

# AUROVILLE TODAY

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PHOTO MOHANDAS V. BADAGARA

## Which Future?

### THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR: AN INTRODUCTION

The international seminar on the theme 'Humanity at the Crossroads: Evolution of Consciousness', that took place in Auroville last February, was in the planning process for over one year. During that period, the concept remained constant—to invite stimulating individuals from various fields and cultures to interact with each other, and with the Aurovilians, over the question of what constitutes the next great step in humanity's evolution in the context of the present global crisis.

On the first day of the seminar, which took place in the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium, Bharat Nivas, each speaker was invited to briefly present his or her point of view, and this was followed by a discussion between them. The second day began with the invitees answering questions from Aurovilians and guests and in the afternoon, the speakers put questions concerning the Auroville experiment to a panel of Aurovilians. After the concluding speeches, everybody reassembled beneath the Banyan tree near Matrimandir for an evening meditation.

#### The panel of speakers was as follows:

- ♦ Dr. Karan Singh (global perspectives)
- ♦ Dr. Ervin Laszlo (evolutionary philosophy)
- ♦ Mr. Bertrand Schneider (global perspectives on development)
- ♦ Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan (inter-disciplinary research in art and culture)
- ♦ Dr. Ajoy Bagchi (environmental issues)
- ♦ Prof. Arabinda Basu (Comparative philosophy and religion)
- ♦ Prof. Arindam Chakraborty (philosophy)
- ♦ Swami Chidananda (the spiritual path)
- ♦ Prof. Manoj Das (author)
- ♦ Shri N. Krishnan (international relations)
- ♦ Miss Maggi Liddchi (author)
- ♦ Mr. Gerard Mourue (psychology)
- ♦ Aster Patel (research in matter)
- ♦ Shri S.R. Tayal (international relations)
- ♦ Mr. George Tompkins (kundalini research)
- ♦ Dr. R.M. Varma (neuro-sciences)

*"The Crossroad sustains the  
influx of the future and  
discovers the way"*

*(from a poem by Anu, part of the  
dance performance 'Crossroads',  
created for the Seminar.)*

In 1993, to mark the 25th anniversary of Auroville's inauguration, UNESCO featured Auroville in its magazine, *UNESCO Courier*, and hosted an Auroville exhibition at its headquarters in Paris. It also allocated funds for an international seminar on the theme of 'Humanity at the Crossroads: Evolution of Consciousness'.

That seminar took place during the 'birthday week', from the 21st to the 28th of February. The following pages are devoted to that event, and include summaries of the main speeches and dialogues, reflections upon the process and outcome of the seminar, and extracts from a compilation of the writings of Sri Aurobindo and Mother on the theme of 'Humanity at the Crossroads', prepared for the seminar.

In this issue we also include an overview of the cultural events of Auroville's Birthday Week, with particular reference to the dance programme, 'Crossroads', which was created specially to complement the seminar; we interview Bertrand Schneider, Secretary General of the Club of Rome who, after the seminar, attended his first meeting as a member of the International Advisory Council of the Auroville Foundation; and we talk to the man responsible for the manufacture of the Matrimandir carpet, which was recently installed. □

### On Evolution and Consciousness

The conditions under which men live upon earth are the result of their state of consciousness. To seek to change these conditions without changing the consciousness is a vain chimera; for no human organisation can change radically unless human consciousness changes.



At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way...



A spiritual evolution, an evolution of consciousness in Matter in a constant developing self-formation till the form can reveal the indwelling Spirit, is then the key-note, the central significant motive of the terrestrial existence.



In the previous stages of the evolution Nature's first care and effort had to be directed towards a change in the physical organisation, for only so could there be a change of consciousness; this was a necessity imposed by the insufficiency of the force of consciousness already in formation to effect a change in the body. But in man a reversal is possible, indeed inevitable; for it is through his consciousness, through its transmutation and no longer through a new bodily organism as a first instrumentation that the evolution can and must be effected.



...Or we may find when all the rest has failed  
Hid in ourselves the key of perfect change.

*(From the seminar compilation Humanity at the Crossroads: Evolution of Consciousness. Extracts from Sri Aurobindo and Mother.)*



## THE PRESENTATIONS ON THE FIRST DAY: EXTRACTS

### Dr. Karan Singh:

We are moving into a global society, but our consciousness has not developed any new dimensions because the globalisation phenomenon has hit us so fast. This gap is creating the tremendous tensions we see in the world today. The critical question, then, is how do we develop a new level of consciousness to deal with the global society which is emerging?

I see two aspects necessary for the evolution of consciousness. The horizontal aspect, which involves a rational reorganization of society so that we can survive, based on a holistic approach linking all human beings together with a spiritual bond. And a vertical aspect, a growth inwards towards the centre of our being, towards what Sri Aurobindo called the psychic being. As human beings living in the most exciting period all human history, we have a unique opportunity to widen and to deepen our consciousness. May this seminar be a step towards this.

### Bertrand Schneider:

We live in an age of great transition. We know a lot about the society we are leaving, but very little about the global society that we are entering, and I feel that we are not at all prepared for the global challenges which are arising. We know that we cannot solve problems like poverty and underdevelopment without considering what I call the global problematic—in-termeshed factors like environmental degradation and the negative effects of science and technology. But the problem is essentially a problem of consciousness because we have to make the right choices. In this respect, I believe that education, the learning process, can be at the centre of the evolution of consciousness to the extent that it prepares us for change.

### Ervin Laszlo:

One of the key terms of this symposium is 'crossroads'. In the new sciences, this would be termed 'bifurcation', a point at which a system either evolves or devolves; it cannot stand still. This is the choice of destiny that mankind is facing today, and we are the only species that can choose that destiny. The question is, is a technological society like ours wise enough to survive? The answer is not yet in and, indeed, it would not be exceptional for mankind to become extinct—99% of the species which inhabited the Earth have become extinct. This is the moment we must choose our destiny. We have a small window in time—perhaps 10 years—but if we don't choose by then, the problems facing us will be so huge that we will have little space for manoeuvre.

However, none of the necessary physical changes will happen, and fast enough, unless something else changes; unless we stop thinking and acting in the way we have done for most of this century. We need a new consciousness, a new way of thinking, feeling and, above all, relating. How do we discover this? Some scientists believe—and I include myself among them—that there is no such thing as absolute chance in the world; that God gave us not only the rules, but also a basic scenario, a direction

to evolution. There may be something like a 'divine trend', a divine will that can guide us, if we are willing to listen to the voice deep inside. We seem to be part of a tremendous cosmic process in which we are being pushed to become more and more conscious of ourselves in order to achieve our destiny.

Evolution, it seems, does not happen gradually, step-wise, but in sudden rushes of transformation; and it starts outside the established patterns with something new, an outpost, and then interacts. Today, such local experiments can be very influential. For we live in a time when there are ripple effects, when a small initiative can spread very fast on the surface of the complex global system. The ripple effect of people who live a new consciousness in centres like Auroville can spread, and this gives the hope that humanity will bifurcate upwards instead of downwards to extinction.

### Swami Chidananda:

Man has made tremendous material progress by focussing on the outer world, but he has forgotten the true liver and doer of life, and so he has stagnated within. There is a fearful lack of education and culture in world leaders, who feel responsible only for their own people and own nation and not to the human family as a whole. This low-grade understanding, these thought patterns, are what is creating the present global holocaust. The one great need of today is to give these leaders, indeed all individuals, a new identity, a new definition of man. And in this India's great contribution to Humanity—which is the study of human consciousness, and the experience of consciousness as such—can be of great use. For the great spiritual masters discovered that behind the outer flux of life there is something eternal, and that the higher consciousness within us belongs to That. That each creature and individual is a repository of that being, and through this we are all one.

This connection of the individual to the eternal has been neglected, ignored, and over the centuries has become blocked. There is a need for a global restoration of that channel. If the link is maintained, we can go on with our work and nothing will come in the way of evolution. If we break away from God, we cannot evolve.

