These are the traditional qualities of life.

The idea that nature is uncreative has been replaced by the idea of evolution. Darwin denied that all animals and plants were made, designed and created by God the Father. He was rebelling against a particular kind of Protestant theology that put all the creative powers into a (male) Divine Engineer. Darwin reacted against that and said, 'No, life on Earth - all forms of biological life - are made, designed and created by the Mother, by Nature herself'. And Mother Nature, in all archaic mythologies, has just the qualities Darwin thought she had: on the one hand prodigious fertility, and on the other a cruel, destructive and ruthless side by which her own offspring are devoured or destroyed.

Finally, the idea of eternal laws governing everything is questionable now because if the universe evolves, why shouldn't the laws of nature evolve too? In my hypothesis of morphic resonance - described in my book *The Presence of the Past* - I propose that there's an inherent 'memory' in nature. What we usually call 'the laws of nature' may be more like habits. According to this theory, there's an influence from similar things towards subsequent similar things by the process I call 'morphic resonance'. Each species, or each kind of thing, has a collective memory. This influence works through the organising fields of things which I call the 'morphic fields'. At all levels in nature, things are organized by fields and these fields have an inherent memory. This is essentially the essence of the hypothesis.

Rupert Sheldrake has visited Auroville a number of times, and in the present article, used with the kind permission of the author and Bob Kingsley, editor of *The Circular*, a quarterly journal of crop-circle studies, Sheldrake examines the way our perceptions of nature have changed over the last two thousand years, and how those perceptions translate into the way we interact with nature. *The Presence of the Past*, his latest book, was published in Britain last year.

Roger

The morphic field idea, I think, enables us to look at the qualities of places in a new way. What if places like valleys, waterfalls—all kinds of things traditionally thought to have nature spirits associated with them—have morphic fields as organising entities within and around the place? If there are morphic fields, then the place would have an inherent memory, and also resonate with similar places throughout the world.

(This is the edited version of an article that appeared in "The Circular", Volume 2, Number 2. Published here with the permission of the author.)

It is a familiar view in India: the bullocks pacing steadily, the driver half asleep on the seat behind. Occasionally there is a change, when he grabs the tails of the bullocks to convince them to get up greater speed.

The pace of the Auroville Foundation so far reminds me of this slow jolty gait of the bullocks. For, like it or not, we must admit that it does go slowly, on all possible levels. And when an attempt to increase the speed is made...

BEGINNINGS

But let's start at the beginning: September 1988. The Indian Parliament passes the Auroville Foundation Act. Optimists in Auroville welcome the Act, a few pessimists consider that the Act heralds another "Shantiniketan", the educational project of Tagore that, in the opinion of many people in India, was spoiled due to the intervention of the Government of India. But generally, a 'let's wait and see' attitude prevails in Auroville, for all depends on the coming into force of the Auroville Foundation. The very first issue of *Auroville Today* is dedicated to the Act.

Years pass. Auroville waits; the Government of India goes through turbulent times, and the energizing of the Auroville Foundation is obviously not its first priority. In the meantime the status quo continues; only the title of the representative of the Government of India in Auroville changes from 'Administrator' to 'Custodian' but things go on pretty much as before. With one exception: Aurelec, Auroville's computer industry, vehemently objects to being 'taken over' by the Government of India and finally starts a court case against this⁽¹⁾ which results in controversy between Aurovilians.

On January 29, 1991, the Auroville Foundation comes finally into existence. The Government of India announces the appointment of the members of the Governing Board, consisting of eminent Indians, dedicated to the ideals of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. The Board includes one Aurovillian. Nearly all Aurovilians are unaware of 'who is who' in the Governing Board. On February 28th, 1992, the Governing Board holds its first meeting in Auroville, which is attended by four out of nine members. The Chairman of the Governing Board, Dr. Karan Singh, introduces himself to the Auroville community and gives a speech.⁽²⁾

January 1991 also marks the beginning of another movement. Until then, Aurovilians had come together in meetings called General Meetings. But with the coming into force of the Auroville Foundation, the rules of the Act have to be followed. And the Act speaks of 'the Residents' Assembly', and of its representative body, the 'Working Committee'. A new situation arises, and after a process of lengthy discussions, the first Residents' Assembly decides that elections have to determine who will become the members of Auroville's first Working Committee. "A disgrace", say many Aurovilians, who oppose elections and democracy as a matter of principle. But elections are held and a complete fresh team starts at the beginning of May 1991.⁽³⁾

AWAITING THE SECRETARY

Meanwhile, the Custodian remains in office. For the Foundation is basically empty as the properties, which the Government expropriated through the Auroville Foundation Act from all the organizations that are related to Auroville, are not yet transferred to the Foundation. "We await the coming of the Secretary before the properties can be transferred", explains the Chairman. The Working Committee has its first encounters with some individual members of the Governing Board. A second meeting of the Governing

THE AUROVILLE FOUNDATION

Slowly and jerkily the bullock cart makes its way.
But who is the driver?

Board is held in August 1991. This time five members attend.

In February 1992, the Secretary, Mr. L.K. Tripathy, member of the Indian Administrative Service and a previous Secretary in the Government of Tamil Nadu—a highly qualified administrative officer—takes office, just in time to attend the third meeting of the Governing Board, which is again attended by four members only. (Four other members of the Governing Board have not yet visited Auroville to attend a Governing Board Meeting.)

The properties held in custody by the Government of India are transferred to the Auroville Foundation on April 1st, with the exception of Aurelec as the court case is still pending. The Auroville Foundation, after an incubation period of almost three and a half years, finally speeds up. But not yet in full gallop. The International Advisory Council, the third component of the Auroville Foundation along with the Governing Board and the Residents' Assembly, is still not appointed. Some names are proposed, some candidates accept, but even today the Council has not been created.