### Professor Arabinda Basu:

In reading Sri Aurobindo, I have grasped that there are a few points of central importance. Firstly, that it's not a matter of man evolving into superman, but of consciousness evolving from mind to supermind. For, according to Sri Aurobindo, everything has to be looked at from the point of view of consciousness, for consciousness is the fundamental reality; it is self-existent, inherent in all, universal. How, then, can consciousness evolve if it is the ultimate reality? Sri Aurobindo explains that consciousness has the inherent capacity to limit itself, to ap-

pear as less than consciousness, and that Mankind is one of the limited manifestations of this consciousness. The only business of spirituality, of evolution, is to make possible a more overt manifestation of God in matter. We can be instruments in this. And if we do not take the opportunity of collaborating with the Divine in this great evolutionary endeavour, Sri Aurobindo has no hesitation in saying that humanity will be thrown on the scrap heap of history, and the Divine will make a new instrument to manifest Himself more fully here on Earth.

Human life can change only if human nature changes, and human nature can change only if human consciousness changes. Sri Aurobindo says that Man is at a crossroads because he has a double nature. On the one hand, he is a mental, physical and vital being; on the other hand, he has a psychic being. But so far the psychic being in man has not been sufficiently powerful to influence his other nature and to bring out the Divine from behind the veil. How, then, can Man, the mental being, become more than Man? Only by breaking the fetters and letting the Divine flow through us.

### Dr. R.M. Varma:

I define the evolution of consciousness as the continuous experience of expanding awareness. In my own field—the neurosciences—consciousness has entered with a bang during the past two decades. Further, today, as a result of discoveries like the differentiation of the left and right brains and the multimodal aspect of sensory perception, neuroscience is no longer divisive in its approach but is increasingly adopting holistic perspectives.

In the next 5 years I see several trends emerging in my field, all of which point to increasing integration, wholeness and a refining of consciousness. These include a shift from closed to open systems; from the inferential to the experiential; from negative to positive definitions of health; from gross to subtle interventions to preserve health; and, crucially, from a preoccupation with quantity to an emphasis upon quality.

Before transcendence to a higher order, there is always chaos. I sincerely hope that the present crossroads facing humanity are the signals of the emergence of something new, something higher.

### Aster:

Why is humanity at a crossroads today? Because, some time ago, humanity set out to master nature, to conquer it, for the welfare of man. But we have tried to do this from the outside, through the use of technology etc.

The Auroville experience has taught me, however, that there is another way of dealing with matter. That there is an inner core which we can 'descend into', which allows us to approach reality from within. And if one can continually deal with matter from this core of inwardness, something changes. There is no longer a disjunction between perceiving, willing and acting—they are one—and the activity and matter itself become supple and many-sided.

### Professor Arindam Chakraborty:

It is important for all of us to experience deep disquiet at the sight of the world aflame with communal massacres, hunger, hatred, and at truth apparently trampled everywhere underfoot. It is important for us to feel the need for a collective remedy, and to pray constantly.

Because my suggestion for a way forwards from the present global crisis is prayer and hope. But by 'prayer' I mean something quite different from what is usually understood by the word. I mean a mental, physical and spiritual activity which consists of four elements:

- a feeling of imperative need for nothing less than a divine descent
- a complete trust that the Truth will win in the face of the worst experiences
- selfless work which is performed as a sacrifice for the sake of the happiness of the world and the perfection of oneself
- a willingness to take up this activity without waiting for others to begin

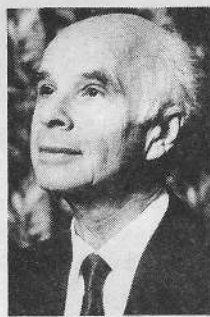
It is not as teachers, as scientists etc. that we can make a difference to the world, but as individual undertakers of the project of perfection. Can we do it? The dangers are immense. I teach the cream of India's academic youth, yet I'm concerned by how widespread cynicism and pessimism is among them.

Nevertheless, I believe that to the particular form of prayer I have described there must always be some answer in the Divine reality and in nature.

### Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan:

I'm somewhat bewildered by the formulation of the title of this seminar. For me, the metaphor of 'crossroads' implies a moment of destiny, of choice between different roads. But is there a genuine choice? The only roads I see at present are all single-track roads, with no multiple lanes, and I cannot ride on those. To put it differently; on the one hand we keep talking about the need for a holistic, integrative view, but on the other we continue to travel the narrow, reductionist roads we have trodden for the past 200 years. We do have other choices. For example, the vista opened up by relativity theory. And in the context of this vista, which emphasizes the primacy of relations, I ask myself, 'What are these relations that I need to make in order to make a whole?' Those relations are those in which the roads I've traversed intellectually are seen as part of other aspects of my experience, the right side faculties of the brain—intuition, sensitivity etc.—which have been totally negated, illegitimized, by modern society. This disjunction, this negation, along with the disjunctions between man and environment, between body and spirit, have very deep implications for the problems we are facing now; it is these which are putting our survival at stake.

Consequently, the task before us begins in the mind of man. These disjunctions must be made into concordances. Can, for example, education inculcate from the word 'go' that I am dependent upon that tree and that I am not the maker or the master of it? We have compartmentalized everything. Now we must begin again from a point, a moment, of unified integrity from which we can celebrate differentiation. □



Photos on this page: Leo Raj (except Laszlo)



## THE ROUND TABLE SESSION WITH THE AUROVILIANS: EXTRACTS

The penultimate session of the seminar provided an opportunity for the invited participants to put questions about the Auroville experiment to a panel of Aurovilians: Alain B., Alan, Ashok C., Aurora, Barbara (MM), Bhaga, Bill, Deepti, Meenakshi, Toine and Ulla. For many people this session proved, in its concentration and depth, to be the most interesting session of the entire seminar. The following are excerpts:

**George Tompkins:** *Since Auroville is a microcosm of the whole world, and since one of the major problems in the world today is unresolved conflicts, I would like to know how you resolve conflicts in the community.*

**Alain:** We don't feel we are very good at this—and here you can find almost every kind of conflict that you can imagine—but one thing which is quite strong here is the feeling that we all belong to a kind of family, and this helps change the dynamic.

**Bhaga:** Mother stated that for the resolution of a conflict, both parties must want to come together—the element of goodwill is very important. She also explained that for every conflict an ideal solution exists. But to discover it, everybody has to want it. So, once again, we are talking about a change of consciousness.

**Ulla:** My own experience is that when I have a conflict within me, I have to step back and not identify with any of the elements. Through accepting the different energies within me, I allow them the space to work themselves out.

**Mrs. Krishnan:** *Are you not making a decision for your children, which one day they may resent, by bringing them up in this isolated environment? And what is the nature of your educational system?*

**Bill:** But we are not in isolation, we have not left society. Auroville is very much involved in projects which are of regional and worldwide importance, and we receive a constant influx of visitors.

**Deepti:** Inevitably, parents always make choices for their children up to a certain age. I had a very good, conventional upbringing, but still I wish that I had been brought up in a place like Auroville. Auroville is an experiment in the growth of consciousness. Here we recognize that every child comes with the uniqueness of his or her own consciousness, and the aim of our education is to ensure that the child grows up in contact with their soul. But since we ourselves have not discovered this yet, we are all learning together, groping for answers.

**Kapila Vatsyayan:** *What have you learned here that you could take back to and*

*influence the societies from which you came?*

**Alain:** Mother said many mysterious, incredible things about Auroville, including that it could prevent a Third World War and, later, that it was the place where the problems of humanity would have to be solved. We don't really understand this, but it's clear from what She said that the work we have to do here has a definite relationship with what happens elsewhere.

**Barbara:** In 1966, when Mother was asked about Auroville She said it was going very well, but not in a way that was obvious to the outer vision. This was before there was anything on the ground here! I feel we tend to confuse the Auroville that exists on the level She referred to—which is the spirit of Auroville—with the Auroville on the physical level. The spirit of Auroville is about a new way of being, of relating, of solving conflicts; it represents a possibility for the world with a capital 'P'. Once you connect with that spirit, you live it, wherever you are in the world.

**Ulla:** When I first came to Auroville, outwardly I was a professional teacher but inwardly I was a bundle of fears. I soon learned that the skills I had adopted to survive in Germany were insufficient here, and that in my lop-sided development I was not a full human being. So I started working in the garden, sowing seeds, and something in my nature began to echo. I started to sense my own nature, to become alive. And whenever I had learned something, whenever I had reached a certain plateau, I found that the next step I had to make would reveal itself, and that I had to let go of the tools that I had acquired in order to make that step. If I returned to Germany tomorrow, the same process of responding to inner and outer needs would surely continue.