The Secretary starts his work. Assisted in the first months by Mr. P.N. Ojha, the former deputy Custodian, he attempts to obtain insight into the tricky and complex matter of Auroville's affairs. He soon discovers that there are many tasks waiting, and loses no opportunity to immerse himself fully. The Auroville community soon realizes that the 'static' period of the direct involvement by the Government of India is over, and that a 'dynamic' period with the active participation of 'an outsider'—as the Secretary continues to be seen—has begun. 'The outsider' appears to be very knowledgeable about many aspects: "Are you aware of the Tamil Nadu Town and Country Planning Act, and that your master plan for Auroville has to comply with it?" he asks Aurofuture. They are not. He manages within a period of two months to purchase the lands necessary for Matrimandir—a feat which Auroville has not been able to accomplish for many years. Realizing that Auroville is plagued by power cuts, he talks to the Chairman of the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board and obtains the promise that continued 3-phase supply will be given to Auroville. He actively participates in Auroville's fund raising efforts—in particular with the Government of India. And he does many more things. Within months, the Secretary plays a pivotal role in quite a number of Auroville's affairs.

TRANSFERRING ASSETS

The majority of the Aurovilians continue to 'wait and see'. But this mood is shaken when the Secretary endeavours to legally transfer the responsibility for the management of the various properties of the Foundation. These properties, such as SAIER, Auromitra, CSR and all the business units, are being managed by Aurovilians under an office order issued by the Custodian. Now that the legal ownership of the properties has been transferred from the Indian Government to the Auroville Foundation, a new process of transfer has become necessary.

Long discussions on how and under what conditions this transfer should happen take place between the Secretary, individual unit executives, the Auroville Board of Commerce representing the Auroville commercial units, and the Working Committee. Some units reach agreement, and sign the

so-called 'Office Order No. 5' issued by the Secretary. Some do not agree, but sign as it seems the only thing to do. But others refuse. They object to the authoritarian wording and spirit of the office order; to the fact that the Secretary, like the driver of the bullock cart, tries to twist Auroville's tail; to the very fact that the Secretary acts as the driver of the cart. The opinion page of the Auroville News, Auroville's internal newsletter, not known to hide controversial topics, soon expresses angry views. And the outcry becomes louder when the Secretary, obviously not understanding this opposition after so many meetings to come to an agreement, makes remarks about "the necessity to close units whose unit executives refuse to sign" and questions the presence of certain Aurovilians in Auroville, referring to them as "guests of the Indian Government".

The Working Committee, meanwhile, tries to bridge the growing gap by explaining over and over again to the Secretary the deep concern within the community, and to the community the reasons for the transfer and the intentions of the Secretary—to no avail, however. Many Aurovilians consider that some members of the Working Committee have taken the side of the Government, and are not representing Auroville. The Working Committee feels squeezed, like jam in a sandwich.

STUDY GROUP

There is growing uneasiness within the community. Is the community process to be shunted aside by the Secretary? It finds expression on July 13th, 1992. A Residents' Assembly meeting, called by three Aurovilians, is attended by over 160 Aurovilians. The meeting overwhelmingly decides to support those unit executives who refuse to sign Office Order No. 5, and to reject Office Order No. 5 altogether—notwithstanding the fact that some unit executives have accepted the order in full agreement. The meeting also appoints a study group, consisting of the Working Committee and three individuals, to prepare a paper on the relationship and responsibilities of each of the bodies that represent Auroville: the International Advisory Council, the Governing Board and the Residents' Assembly. This paper is intended for discussion with the Governing Board in their next meeting in August 1992, after it has been approved by a Residents' Assembly meeting.

The study group soon gets to the heart of the matter. For the problem is not so much the Office Order No. 5, but its background. And that background is the Auroville Foundation Act itself. What has been intended with this Act, and what has actually happened?

The intention was stated by the Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Shiv Shankar, when he introduced the Auroville Foundation Act in 1988 to the Indian Parliament:

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

He said further:

"The powers and functions of the Governing Board and the Residents' Assembly are

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

But the Act gives to the Governing Board the general powers of management and the responsibility to secure the proper management of the properties vested in the Foundation. One interpretation of the Act is that the Governing Board are the owners of Auroville, and the wording of the Office Order stressed this aspect of ownership. This is unacceptable to the community.

NEW PROPOSAL

The study group therefore stressed in its paper:

"The first line of Auroville's Charter reads: 'Auroville belongs to nobody in particular, but to humanity as a whole.' Therefore, though the Auroville Foundation Act has transferred the ownership of all assets in accordance with Indian law to the Auroville Foundation, the attitude of all authorities and executives of the Foundation and of all Aurovilians has to be one of 'stewardship', holding the assets in trust for humanity as a whole."

"The spirit expressed in the Auroville Foundation Act is that the authorities and executives of the Foundation work together for the furtherance of the ideals of Auroville."

"The Governing Board shares with the Residents' Assembly and the International Advisory Council the task of ensuring Auroville's growth towards ideals expressed in the Charter of Auroville. In this light any major policy decision concerning Auroville's affairs has to be taken by or together with the Residents' Assembly."

The study group emphasizes that the management of Auroville's assets is a shared responsibility between the Governing Board and the Residents' Assembly and proposes a new process of transfer, one in which the Governing Board transfers its powers through the Secretary to the Working Committee as the representative body of the Residents' Assembly. Subsequently, the Working Committee delegates the management to the various unit executives. The Governing Board through its Secretary and the Residents' Assembly through the Working Committee will ensure the proper management of the assets.

According to the study group, the advantages of this way of transfer are obvious. The process of self-management which has been encouraged in the last twelve years under the previous Act will be continued. The Auroville community will be able to progressively grow in response to an inner need, rather than from an external authority. And a sense of unity will be encouraged, whereas the direct transfer of management by the Secretary to the individual unit executives may lead to separation and division within the community. Individual Aurovilians may feel tempted to bypass the community process, as they will feel responsible to the Secretary only. And last but not least, in the words of the study group:

"The spirit and principles of management proposed in this paper are in line with the Auroville Charter and with several messages given by The Mother regarding Auroville's organization."

The Residents' Assembly meeting of July 31st, 1992, at which about 120 people were present, accepted the paper of the study group as a working document and a number of amendments were proposed. One of them was that the proposal would create a powerful Working Committee. Is this desired?

NIRODBARAN was born in East Bengal in 1903. He first heard about the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in the late 1920's while studying medicine at Edinburgh. On his return to India in 1939 he met the Mother before taking up a medical post in Burma. Three years later, he returned to join the Ashram where he has been ever since. He is the author of *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo and Talks with Sri Aurobindo* (in four volumes); he has also published *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*. His most recent book is *Sri Aurobindo For All Ages*.

Matrimandir: An impressionistic picture

by Nirodbaran

"The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine's answer to man's aspiration for perfection, union with the Divine manifesting in a progressive human unity."

The Mother

Rising from the womb of the earth like an apocalyptic vision, a huge ribbed globe, a wonderful feat of architecture! Based on and supported by four concrete pillars, it lifts itself like a great ball and hangs suspended, as it were, in mid-air. This unadorned marvel of nude symbolic beauty stands at the far extremity of the world on a sandy plain. Above, the sunlight dances upon it, the serene blue canopy of the sky stretches endlessly; while below, as far as the eye travels, there is nothing but the thick green foliage of palm, neem, tamarind and eucalyptus. Far away ripple the blue waves of the Bay of Bengal. Such is the unique creation named 'Matrimandir'.

"Whose brain-child is this, God's or man's?" one wonders as one stands in silent admiration. We have seen the superb Taj Mahal, 'a tear-drop on the cheek of Time'; also the Sun Temple of Konarak with its thousand carved images of the three worlds, which held us breathless. And then there are the temples and *gopurams* of the South, rising tier after tier from a broad-based pedestal and tapering to a narrow wedge, pushing into the vast Inane. The famous Swe Dagon pagoda of Rangoon left my young mind stunned with amazement at its golden image of the Buddha seated in calm Padmasana majesty, his hand outstretched in a gesture of universal compassion. Even the Eiffel Tower, a stupendous engineering feat, lurks in my memory. But this novel marvel,

shorn of all external grandeur, modern in conception, simple in plan—as simple as the orb of the moon—yet in its internal structure beautiful and complex at the same time, bewilders the imagination...

(On his first visit, made before the crystal was in position, Nirodbaran was shown the structure by Piero, the engineer.)

Piero described to us how, when the entire project would be complete and the crystal is placed in its royal centre upon Sri Aurobindo's symbols, the sunbeam would fall upon it; then the walls cased in marble would shine with a quiet glow, and the columns—radiant and puissant—would stand in a circle around the magic globe. Thus from the very summit of the temple, the

Sun-God's thousand rays, gathered to a point, would pass through the crystal and right through the building below, into the Earth-Mother's womb in the form of a lotuspond beneath the structure. In this way the Truth-Consciousness would be symbolically united with inconscient matter...

On our second visit a month or so later, we saw that the work had advanced considerably. As we were about to enter the hushed sanctum, the guard gave us white socks to wear, in order to prevent any dust from being carried inside. It was the same hall, but with the great difference that now the crystal had been installed upon Sri Aurobindo's symbols.

All was as Piero had promised, with the ray of light passing through the aperture and striking the crystal in the centre. Whichever way we turned, we saw the small point of light reflected in the globe. After we had passed a few minutes in absorbed silence, we were each given a cushion to sit on, so that we might meditate wherever we liked in the clear-obscure chamber. For myself, except for a mystic feeling of profound stillness during my own meditation, I could not enter into any communion with higher occult powers.

When we emerged from the enclosed hall, gorgeous scenery met our eyes. Below us spread an empire of green foliage, with the

continued on next page

The Auroville Foundation

(continued from page 4)

Another was that the document breathed an atmosphere of confrontation. "Auroville should aspire at assimilation, not at confrontation." A few people were asked to discuss these points with the study group and prepare a final document, to be discussed in another Residents' Assembly meeting one week later.

But a part of the discussion went into how the Residents' Assembly functions and makes its decisions, as that is crucial to the workability of the proposal. As usual, only a certain section of the community had been present in both meetings. A number of Aurovilians who are known to hold strong views on the internal organization of Auroville, had chosen to be absent. Acknowledging that a majority should not bulldoze an absent minority, it was decided that a few individuals would be visited to hear their views, and to invite them for a next meeting.

Why do certain individuals choose not to attend meetings?

"There is no safe space to express a view contrary to that of the majority" is one observation. For many Aurovilians are still scarred by the experiences of the past when they were offended for expressing a different point of view, or not given the space to express it—something which happened again, though on a minor scale, in these two meetings, and a few people felt forced to leave. "We do not trust a democratic process" is another observation. "For a democratic process implies the rule of the majority over a minority. And that goes against the spirit of Auroville: we should aim at consensus, even if that implies a lengthy and exhausting process."

It is clear that the absence of the minority can also be regarded as another form of bulldozing. And again the words of Mother keep ringing in our ears:

"You must all agree. That is the only way to do good work". (2.4.'70)

The bullock cart plods on. *Auroville Today* will keep you informed of developments.

Carel

(1) see *Auroville Today* no. 17

(2) see *Auroville Today* nos. 26 and 27

(3) see *Auroville Today* no. 29

Champaklal's Vision

CHAMPAKLAL, the devoted attendant of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, passed away recently. He visited Matrimandir a number of times during its construction, and on one occasion—on 7th January, 1986—he had a powerful vision there which was later recorded in a Matrimandir Newsletter and the book *Visions of Champaklal* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1990). The following are extracts from that vision:

As soon as I stepped in, she saturated me. I entered an altogether different world. I had to struggle to keep my eyes open. The whole of Matrimandir seemed to be rolling from side to side. So I opened my eyes and saw that Matrimandir was steady, but again as I shut my eyes, Matrimandir appeared to be tossing and turning like before. Once more I opened my eyes and found that it was stable. This happened three times. I don't recollect when actually it ceased tumbling. Later it started whirling slowly like a merry-go-round. Suddenly it was spinning very fast. Then its pace slowed down and it began to plunge down, deep down in the abyss. Finally when it got settled a marvellous figure was seen. As soon as it touched Matrimandir, I do not know what happened but I fell back to my original place inside the Matrimandir.