**Kapila Vatsyayan:** *When one is organizing something, one can organize*

*on the basis of trust or of mistrust. How do you organize yourselves here? And how do you deal with fear and mistrust?*

**Alain:** When Mother said that She didn't want any rules framed in Auroville, I think She was saying that the level of trust here should make rules unnecessary. The question is, are you going to install rules because of the few who might be misbehaving, or do you create the space to allow the experimentation and risk which gives meaning to this place? It's precisely this area which we are exploring together with the Auroville Foundation at present.

**Barbara:** But in the context of Auroville we are talking about yoga, not government. And when we are talking about yoga, we are talking about having a conscious relationship with the Divine. For me, when you put all your trust in the Divine, all the other things will work themselves out.

**Deepti:** In Auroville at present, we are very much in transition. In answering your questions, we are constantly jumping from the level of inner truths to the level of the present outer manifestations, which are sometimes very aberrant. But, as a society, we have to go through these phases precisely because we are trying to go beyond the normal structures and to find something else.

**Bhaga:** In general, there is not much personal ambition in Auroville. I perceive that people here try more to identify what their unique contribution to Auroville can be. What emerges from this is a feeling of teamwork, and this brings a quite different dynamic from that of competitiveness, conflict or fear.

**Karan Singh:** *Last February we dedicated the inner chamber of Matrimandir. Does the community feel that the completion of the chamber has made a qualitative difference to the consciousness of Auroville?*

PHOTO IRENO

**Toine:** As somebody who works at Matrimandir, I can see that the completion of the chamber is very much hastening the completion of the rest of Matrimandir; it's as if the chamber is building the rest. And when Matrimandir is complete, it will build Auroville.

**Alain:** I feel that since the chamber has been completed, something else has begun to be here in the atmosphere of Auroville. It's as if there's a greater inner stability, as if Auroville has gone deeper...

**Bill:** To me, Auroville in its construction represented several impossibilities that, somehow, had to be worked out. And it demonstrates to me, very concretely, that if people get together, they can do the impossible.

**Ervin Laszlo:** *You seem to feel that if the Auroville experiment reaches a critical point, then it will take off and will be able to influence what is happening elsewhere. How close are you to reaching that point? And how open is the world to accepting what Auroville has to offer?*

**Alain:** When you consider what Mother had said about Auroville, that the Aurovilians should be servitors of the Divine Consciousness, you see how far we are from reaching that critical point. At the moment, many of our energies are blocked. Nevertheless, if we can find something that can shape us together—like Matrimandir—I think there will be a tremendous release of energy and we can move very fast.

**Toine:** On the evolutionary scale, I think we have been at a critical point for billions of years! One of the main principles of evolution seems to be contagion. That is, when something has really been achieved materially, then automatically it spreads. So I think that Auroville will truly have reached its critical point when the contagion starts. Is the world ready? I think the world is becoming more and more ready, as is demonstrated, for example, by how science and spirituality are getting closer and closer to each other.

**Alan:** It's very difficult to identify how close we are to that critical point because of the nature of the process here. From a superficial point of view, we often seem to make an advance and then, almost immediately, to fall back. But at the deeper level, I think that what is happening is that we are being forced to find solutions that work at all levels, and that any solution that is less than complete is rejected; this is the joy and frustration of Auroville. The critical point is reached, then, when the final piece is added to what, a moment before, seemed chaos. And this makes it very difficult to predict.

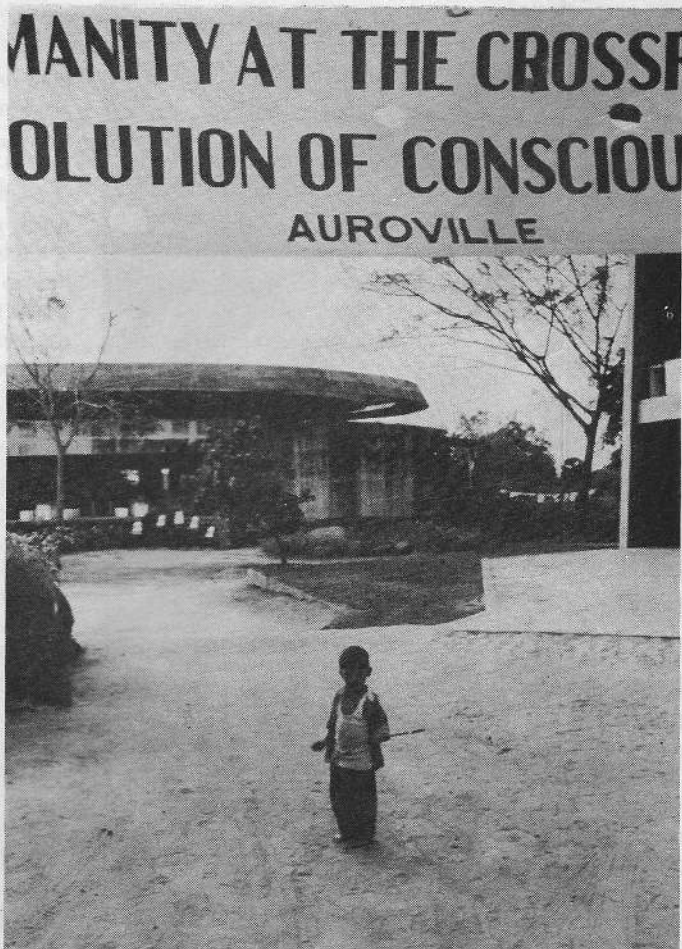
**Mr. N. Krishnan:** *Do the Aurovilians feel that the seminar has been of value to them?*

**Bill:** It certainly provoked some controversy among the Aurovilians! But, in conjunction with the internal seminar that was held a few weeks ago, I think it has helped launch Auroville into a new phase because it has focussed us upon the need to take another step.

**Alan:** I was very happy to welcome all the participants to Auroville, and I feel that some very interesting ideas have been expressed in the past two days which, no doubt, will continue to resonate with us. However, a question remains for me about the form of the seminar. Because it seems to me that if we are really going to take a step forward from the crossroads, we have first to lay down all our personal baggage—our predispositions, theories etc.—and be ready to stand naked; to say 'I don't know', and so open ourselves up to something else, to new energies and ideas. I didn't hear that enough over the past two days, which may indicate that such a seminar format is far too short for this kind of 'unloading' to take place.

**Aster:** This seminar has been an amazing experience for me. Not only because it has represented a renewal of contact with UNESCO, but also because the process of working with a very heterogeneous group of Aurovilians in the planning of it has been very important and rewarding.

(page 2 and 3 edited by Alan)





# Caught in a contradiction?

**T**he recent UNESCO-sponsored international seminar brought a number of eminent and stimulating individuals to Auroville to engage in dialogues with each other and with members of the community. The milieu were varied—over tea, at the Auroville picnic, under the Banyan tree, during two prearranged workshops etc.—but what was noticeable was that the quality of the interactions during the organized part of the programme—i.e. during the seminar itself—was sometimes disappointing. What went wrong?

Well, firstly, a word of warning concerning immediate judgements on the success or failure of such events which may continue to 'ripple out', at least at the personal level, far into the future. And sufficient insights and ideas were provided during the course of the seminar to serve as a springboard for stimulating future explorations. Nevertheless, as one of the invitees himself put it plaintively during the course of the second day, "I came as a mendicant begging for answers, but my alms bowl is still empty," and there was an unmistakable feeling at the very end that, for a combination of reasons, the considerable talent that had been assembled had been underused.

On hindsight, one of the reasons for this was the original decision to hold the seminar over two days for between 15 and 25 participants. Since, obviously, each participant would have to have the opportunity to make a presentation, to question the other participants about their presentations, and also to have some interaction with the audience, simple arithmetic indicates that the timing was going to be very tight. In the event, the first day was taken up almost entirely with presentations by the invitees which, nominally, at least, were limited to ten minutes each. This placed enormous demands upon the capacity of the invitees to express their ideas within the time limitation as well as upon the intellectual stamina of the audience.