Now the walls were transparent and luminous. Then gradually they were interchanging their colours many times. Eventually they appeared to be translucent, of a brilliant and resplendent golden colour. I could see very vividly far off objects on all sides, all in one expansive gaze. It was a fantastic sight! Around Matrimandir, up to a certain distance, there were different kinds of beautiful, bright and fascinating flowers and plants of varied colours and hues, never seen before. Behind them were numerous trees of various kinds. Many of them were adorned with lovely, glistening blossoms while many were of lustrous colours. Beyond them, very



Champaklal visiting Matrimandir

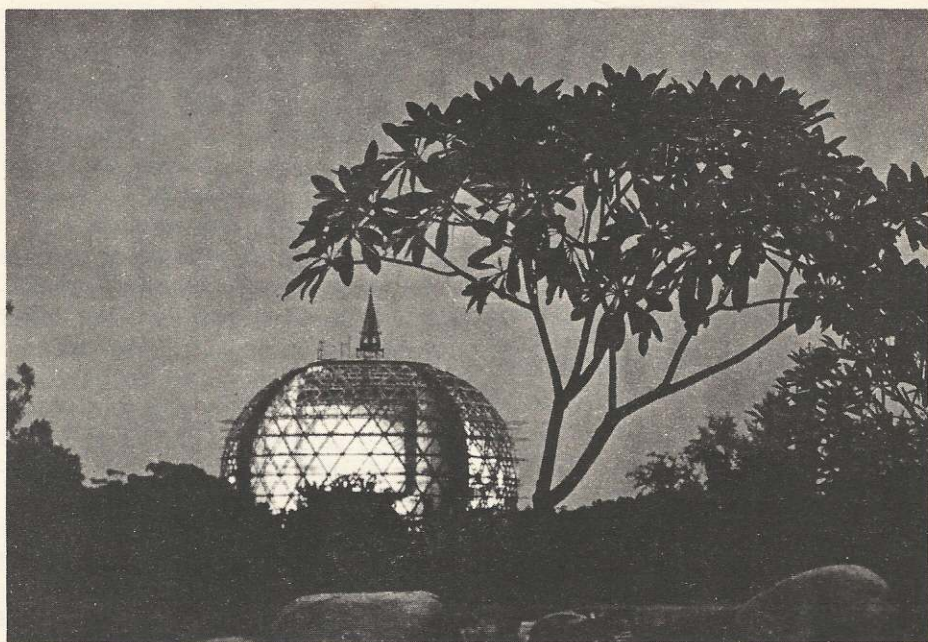
very far, there was a vast open space in the midst of which shone an exquisite, radiant and magnificent throne of superb workmanship and golden glow...

My eyes turned again to the throne and I saw that the golden light was continuously emanating from it. It seemed that the Mother was seated there in her golden translucent body. Again it appeared that Sri Aurobindo was there. In between, time and again was seen an incredible vision of the two in one body. It seemed to be a transparent body but I could not comprehend how it was inside...

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo, two together in one body, were seen in front of each and everyone at the same time, in a benediction pose, with their right hand showering grace and love. What an indescribable scene of wonder and beatitude! Everything became quiet and peaceful. Suddenly an ear-piercing resounding victory conch was heard. Simultaneously the children were seen wonder-struck as their physical bodies were slowly and gradually undergoing change and they became youthful. The young people turned strong and well-built while the aged were transformed into the prime of youth. The animals and birds were released from their genetic lineage and were seen in different beautiful forms. Now it started drizzling and then

pouring. The novelty of the phenomenon was that it rained in many different colours and finally in silver and gold....Eventually the rain stopped and nothing but the golden light was visible everywhere.

All of a sudden my glance fell on the upper portion of Matrimandir and I beheld a blazing, glorious, ravishing and golden sun covering the entire firmament! Instead of heat, it effused golden light and delightful coldness. My gaze went back to the throne and I saw everyone (men, women, children, birds, animals) standing in adoration in a posture of *Namaskar* (folded hands in obeisance). It was a peerless spectacle. Everything appeared to be golden. Instantaneously, a cascade of golden light from the sky poured into Matrimandir. At this time I sensed that a number of persons were sitting nearby but I could not see them clearly. I had a feeling that the golden light fell on all and penetrated inside. The whole hall was suffused with golden light. Now one could not see anything except the golden light. Suddenly Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's hand of blessing were seen caressing not only my head but everyone's. Everything became peaceful. Once again a sweet melody was heard. My eyes opened. It is just impossible to formulate in words the impact of this moment on my body...



Matrimandir (continued from page 5)

white, pavilion-like houses of Auroville nestling here and there, and the sea in the distance ...

In conclusion, I would say that the Matrimandir, even though still in the process of construction, is unique in its conception, architecture and ultimate purpose. Nothing like it exists anywhere else. With its completion, we shall enter the twenty-first century, anticipating the vast potential of the new era upon the earth that it promises to usher in.

It is interesting to note that Champaklal, even in his enfeebled condition of health towards the end of his life, visited the Matrimandir. A group of Aurovilians gave him a wonderful welcome, carrying him up to the central chamber, and receiving his blessings.

Now I would like to speak about the Divine Mother, in whose supramental vision the entire inner Chamber was revealed in the minutest detail. She called together some of her devotees from the West and asked them to execute her vision on the material plane. Long discussions with them followed, and at last the entire plan was finalised. Transcriptions of some of these discussions have appeared in her Centenary Volume 13. I shall quote a few relevant portions, in which the Mother sets forth her ideas in her own words. They make fascinating reading, particularly in the light of the reality Matrimandir is now becoming.

She says:

"For a long time I had been feeling something, then we spoke about it the other day and I saw it ... I had seen what should be done ... I saw clearly—very, very distinctly ... that is to say it was like that and it is still like that, it is there (*gesture indicating an eternal place*) ... the interior of this place.

"It will be a tower with twelve facets, each facet represents a month of the year; and up above, the roof of the tower will be like this (*gesture indicating a roof which slopes upwards from the sides to the centre*).

"And then, inside there will be twelve columns. The wall and then twelve columns. And right at the centre, on the floor, there is my symbol, and above it four of Sri Aurobindo's symbols, joined to form a square, and above that ... a globe. If possible, a globe made of transparent material, and with or without light inside, but the sun should strike the globe; and then according to the month, the time, it will be from here, from there, from there (*gesture indicating the movement of the sun*). You understand? There will always be an opening with a ray. Not a diffused light: a ray which strikes ...

"And then, there will be no windows or lights inside. It will always be in a kind of

clear half-light, day and night—by day with sun, by night with artificial light. And on the floor, nothing just a floor like this one (*in Mother's room*). That is to say, first wood (wood or something else), then a sort of rubber foam, thick, very soft, and then a carpet. A carpet everywhere, everywhere except at the centre. And people will be able to sit everywhere. And the twelve columns are for people who need support for their backs!

"And then, people will not come for a regular meditation ... it will be a place for concentration. There will be a time in the week or a time in the day when visitors will be allowed to come, but anyway, no mixture.