A further factor which may have influenced the scope and depth of the discus-

## Are we not only at the end of history, but also of seminars?

sions concerned the composition of the invitees. Originally, people like Fritjof Capra, Rupert Sheldrake, Deepak Chopra, Octavio Paz, Vaclav Havel, Ram Dass and Wangari Maathai were invited, but because the invitations were sent out relatively late, none of these individuals was able to attend at such short notice. In fact, the eventual participants included people of the stature of Ervin Laszlo, Bertrand Schneider, Kapila Vatsyayan, Swami Chidananda and Dr. Karan Singh, but it was noticeable that, with the exception of one or two individuals, everybody was in some way already connected with Auroville, the Ashram or Sri Aurobindo and Mother. Within the 'family' there were marked differences in the emphases and perspectives, but it was difficult to avoid the sense that a genuinely international seminar would have brought together a greater diversity of approaches—including those individuals able to play the Devil's Advocate—as a means of forcing the participants to plunge deeper into themselves and to reassess long-held positions. As it was, both the time limitation and the composition of the participants combined to put the emphasis upon presentation rather than exploration. And the relatively 'static' nature of the first day was further reinforced by a seating arrangement which separated the invitees in a row on the stage of the auditorium with the audience sitting below.

On the second morning, there was a better chance to energize the proceedings as everybody sat together on the stage and the audience was invited to put questions to the participants. In fact, a number of speakers on the previous day had indicated interesting lines that we could have further explored on that second morning, including the relationship of mind, body and spirit, the need to reintegrate the traditional oppositions of matter/spirit and intellect/intuition,

and a call for a new form of learning which would emphasise relationships rather than analysis, and social responsibility rather than individual rights. As it happened, however, some of the questions from the audience on that second morning only resulted in the discussion being led up obscure side-alleys and into the realms of metaphysics and arcane philosophy. Samples include, "What is the relation of *aarti* prayer to the mantra?" and "Are situations like Nazi Germany and present day Yugoslavia the result of racial or national karma?"

On the final afternoon the tables were turned, and a group of Aurovilians answered questions from the delegates about the Auroville experience. They were the most focussed and most deeply expressed moments in the entire seminar and, in different circumstances, would have provided an opportunity for the participants to begin exploring an entirely different landscape in an entirely different way. But it was already time for the closing speeches...

**I**t is, of course, easy to criticize, and the efforts of the Auroville organizing group who worked so hard for so long, and who put out a valuable anthology on the theme of the seminar, should be honoured and appreciated. It's also simplistic to lay all the blame upon an unwise allocation of time, too many participants and the general unpreparedness or naivety of the audience (many of whom, by the way, were visitors). The deeper question which such a seminar poses, however, concerns the relevance of such gatherings to the theme which it sets out to explicate and discuss. Clearly, there are contradictions in discussing a topic which transcends language and the intellect, and which involves a quality of *being* rather than presentation. As Arindam Chakraborty noted, for example, "Someone who is in touch with the Truth, the One, is usually silent. If I'd been in touch with the One, I would have answered all your questions from my silence".

More than this, however, the seminar uncritically embodied the very assumptions which have served to put humanity at the present crossroads in its history. These dangerously outmoded assumptions include the primacy of the intellect over the intuitive faculties, and a dichotomous mode of thinking which separates rather than integrates. Thus, the participants were overwhelmingly drawn from an academic or intellectual background, they included only three women (who were called upon to speak last!) and, in spite of the regular references to the need for a 'holistic' perspective, the terminology remained aggressively Cartesian, with frequent references to 'left' brain AND 'right' brain, to mind AND body, spirit AND matter. Kapila Vatsyayan summed up the contradictions best when she warned the delegates, on the basis of her own experience, that while the goals of the various bodies they represented were praiseworthy, the very form of the organizations themselves—based as they are upon outmoded perceptions of the world and human potential—were bound to destroy the causes they were supposed to further.

Are we, then, not only at the end of history, but also of seminars?! Not necessarily. It's significant, for example, that many Aurovilians who had not attended the main sessions crowded in to the workshops given by Ervin Laszlo and Bertrand Schneider on the morning after the conference ended, sensing that here was a real chance to understand their ideas and make a contact with them as individuals. For there is still a place for workshops and seminars which are genuine mutual explorations of a predetermined theme, but they require time, they require a high level of trust and willingness to take personal risks among the participants, and they require an interdisciplinary, multi-activity approach that expresses all the faculties and compels the participants to reach for the highest synthesis and the truest mode of being. With mankind standing at the crossroads, desperately seeking a new road ahead, we can no longer afford anything less.

Alan

## 'You must project a more precise image'

**BERTRAND SCHNEIDER** is Secretary General of the Club of Rome, an influential 'think tank' which is a loose association of 100 eminent individuals drawn from some 50 countries and five continents. The Club tries to influence decision-makers and the public by identifying problems and analyzing global issues. Since the creation of the Club of Rome in 1968, many other bodies have been instituted, but there is no other body at the international level which concerns itself with the totality of global problems and draws its members from so many different cultures and disciplines.

Bertrand Schneider is also a member of the International Advisory Council of the Auroville Foundation, and recently he visited Auroville for the first time to attend a meeting of the Council, and to participate in the international seminar. Auroville Today spoke to him at the end of his visit.

**AVT: The Club of Rome is probably best known for commissioning 'Limits to Growth', the report which, in 1972, opened many people's eyes to the problems of environmental degradation and the population explosion. What has the Club been involved with since?**

Bertrand Schneider: We've held over 40 important meetings in all parts of the world,

involving all sections of the community, to study facets of the global problem; we've fostered the creation of new global institutions and regional bodies to address issues like economic regional cooperation and training for development; and we've published 18 reports on important issues. Our most recent published report is 'The First Global Revolution', which I co-authored



PHOTO LEO RAJ

with Alexander King. Basically it examines, 20 years after 'Limits to Growth', what global development policies have achieved and it rethinks where we are going. Our thesis is that for too long we—meaning governments, development and aid agencies etc.—have concentrated too much on trying to understand world problems and not enough on doing some-

thing practical to resolve them. Now we want to concentrate upon getting practical results. The report also raises a few issues which were not tackled in 'Limits to Growth', namely the problem of governance and the importance of ethical and spiritual values. For it's clear that, while we have to work on improving conditions in the world, if we don't change consciousness at the individual level, nothing will truly change.

I've just finished another report, called 'Poverty and Underdevelopment: The Shame', in which I set out a new concept of development which is based on the well-being of the people rather than economic factors. The objective of development is to eradicate poverty, malnutrition and starvation, but in the past much money intended for development has been wasted because it has been misused. Let me give you one example. The World Bank employs more than 6,000 people at an average monthly salary of \$10,000 tax free—and last year they increased their salaries by 10%! Their bill in 1993 for transportation alone was \$135 million! Despite all the money which has been poured into aid in the past 20 years, it's significant that the countries which are developing fastest—like India and China—

(continued on page 6)



# One-track Roads?

Given the build-ups, melt-downs and fall-out chronicled for months in our internal newsletter *Auroville News* as regards the Seminar "Humanity at the Crossroads", attendance was of course something of a must, and not to be missed for the world.

I missed the opening ceremonies; drifting in an hour late after an airport run the night before—still musing on Bertrand Schneider's remarks in the cab on the similarities between the Tibetan and Egyptian Books of the Dead—and was just in time to catch the end of Aravinda Basu's talk and his concluding remarks that Transformation was the crying need of humanity.

Dr Varma then launched into a passionate presentation of developments in the sciences, and in particular studies of how the

brain works, which he framed within an overall philosophical perspective. Crisis precedes transcendence and quantum jumps occur on a basis of continuity—whose movement was not circular but spiral. He stressed the importance of an experiential versus abstract awareness. He remarked that the shift from completeness to fragmentation has occurred because of a lack of unitary experience capable of holding the diversity of the present world. "We must carry the unitary experience along with us." Function precedes form, and he remarked on the importance of holography and Rupert Sheldrake's work in the field of morphic resonance which he described as "a very important biological input that has helped us in the neuro-sciences." Medicine was becoming more and more holistic and multidisciplinary and the relation between doctor and patient as a result more interactive.