"So I think that is good. It was there (*gesture upward*). I still see it when I speak of it—I see. As I see it, it is very beautiful, it is really very beautiful ... a sort of half-light: one can see, but is very tranquil. And then, very clear and very bright rays of light (the spotlight, the artificial light, must be rather golden, it must not be cold—that will depend on the spotlight) onto the symbol. A globe made of a plastic material or ... crystal perhaps.

"After we decided to build this temple, I saw it, I saw it from the inside ... I did not see the outside, I did not see it at all, I saw only the inside.

"And the important thing is this, the play of the sun on the centre. Because that becomes the symbol—the symbol of the future realisation.

"You see, this is what I have learned: the failure of religions. It is because they were divided. They wanted people to be religious to the exclusion of the other religions; and every branch of knowledge has been a failure because they were exclusive; and man has been a failure because he was exclusive. And what the new consciousness wants (it is on this that it insists) is: no more divisions. To be able to understand the spiritual extreme, the material extreme, and to find ... to find the meeting-point, the point where ... that becomes a real force."

One question asked was whether disciples from the Ashram should work on the Matrimandir with the Aurovilians; the Mother answered:

"It is not possible. All the people of the Ashram who are of working age are all working, they have all got their work."

When the questioner insisted, "... without the inner force of the people of the Ashram mingling with the Aurovilians, the people from Auroville will remain what they are ... Otherwise there is no hope," She replied:

"Oh no! He does not know. It is all in the mind, it is all mental. Who knows? It is only when one sees. Not one of them sees.

Condemned to Progress

I sometimes think we Aurovilians are like jugglers, juggling inexpertly with the multifarious situations—trivial, apocalyptic, Kafkaesque—that are thrown at us here, while we struggle to keep our balance on a ground that keeps shifting under our calloused feet.

But if it's sometimes obvious that everything—marauding goats, discussions about the powers of the Governing Board, the price of eggs in the stall etc. etc.—has its necessity for our integral development, the question is how to keep dealing with all these different balls that are flying through the air. After all, jugglers eventually tire and start dropping things—often on their own feet. What is needed, in other words, is a point of stasis, of elegance, balance and wisdom, which comprehends the essential interconnectedness between us and all this stuff flying about; and which shapes this seeming chance collocation of incidents and Aurovilians into their true form and dynamic pattern.

I trust—I have to trust—that we (or parts of our individual beings) are already engaged on this. That we are preparing ourselves, or being prepared, for a work that involves an absolute change in our being; a change that will take place through our surrender to a consciousness that is able to transform everything, even, and ultimately, our physical substance and the 'habit' of death itself. For that is the change that levers us out of the game; at that moment, the juggling stops...

Heady stuff! So why don't I just get on with it faster rather than, say, writing fluffy articles for *Auroville Today*? Why don't I vote wholeheartedly for life rather than the death which, Mother said, is the reality of our ordinary existence?

Because... because a part of me doesn't fully believe in it. Because a satirical fellow—wearing, I believe, an MCC cricket blazer—sits on my shoulder every time I approach those other domains, with his "I say, old chap, let's not get carried away". And because, for those parts of me that want to make the attempt, it's so damn, damn hard. Take your skin, pinch it, then watch it snap back into shape. And realise what it means to fight the habits and fears of millennia locked up in that little-known substance we call 'our' body, to lasso the ego—that master of guerilla tactics—and to open this tired, scared, doubting, clenched fist of being to the energy and possibility of something else.

Of course, there is the 'Sunlit Path', which only requires a constant aspiration and surrender to the Grace. But that tiny word 'only' implies a desperate thirst and a depth of trust that, frankly, I don't have.

Even though, somewhere, I both dread and long for it...

As a community, we don't talk about these things much. And there are plenty of good reasons not to. There's the fear of distorting or losing the 'charge' of personal experiences; there are the shortcomings of language; there's a fear of spiritual politics and manipulation; there are feelings of inadequacy and shyness. Fine. But still, aren't there ways that we can be levers for each other by sharing something of our personal struggles, our deeper language of aspiration and spiritual adventure, openly, innocently? And can't we try to create psychological and physical conditions which are more supportive of this horribly difficult work? Do we have to keep fumbling in our individual corners with our individual interpretations when, perhaps, we could plug into a grid of communal wisdom, courage and daring?

For, finally, there is no going back. We are condemned, condemned to progress. Having read Sri Aurobindo and Mother, we have lost the easy innocence of the dog asleep in the sun. We can never unknow what we are here for, even if—uprooted beings that we are—we rage against the loss of that former 'security' as temporarily we cartwheel over a void. At some point, in some lifetime, we are going to have to collaborate with that other reality which already interpenetrates every particle of our existence. Until then, well, we dangle. And juggle...

Alan



All thoughts, thoughts, thoughts... Thoughts do not build.

"You know, I do not believe in external decisions. I simply believe in one thing only: the force of Consciousness which is making a pressure like that (*crushing gesture*). And the pressure goes on increasing ... which means that it will sift out the people. I believe only in that—the pressure of Consciousness. All the rest are things that men do. They do them more or less well, and then it lives, and then it dies, and then it changes, and then it gets distorted, and then... everything they have done. It is not worth the trouble. The power of execution must come from above, like that, imperative (*gesture of*

descent)! And for that, this (*Mother points to her forehead*), this must keep quiet ..."

The world has been presented with two divine epics: one is Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, which is already in our midst: the other is the Mother's epic still under construction, the Matrimandir. The first has a body of sound, the other a body of sight and silence: both are unique and mantric in character, unconceived by any human brain.

The world is racked with violence: life has lost its sanctity, a dark Power has eclipsed the light of faith, truth and love. At this critical juncture, the Matrimandir is rising like a tower of peace and harmony, and its completion will establish the Golden Era. □

A SUNDAY PICNIC

Reviving an ancient tradition in the green-belt area of Fertile, a pot-luck picnic took place in the Gaia Forest to the obvious satisfaction of the participants. Under a large neem tree embraced by a cashew tree, the delicacies were laid out near a fire. Ants, flies and dogs were absent as it was a very warm day, and the forest was rather parched waiting for the rain. Johnny had organized the event recalling the distant past when Jan used to host these gatherings in Fertile on Sundays. Everyone had a chance to meet the new babies, new neighbours and share the surreal story that Auroville seems to be.

COMPOST HAZARD

For some years, the local farmers have been hauling waste from the rubbish dumps of Pondicherry to put it, after the first good rain, on their fields as 'compost'. This summer, the rains have not come and large piles of this waste, with its attendant litter, stench and health hazards, are collecting outside New Creation, in parts of the Greenbelt, and elsewhere in the area. The Auroville Environmental Group have written to the Chairman of the Pondicherry Municipal Corporation, asking him to assist in remedying this situation. Also, a videofilm is being made to help raise awareness.

SILVER DOLLARS

UNESCO has tentatively allocated \$45,000 for Auroville's 25th birthday celebration. The suggestions so far relating to how the money could be spent include an international seminar on the theme of "Humanity at the Crossroads: A Programme for Change—the Auroville Charter." Cultural events include the possibility of a music theatre presentation of *Savitri*, with Pandit Ravi Shankar; a documentary film on Auroville; and various publications, including a new Auroville brochure, and a collection of Auroville poems and essays. The UNESCO *Courier* will publish an article on Auroville in one of their next issues.

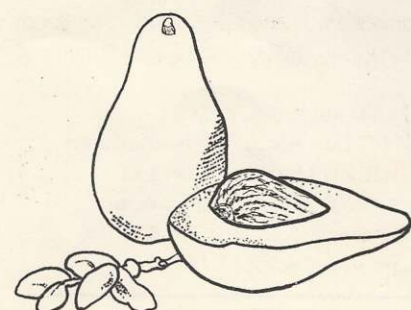
THE WEATHER

On the 1st of August, after seven months of hardly any rain, a short but heavy storm took us by surprise. It damaged a number of windmills, but the rain gave us and the trees a welcome respite from the hairblower heat of the previous two months.

OGA VERSUS CGP

The Pour Tous Stall is now displaying OGA (Organically Grown in Auroville) vegetables and fruits separately from CGP stuff (Chemically Grown from Pondicherry). So far we have found a fair variety of OGA delights placed on the top shelf of the vegetable section of the Stall: bananas, mangos, ladyfingers (okra), oranges, papayas, gourds, egg plants, coconuts, avocados, etc. The new display will hopefully increase the demand for OGA food and encourage our hard-working farmers; also hobby-gardeners are invited to share their produce with the larger community.

Drawing by Peio



Today, as the earth cries out as never before, can a key still be found to release man from "both his devils and his gods?" Is there still a passage, a way out from our evolutionary impasse, a secret to be unearthed in which is contained the sense of our destiny? Perhaps—as Sri Aurobindo foresaw at the beginning of the century—we are at the end not only of an age, but also of an evolutionary cycle. "Our murders and violence, our drugs and viruses are the cry of the earth, an ultimate revolt against ourselves for want of having our own sense of being, just as the materialist revolt was against an ecclesiastical prison, only more radical and deeper in our cells... both science and religion have crippled us rendered us stupid—robbing us of our own powers and evolutionary secret, one by urging us to heaven, the other to a utilitarian machinery", writes Satprem in *The Revolt of the Earth*.

This, his latest book, is written in a style that is condensed, pared down—almost minimal—and reads with the passionate urgency of a communique from the front of an evolutionary Armageddon. In ten short chapters he retraces the turning points in his life that were to lead him to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, before going on to highlight some of the more recent discoveries he has made in his attempt to pick up the thread Mother had left, and follow it through the labyrinth and down the path—the great passage—She has opened through her yoga of transformation for the species as a whole.

Eighteen months in the horror of a German concentration camp—Satprem was arrested by the Gestapo in France for belonging to the French Resistance—was enough to set Satprem off on his fierce heretical odyssey that was to take him via Egypt to India, and his first encounter with Sri Aurobindo and Mother. "I was twenty-two... I was not even a 'man'; my humanity had been brutally torn from me. Can one ponder what is nothing? Something that is just a hole, a cry and nothing else?" Compared to the massive ruins of Egypt, the frescoes of Thebes, the Sphinx: "the West's entire culture, its intelligence, its machines, were like wind swallowed up in a black hole. All one had to do was blow on it and it would crumble... but the columns of Luxor would remain standing... No, it was not the crumbling of the West I was contemplating in my Cairo-bound train, but something far more profound and recondite in which a secret of life, or death, had to be captured if one did not want to fall, like Spartacus, in a thousandth futile revolt."

Satprem takes a boat from Port-Said to Bombay and arrives in Pondicherry to take up a job with the French Government. It was at the *darshan* of April 24th, 1946, that he first encountered the power of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's gaze.

"I stepped forward and folded my hands in Indian fashion, as I had been told to do. There he was—a mass of immobile power. His face was suffused in blue light (I thought it was neon lights!). He looked at me. That look felt so vast, oh, vaster than all the sands of Egypt, softer than all the seas! And everything seemed to be engulfed in something unknown. It lasted three seconds... I returned to my room at the Governor's palace and stayed there, stunned, much as I had been stunned by the Valley of the Kings and Thebes. Something kept on vibrating, vibrating in the depths, far, far away, beyond all known horizons, and I no longer knew anything. I only knew I had encountered something for always. A unique being, unlike anyone I would ever meet."

Back in France, four years later, Satprem reads of Sri Aurobindo's passing. Stunned, he leaves for South America and the jungles of French Guyana, where he lives for two years and digs for gold. He returns to India and gradually over the years becomes Mother's close confidant. In weekly sessions she speaks to him of her amazing experiences on the frontiers of a new consciousness, and her unprecedented attempt to bring down and awake a new supramental consciousness in the cells of the body, capable of undermining and transforming death's ancestral hold upon us, and altering, to the point of transformation, our vision of the world with which we are one.

But it does more than alter our vision. "She laid siege to the new species through the very resistance of the old... she made me witness to her incredible advance towards the tomorrow of the earth, towards the man yet to be... A new being is a peril for all. It disturbs everything, goes against every existing law. But of course the new law must be wrested from the very negation of our own body—and all bodies, as there is only one body!"

"She hewed and hewed... she would take my hands, close her eyes, secretly drawing me towards what I had yet to understand, what I had yet to be. And as I know now, she planted into my heart a few particles of that new seed—that hope for the earth."