The next speaker, George Tompkins of the Kundalini Foundation, spoke of the coming together of science and spirituality and the wealth of material that existed about transcendent states of consciousness that would lay the foundations of a new science. Science having explored matter to its limits was at a crossroads and there was a need to turn to a subjective direction. Many scientists now admit the possibility of a superintelligence behind it all. He referred to the Shakti Shastra and to the Kundalini force, remarking that forces of evolution were accelerating the brain's evolution and that today's children were far ahead of those of previous generations in terms of their awareness. We are at present living through a process of accelerated change of purification and sifting that was leading to the emergence of a trans-human form of consciousness.

The Indian philosopher Arindam Chakraborty quoted the Gita, "Your form is fierce and fills all the heavens and regions of the earth", before going on to stress the need of prayer born of disquiet and anguish at the trampling of Truth throughout the world, even in countries with an ancient inner tradition. Referring back to Aquinas and Kant he spoke of the importance of Hope, and the need to feel the imperative-ness of nothing short of a divine descent. But effort was important: "Prayer is not a divine state of waiting for Godot", one has to take the initiative, start wherever one was, even at home. And "To this prayer, there must be some type of answer in the divine Reality", for "The ripples of a single person's effort are felt all over the world".

Maggi Lidchi stated that "Each one of us is responsible for the universe and with each one of our acts and thoughts we hold the universe in our hands". She mentioned how Mother used to pinch the skin of her arms and referred to the contagious chain of events occurring on an invisible level. What was promised by the prophets and the seers is happening, and the most important thing to do is to remember the fact—the Great Truth—that we are in fact witnessing the birth of a new world.

Ervin Laszlo then underlined the importance of asking the right questions observing that up to twenty years ago Science was defining things in isolation, but that it can now only define them in terms of their interaction. The problem is not what a human being is but "How does a human being relate to everything else?"

Dr. Bagchi then brought in some ballast to the discussion that had been floating away Montgolfier-like into the spiritual stratosphere by referring not to a spiritual crisis but to the crisis born of affluence and population growth, the degradation and usurping of the world's resources, and to the fact that the larger segment of the earth's population is illiterate, goes to bed hungry and lacks human dignity and freedom. Instead of talking about building up our spiritual consciousness, we should be talking of redirecting the money that goes into armaments to tackle problems of poverty and illiteracy, in order that basic human rights be available to every individual on the planet.

In the discussion that ensued in the afternoon session Swami Chidananda spoke of how the individual's link with the cosmic being had been blocked and how the link needed to be reestablished. He stated that "There is nothing that is not sacred" and that children had to be trained in this regard.

Dr. Kapila Vatsayan confessed her bewilderment as regards the very formulation of the theme of Crossroads which for her brought up images of Greek tragedy and inevitable destiny, and wondered whether a genuine choice actually existed. While we talk of the need for a holistic integrative view we continue to travel the narrow reductionist roads of the last 200 years. "The only roads I see at present are all single-track roads". She wondered if there were other roads to be taken and if so were they already laid out? Survival is at stake and it begins in the mind of man.

Prof. Laszlo remarked on how new species appear in bursts and sudden transformations. Transformation was impossible without some form of destruction and annihilation of a previous order.

Bertrand Schneider spoke of the dangers of being disconnected from the hard realities of everyday and of the positive work being done by small groups of individuals, NGOs and women who were organizing themselves together in Africa. He mentioned that we were prisoners of history and routine and we had to learn to face complexity and uncertainty, which was the main characteristic of the present world.

Ervin Laszlo summed up the session with reflections on nature, evil and the choice that confronts us. Natural laws are permissive, not random or reversible. God has given us a basic scenario and we have to be conscious of ourselves and our destiny in order to fulfill it. Errors are possible, Evil is present in the world, and there is a major possibility of going one way or the other. Regarding the perceived matter/spirit divide he was to remark that he didn't make a categorical distinction between them. Matter is spiritual—a universal element which is largely energy, present in the quanta, in the atom and the galaxies. He concluded that there is a preferred choice of cosmic importance which one had to search and listen for within. He concluded with the remark that "There are few places like Auroville, on this earth, or in this universe, where one can truly listen."

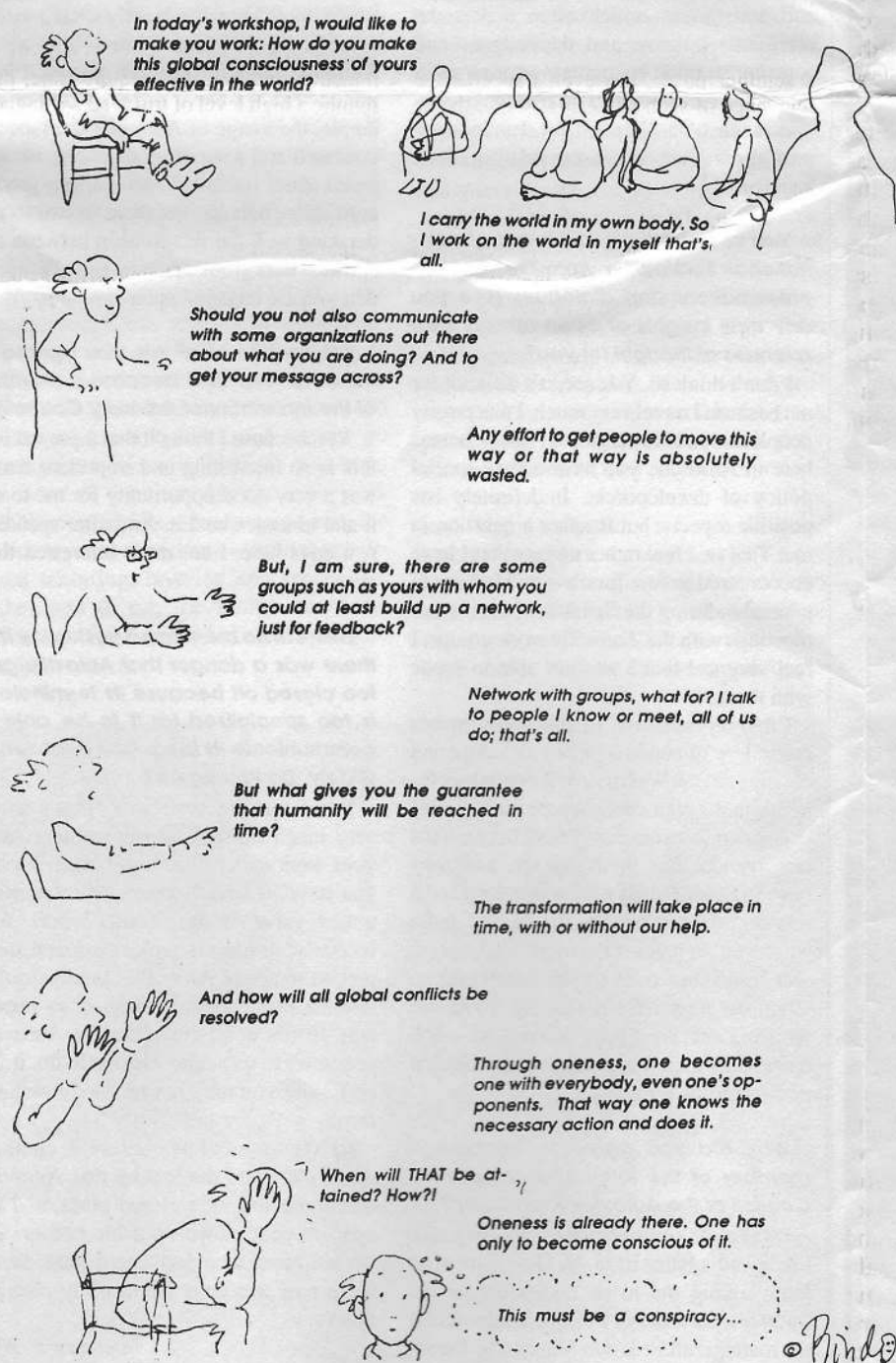
Do seminars of this sort serve much purpose? Some of the speakers were certainly stimulating, but the conference was dominated and limited by the language of Science. There was little sense of roads converging from different directions. The poetic, mythic and story-telling voice was almost entirely absent—though Art did have its welcome moment in the multi-media dance performance of 'Crossroads' by Anu and her troupe. The division between stage and audience was off-putting, and many Aurovilians found the workshops on the last day to be the most rewarding as an interaction could occur that was not possible in the cold set-up and atmosphere of the auditorium. Finally it was perhaps the informal interactions that occurred at the guest houses, during the coffee breaks or at the tribal picnic on Sunday that were the most rewarding for Aurovilians, guests and delegates alike.