When Mother left her body in 1973, Satprem found himself with the responsibility of saving and bringing to light the six thousand pages of the *Agenda* that chronicle Mother's epic battle on that terrible yet marvellous frontier of transformation. "It took me eight years to materialize that fabulous message of six thousand pages and to try and map out a service path, as they say in the jungle, through this green deluge, no longer related to prehistory but to a history yet to be born." With this phase of his work—that includes a series of books on Mother and her work of transformation—completed, Satprem decides, in 1982, to set out on the path that Mother and Sri Aurobindo had opened up, and to attempt to unearth in the body that secret which is the cellular key to its transformation. "Salvation is physical" Mother said.

"I took the plunge. It has been seven years—over seven years—day after day and hour after hour, since I have undertaken that labour. The Vedic Rishis called it digging. It is like riding a storm that uproots everything; everything is laid bare. But once in the middle of the storm, you cannot pause for a rest; you ride it out or you sink... One understands nothing until 'it' descends into your own body like an earthquake. Then one says, "Ah" and one is thunderstruck as before the secret of the earth and the centuries."

Satprem refers to notebooks he has been keeping of this "perilous odyssey"—"to take a step toward another species requires a long adaptation to a new and crushing sun", and calls them the *Notebooks of an Apocalypse*—a word which he uses in the original Greek sense of 'laying bare'. Satprem speaks of two bodies, one within the other: "One that knows irrevocably and for all time, against the whole world: it KNOWS the life it has touched. And the other, the old mortal body, slightly above it, as if covering the first one—the product of untold ancestors who have repeatedly instilled death into it, death for the least thing that questions the ancestral rhythm."

"Each step is unknown; yet somehow, one puts a foot down on something. It's truly like being born anew from one minute to the next, except one does not come out of the womb of one's mother and into a ready made world... One comes out of the womb of a

formidable Mother, perhaps She who has breathed all these stars into existence."

One day he suddenly understands for the first time, a remark Mother had made to him years before: "Life and death are the same thing". That—paradoxical as it may seem to the mind—what we call life is nothing but a form of death, for we are all living on the wrong side—the shadow side—of the Life that is yet to be.

In one particularly decisive experience Satprem describes the kindling of stupendous innumerable fires in the depths of the body, like microscopic volcanoes "smaller than a cell" which, drawn upward as if by a magnet, encounter their source of fire and joy and love above. "As if the body had reached the goal of the Ages" and the source of a new life—a life that is already in the process of invading our world and establishing a new vibration, a new physiological memory in matter.

"O Fire, thou art the son of heaven by the body of the earth" say the Vedas and "Our fathers shattered the mountain rock with their cry: they made us a path... and discovered the Day and the Sun-World."

The Empire trembles: "It is the last revolt of the earth."

Roger

Title: *The Revolt of the Earth*. 100 pages.

Author: Satprem

Publisher: Institute for Evolutionary Research, 200 Park Avenue, Suite 303 East, New York, N.Y. 10166.

Auroville Today provides information about Auroville, an international township in South-India on a monthly basis and is distributed to Aurovilians and friends of Auroville in India and abroad. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the community as a whole.

Editorial team: Tineke, Roger, Jill, Carel, Bill, Annemarie, Alan. Typesetting on computer: Annemarie.

Printed at Auroville Press.

New Publications

- ☛ The leaflet *Introducing Auroville* is now available in three new languages: Portuguese, Russian and Tamil. The other languages are: English, French, Spanish, German, and Hindi.
- ☛ The leaflet *Auroville—the Greening of a Wasteland* is now available in English and Portuguese.
- ☛ The leaflet *Matrimandir* is now available in English, French, German and Spanish.
- ☛ A booklet with fitness exercises, *Belebe deinen Körper*, by Ursula Mack, has just been released. Translations in French and English are forthcoming.

Other Publications

- ☛ *Renewable Energy and Appropriate Technology in Auroville* (leaflet)
- ☛ *Education* (leaflet)
- ☛ *The Auroville Building Centre* (leaflet)
- ☛ *Guide for Guests* (leaflet)
- ☛ *Auroville brochure* (40 pages)
- ☛ *Auroville references in Mother's Agenda*
- ☛ Auroville map with list of guest facilities

Forthcoming

- ☛ Village Action (leaflet)
- ☛ Sustainable Development
- ☛ Sri Aurobindo and Mother and the Evolution of Man.