Roger

## Workshops

On the morning after the seminar ended, both Bertrand Schneider and Ervin Laszlo offered workshops for Aurovilians and visitors. The two workshops took place at the same day and time. Bertrand Schneider spoke about the need to re-evaluate global aid and development programmes. Ervin Laszlo conducted a brain-storming session based on two questions—"What would be the characteristics of a global consciousness?" and "How do we move towards it?"

Below is one observer's summary of Laszlo's workshop and the responses to his questions...





## The Marvel of Whiteness

**F**ebruary 19-24. Aurovilians flocked to Matrimandir's Inner Chamber to see for themselves how the cold, veined marble floor gradually disappeared under a thick carpet of pure wool, creating an atmosphere of homeliness, of welcome. "Truly, it has become Mother's Room now", said one of the Aurovilians in charge, comparing the soft carpet to the one in Mother's room in the Ashram in Pondicherry. Hardness and austerity gone, softness has come to take its place. The room is pure white now, with the exception of the golden symbols of Sri Aurobindo carrying the crystal globe.

The carpet was installed by Mr. Meattle and the specialists from his factory, India Carpets and Furnishing Company. "It is all Mother's Grace", said an emotional Mr. Meattle, when we asked him how he got involved with Matrimandir. "This just happened, it is a mystery to me how I got involved in this project. Our firm usually does not take up assignments like this, but I couldn't say 'no' to this." He added that he has been reading Sri Aurobindo's books for some 40 or 45 years, and that he has a very

intimate connection with Sri Aurobindo and Mother. "But this is Mother's desire, I did not do it, it is Her. She made the carpet, not me, it is all Her Grace."

The carpet is of a heavier quality than normal. It has been manufactured on a specially designed handloom, following the technique known internationally as a Wilton weaving system. In this way it combines all the good qualities of a machine-made carpet with something still better which can be produced only with human involvement. The wool used is the finest wool available, obtained specially from New Zealand. As bleaching of the wool was not permitted, the selection and blending (mixing different types of fibre together) were personally supervised by Mr. Meattle. He added: "White carpets are very very difficult things to manufacture. Sheep's wool is mixed, and not uniformly white. I normally refuse to make white carpets. Bleaching would have resulted in an artificial white carpet, but that was not permitted. Matrimandir wanted the natural colour of the wool, and that made the task more difficult and implied a lot of effort and care."

"I really wanted to produce a carpet with a very high lustre. As New Zealand wool is rather soft, I made attempts to make the carpet very dense. The result has been that even the pile (the particular direction which every carpet indicates when you walk over it) is difficult to find. The pile height exceeds 5/8th of an inch (1.5 centimeter) and the close and tough density of the weaving process have resulted in a carpet which cannot be pushed down one way or another. It won't flatten through use. The fibre used will create lustre, and the future wear is going to make the carpet look better."

"The carpet has got a latex backing to create additional anchorage between the fibres. We have evolved a very special latex compound, on which we have worked almost three and a half years, which is unique. The carpet can be bent in any way, it won't crack, and you cannot possibly pull the wool out of it. It is fabulous: we were testing a piece and tried to remove the additional backing with the force of three people. It did not damage the carpet at all. Though natural latex cannot be guaranteed to have an indefinite life, this compound will certainly

have the same lifespan that any other natural latex compound would have.

The secondary backing is the finest and most expensive used anywhere in the world.

"Though I am embarrassed to say it about my own product, I can state that this is about the finest product that can be made."

**A**nd now? Originally the intention was to remove the carpet after the installation, to make sure that it wouldn't be damaged during the construction. But Mr. Meattle has advised against it: "The carpet can get deformed if you remove it. It requires very highly skilled people to put it back. It is better to leave it in place, and even if it has to be cleaned, to do that in situ."

Apart from technical considerations, emotional ones also prevailed. Whoever entered the room was captured by the white immensity and beauty, and none had the heart to propose removing it. White cotton cloth will be used to cover the carpet during the construction period.

Carel

### Industrial Zone develops through Flower Power

**S**hradhanjali inaugurated its 'industrial' complex and gardens on Auroville's Birthday, 1994. The cost efficient building operating on solar power provides a new home for the unit which was crammed for years in the ancient asbestos, "early Aspiration" Aurofuture office. Specializing in flower cards and stationery, Shradhanjali has grown from a mini-scale, two-woman "faith-offering" (Sanskrit meaning of "Shradhanjali") into a multinational—well, almost.

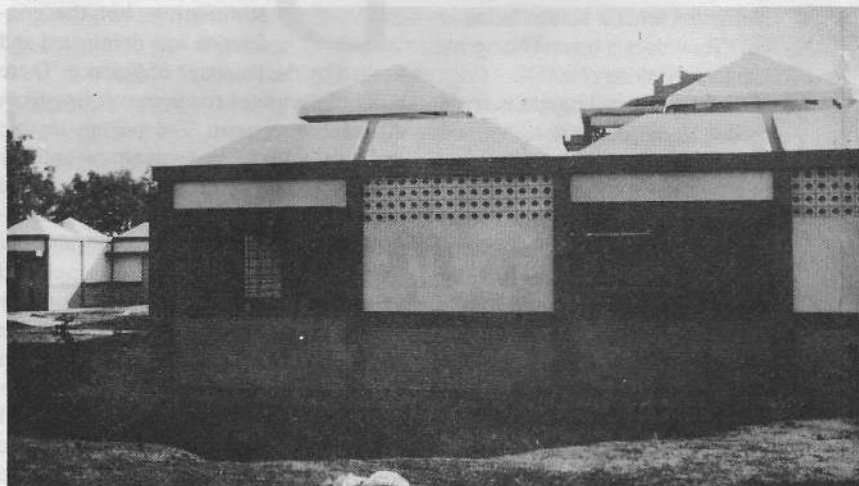
The inauguration ceremony was creatively organized by the founder Abha to sabotage the ten thousand year old Vedic tradition of male-dominated ritual ceremonies by allowing each woman worker to light her own inaugural candle. However, to maintain certain ancient traditions, a reincarnated Tibetan Lama was allowed to light the oil lamp. Eight year old Zong Rimpoche with great concentration did just that while Tibetan monks chanted in the background. Outside the window, a field full of blossoming flowers swayed in the wind waiting to be transformed into cards of joy and love that will carry greetings around the world.

Bill



Above:  
Abha, founder of Shradhanjali, and Zong Rimpoche.

Below: the new Shadhanjali building in the Industrial Zone



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. Proofreading: Barbara. Layout & DTP: Annemarie. Printed at Auroville Press.

### Bertrand Schneider interview

(contd. from page 2)

have received little outside help. So I'm suggesting that we get rid of almost all aid and assistance—which often makes the recipients passive and dependent—and concentrate upon encouraging countries in need, like certain African States, to decide upon their own direction for development and their own ways of solving their problems.

*You've just attended a two day International Seminar in Auroville. Did the presentations and dialogues give you any new insights or open up any new avenues of thought for you?*

I don't think so. You see, it's difficult for me because I travel very much, I meet many people and so I have a global view. Whereas here in Auroville you have a very special policy of development. It definitely has positive aspects, but it raises a question in me. That is, I feel rather uneasy that I have encountered so few Tamils—and Indians in general—during the Seminar or during our meetings with the Auroville work groups; I feel very sad that I was not able to speak with them.

I'm very sensitive to this problem because I've attended so many development meetings in the West where the people coming from the poor countries are put in a very uncomfortable situation. Why? Because it's our agenda, our methodology, and they have to fit in. This is why now we've had a number of meetings in Africa and India where we've handed the total organization and leadership over to the local people. Often the organization was less good, but we from the West have learned so much more about their perspectives and problems through doing it this way.

*Why did you agree to become a member of the International Advisory Council of the Auroville Foundation?*

I was quite surprised when, not long ago, I received a letter from the Government of India asking me to be a member of the International Advisory Council. I discussed the matter with Federico Mayor (the Direc-

tor-General of UNESCO) who had received a similar invitation, and we decided to accept without knowing exactly what it would involve. At that time I knew little about Auroville, and for several reasons I had mixed feelings about the project. For example, the image of Auroville in France is confused and sometimes negative; we had heard about fights between various groups here. Also, nobody 'out there' seems to understand well the relationship between the spiritual background and the actual projects that you are engaged upon.

*Yet, in spite of all this, you agreed to take the leap and become a member of the International Advisory Council*

Yes, because I thought that a project like this is so interesting and important that it was a very good opportunity for me to see it and to understand it. And after spending two days here, I am more interested than ever.

*Ervin Laszlo mentioned yesterday that there was a danger that Auroville gets too closed off because its terminology is too specialized for it to be able to communicate its ideas and experience widely. Do you agree?*

Yes, I feel the same way. That's why I very much insisted, in my meetings with your work groups, on two points. Firstly, you have to have a clear communication policy vis-a-vis the outside world. And secondly, you must project a much more precise image of Auroville. In an information society, communication is so important. If you don't communicate Auroville yourselves, someone else will do it for you—and you may not be happy with the result.

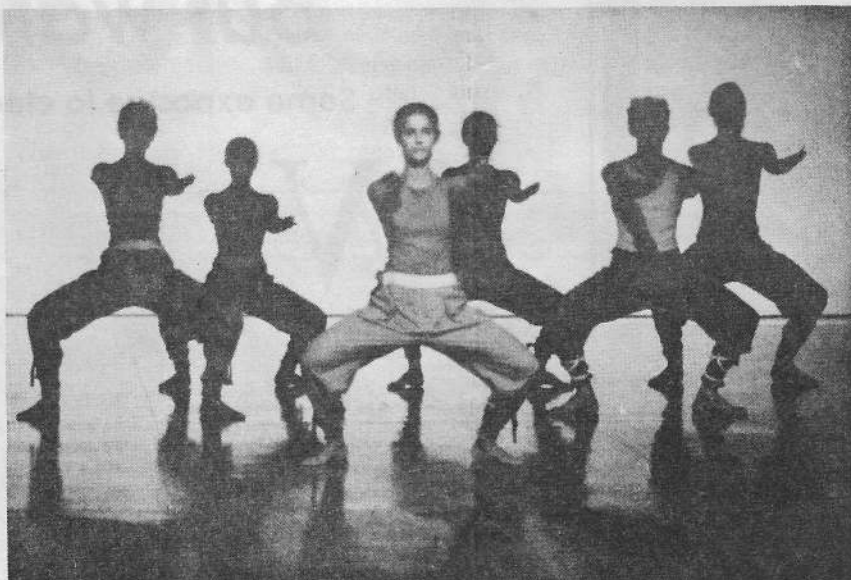
At the same time, before I came to Auroville I had the feeling that Auroville was something of a closed place, and not open to contact with outside bodies. But what I have seen and heard here during these past two days has entirely changed this view.

Interview by Alan



## "Falling into Light"

A highlight during Auroville's birthday week was the dance performance 'Crossroads: the repercussions of change in five parts', a dance piece with text and choreography by Anu, music by Holger, artwork by Pierre L. and lights by Jean L. The dancers were: Joy, Paulo, Thymian, Kanchana, Simone, Veronique, Jean and Anu. AUROVILLE TODAY asked Anu about the process of putting together a work which explored the theme of Humanity at the Crossroads: Evolution of Consciousness, the subject of this year's international seminar.



Anu (front) with some of her group

**AVT:** Did the subject of the seminar inspire you to create from scratch, or did you already have something on this theme in your mind?

Anu: There was my book of poetry, *Mobile Hour*, in the Press and then there were people talking about the seminar. Both topics, Humanity at the Crossroads and Evolution of Consciousness, were dealt with in the book. So the timing was right.

### How did you begin?

I started working with a movement. It was this footslide (she demonstrates), much like a compass, where one foot is rooted and the other slides around to make a circle. So, here we have the tension of being rooted, centred, and then a movement out, and down, like a spiral. This spiral image became the central image of the whole piece. In each section, we go deeper inside the spiral, and then this driving down brings us up again, to another level. Then, again, down—each time getting a little deeper.

### What about the music?

Holger saw the text and looked at the movements I was starting to work with. The music came with an understanding of both. He asked a lot of questions. We were agreed on this movement, the spiral, and then, with each section I would go through the text with him. He was bang on most of the time. He chose to work within two limits. One was to use the voice layer as a constant—through repetition, texturing, layering and space. The other was to use the intonation of the voices to derive his melodies and the subsequent chords.

### Can you describe the five layers?

First, physically, we worked with the idea of layers and nets. Pierre's work inspired me. Crossroads works with several layers simultaneously—voice, word, music, movement, theater, images, light: all add up to the totality of dance. It works with these images of layers, which we take to be layers of memory, of change, which I feel we have pre-coded inside our being, pulling us forward. So, the first layer was a general statement of the whole "mess": "Read the signs", "Open your eyes", take a look at where we are now. We can read these signs every day: war, famine, greed, recession, bombs, pollution, corruption: a meditation on contemporary society. The second layer: "Steps of the Sages"—"the steps of the sages/ are falling into light." Start looking at the anguish as having been built up by our old habits. "Have you heard the news of the world?" The image of the human "rat race"—I gave the dancers the story line and the points, but they were free to develop their own way. Third layer: Remember you're of the earth, and at the same time, facing questions of freedom: the idea of the individual in transition. Here, we covered Joy and Paulo with these wonderful green paintings (projections), so they were really connected to earth, their actual substance—they were part of it. Fourth layer: The sunbridge—a transitory moment when we touch this well of the soul: joy! "We are growing/ we are growing-/ as all the shadows die." A bit of a quick recap of all that came before, and yet the choice has been made: "Life/at the crossroads/opens

doors -/Love/walks right/through the mind". Final layer: NO LIMIT—"Remember, O soul/a new memory of life". This is where we go through the gates of the being, ultimately touching the final web and what we tried to do was bring together all the elements of lightness, of freedom. Finally, to touch this unity, this new memory. Once you touch it, you touch the universal pulsation: the place of "no limits".

### How did the group function?

We worked intensively for four months. The last two to three months, we were working almost every day. They were really beautiful! There are so many moments—like when we were working on the ending, each one related to the last movement in a different way, but they all found the same image—of opening up (hand gesture).

### Some people said that the work was too mental.

Some found it like a journey through different stages of dream! It's how we choose to look at it. For me... there was a sense of things falling into place in spite of me—which is not tremendously mental. What I wanted to do was to identify this crossroads, where the crossroads is. Then, to work towards letting go of the encumbrances of the mind, the mind and the structures it builds which inhibit us. The crossroads, to me, is a very mental junction where we are stuck. We have to go down into it, to look at it, so we can move forward to a lightness of being.

Interviewer: Jill

## CULTURAL EVENTS

The birthday week in Auroville was a busy time for the performing arts. Music aplenty was in the air: you could hear everything from the sacred music of Tibet to the stunning fusion of Nadaka/Ganesh's modern Indian classical-cum-'world' music. While the centerpiece was a 75-minute 'Crossroads' dance performance, the following cultural events took place in or around the week of 21st to 28th of February:

### Concerts

- Sonatas of Bach and Mozart. Played by Caryl (piano) and Holger (violin).
- Auroville Choir: a number of short songs from various origins, directed by Nuria.
- Bach's "The Well-Tempered Clavier", volume one. Played on digital harpsichord by Heinrich Weihrauch.
- Sacred Music of Tibet. Sounds of Tibet by the Monks of Ganden Shartse.
- Contemporary Indian Classical and World music: Nadaka/Ganesh and group.
- Hindustani Vocal: Anand Vaidyanathan of the Sangeet Research Academy, Calcutta.
- Hindustani Vocal: Pandit Jasraj.
- Western Vocal: a number of songs from the Baroque, Classical and Romantic periods. Nuria (soprano/mezzo soprano), Young-Mi (soprano) and Pushkar (piano).