By Airmail
Bookpost

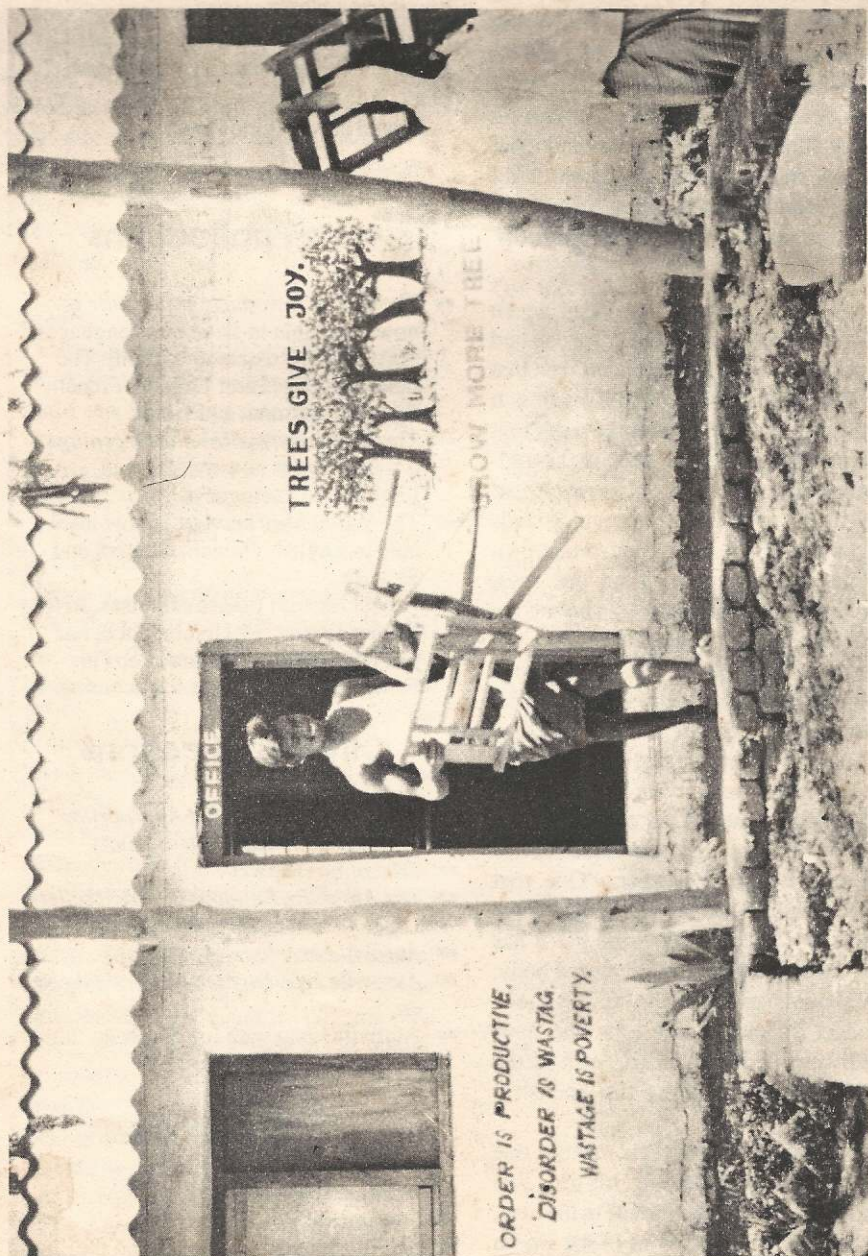
AUROVILLE TODAY

C.S.R. Office,
Auroville 605101
Tamil Nadu, India



In this issue: Auroville in Rio; Rupert Sheldrake;
the Auroville Foundation; Matrimandir; etc.

August 1992
Number Forty-Three



The Road from Rio...

Running In Auroville

A political experience

Have you ever tried running in the forests of Auroville? Did you know that you can jog for hours without meeting a soul? That you never have to run on a tar road? That there are so many different itineraries, that each run is a discovery in itself?

And running in Auroville is indeed an initiating experience, running here is a joy. As your body settles into rhythm, as your breathing becomes regular, you suddenly realize the beauty of the forests of the Green Belt: the trees have grown, this is a REAL forest now with natural topsoil, undergrowth, shade. It's such a miracle when you remember the Auroville of 1968-69: a barren red-earth plateau with only palmyra trees and a few banyan trees; you could see all the way down to the ocean from the Matrimandir camp. Today, it's quiet, silent, pregnant with the force of the Mother.

For some unfathomable reason, running silences the mind; it is a spiritual experience. Slowly, as you get into the rhythm, the tiredness, the constant whirring of the brain, the anger, the anxieties, fall away from you and the mind, freed for an instant from its earthly shackles, settles into an intuitive openness... and funny thoughts enter your head.

Do we have much to show in Auroville in terms of outer realizations? We have neither solved the money or the power problems that plague the outside world (although we may be occultly on the way to doing it). Even our material achievements, be they handicrafts or computers, cannot really compete with the quality and prices of the West. But, after 24 years, what remains is a million trees which have been planted and which have now grown, the result of patient watering and composting; and many kilometres of *bunds*. This is the physical reality of Auroville. This is the basis upon which Auroville can grow and the material protection it needs in order to develop. Mankind's greatest threat today is not any more an atomic war, but an ecological *pralaya*, the self destruction of our environment through man's folly. Rio has proved that this threat is now taken seriously by the earth. And Auroville has shown to the world that nothing is lost in Nature, that an environment can be totally redeemed in less than a quarter of a century. This is Auroville's gift to this planet...

Can you believe that all these ideas can come to you while running in the Green Belt!...

As you jog silently, in harmony with the surroundings, a family of mongooses crosses the road hurriedly, the mother looking back with a worried expression. Further on, a pair of partridges, frightened by this monstrous apparition, prances noisily into the undergrowth; a huge grey hare, caught unawares, hops madly away, kangaroo-like, its bouncing rear bobbing up and down in view for a long time. Far away, a lone jackal looks at you with a kind of strange detachment and then suddenly disappears.

Yes, animal life, too, has come back to Auroville!

Run then, walk, cycle in the forests of Auroville; you will discover not only unknown aspects of our city, its secret paths, its animal life, but you might also receive some illumination that will turn you overnight into a Greenbelter—or at least into a Green Belt sympathizer!...

Francois Gautier



❖How To Receive Auroville Today ❖

The contribution for the next 12 issues of Auroville Today in India is Rs. 150, for other countries Rs. 650, Can. \$ 30, French F. 150, DM 47, It. Lira 35,500, D.Gl. 52, US \$ 25, U.K. £ 14. This includes the postage by airmail. Please send your contribution (or your supporting contribution of double the amount) either to the Auroville International centre in your country (add 10% for admin. and bank charges) or directly to Auroville Today, CSR Office, Auroville 605101. Cheques should be made payable to Auroville Fund, specifying: Contribution for Auroville Today. You will receive the issues directly from Auroville. Personal cheques are preferred to bank cheques. Please do not send postal money orders. Subscribers will receive a reminder when their subscription is about to expire.

Addresses of Auroville International centres:

- AVI Deutschland, c/o M. Soerensen, Bleicherstrasse 60, 2800 Bremen, Germany.
- AVI España, c/o Arjun and Anandi, Apartado de Correos 36, 31.610 Villava, Navarra, Spain.
- AVI France c/o Sotyakom Karim, 14, rue du Colonel Grancey, 94500 Champigny Sur Marne, France.
- AVI Italia, c/o Emanuele Scanziani Via Mazzini 19, 24100 Bergamo, Italy.
- AVI Nederland, c/o M. Berden Lobelialaan 51, 2555 PC Den Haag, The Netherlands.
- AVI Quebec c/o Francine Mineau 10589 St. Denis, H3L 2J4 Montreal, Canada.
- AVI Sverige, c/o Ulf Carlberg, Borgholm, Broddebø, S-59700 Atvidaberg, Sweden.
- AVI U.K. c/o M. Littlewood Canigou Cot Lane, Chidham, W.Sussex, PO18 8SP, U.K.
- AVI USA, c/o Jack Alexander P.O.Box 162489, Sacramento CA 95816, USA