### Dance

- Crossroads: The repercussions of change in five parts. A dance piece with text and choreography by Anu and music by Holger.

### Exhibitions

- Photos by Ireno (repeated)
- Photos of the early years of Auroville
- "Interiors": Furniture (by Decauram), Beadwork (by Bijou) and Tapestries (by Transparences)

### Sports

- Winter Aurolympics '94: team sports competition, mainly basket ball, football and volleyball, for school children. Organized by Dehashakti Sports Team.



The all-Auroville picnic at Fertile, the day after the Seminar, struck a very different note...

(Photos: Ireno)



# AUROVILLE TODAY

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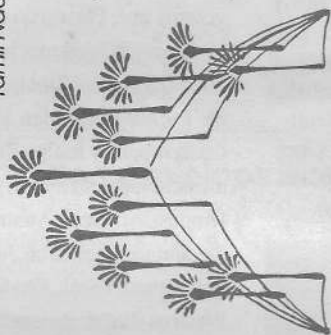
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ANKE AND MICHAEL  
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April 1994

Number Sixty-Three



In this issue (8 pages):  
International Seminar reports; Carpet for Matrimandir; Interviews;  
cultural events; magnetic fields.

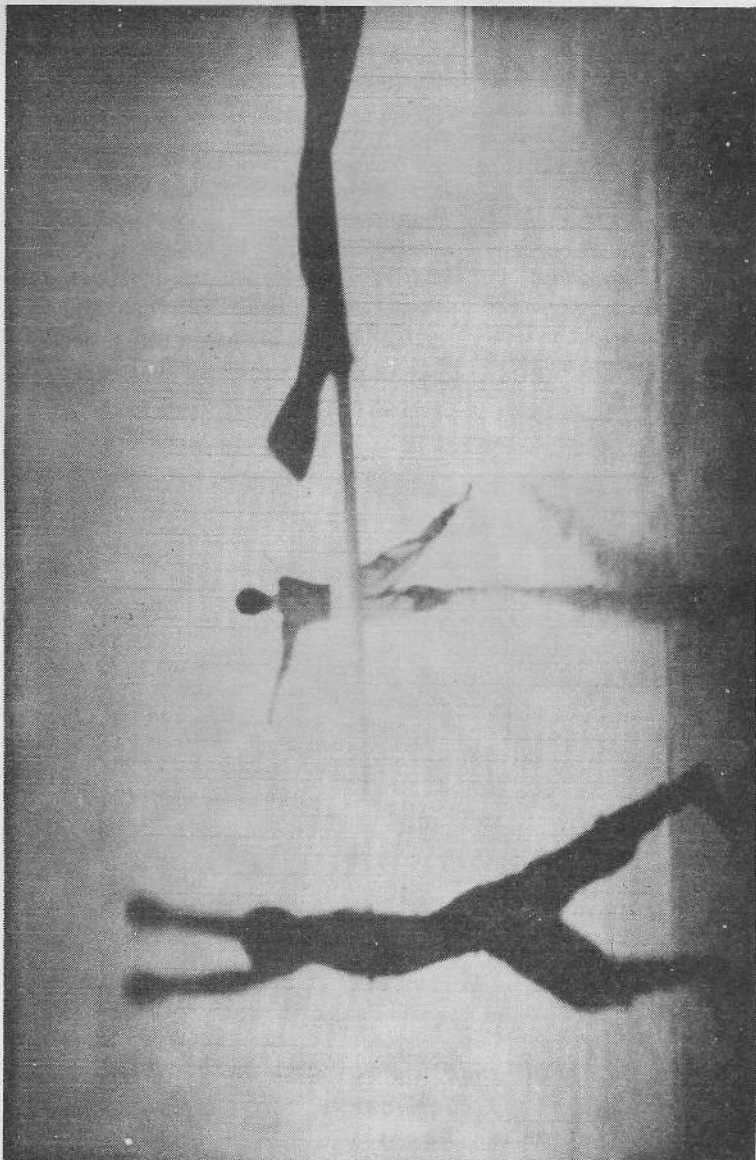


PHOTO RENO

'Crossroads' dance

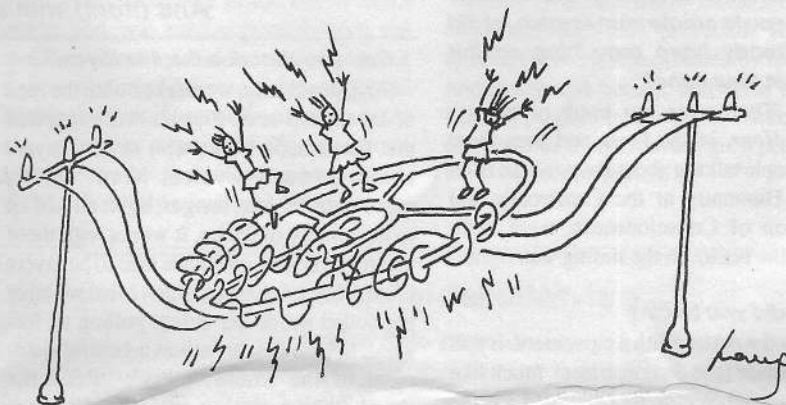
## ENVIRONMENT

# Turn on, tune in, but watch out!

Some exposure to electromagnetic fields

**W**orldwide concern about the potentially harmful effects of electric and magnetic fields on human beings has finally reached Auroville. Proximity to high-tension lines, power stations, transformers, and household electrical appliances exposes people to the electrical or magnetic fields that surround such installations. Instances of adverse health effects have been documented and have become controversial issues. For example, studies have linked prolonged exposure to such fields with various cancers and other dis-

In Auroville, electrical appliances are few and households are normally not heavily wired for electrical installations. Also the high-tension lines are only 22,000 volts and the load on them is not very great at the present time. For example, investigation of the energy field in a small house located between two high-tension lines showed that very little of the field was detectable after ten metres from the lines. However, there is a potential hazard near the bedsides in Auroville houses if lamps and electrical quartz clocks or stereos are too close to the sleeper. A good general rule is to keep ordinary electrical appliances one metre from



eases. Other findings have suggested that children are the most susceptible to the effects of electrical fields.

Mona, an Auroville architect who is doing research for her Master's Thesis in Germany, has recently done some initial testing around Auroville. As a result of her studies in building biology and with special equipment loaned from Germany, she has been able to measure six types of fields: direct magnetic, alternating magnetic, alternating electrical, high-frequency electromagnetic, capacitive body-coupling (you becoming an antenna), and radioactivity.

The human body is a low-voltage direct-current electrical system and is naturally affected by other electrical systems which can exert a force of distortion, change or interference upon its natural functioning. The most serious fields are the alternating or pulsating ones because the start-stop effect has a greater impact on the body and will be out of phase with the natural rhythms of the body. All fields exert influence basically by four factors: frequency, duration, distance and output.

Most fields exist only for a short distance from the source. Household appliances like televisions, computers and hair dryers have strong fields but a little distance from them the field ends. The problem comes when one is exposed for long periods in close proximity to such appliances during sleep or at work.

the body, but three metres for transformers and inverters like the UPS (uninterrupted power supply) which are used with computers in Auroville.

Magnetic or electrical fields are, of course, only one factor among so many that might be affecting a person's health, but it seems always wiser to keep the odds in favour of health and not risk exposure to fields that may harm the body. For example, Mona's research is being applied at the new health project of Quiet now under construction at the beach. The buildings are placed according to a study of the magnetic fields that exist in the earth, and use natural materials for construction. And where concrete is used it is made with lime aggregate which is considered the least harmful for the body. Solar electricity is installed where possible and since it is low-voltage direct current it is much more user friendly. Alternating current fixtures and electrical appliances are kept to a minimum and separate from working and living activities.

Generally, Auroville, because of its rural setting and low density settlement pattern, is much better off than urban centres where one is normally much more exposed to the potentially harmful effects of electrical and magnetic fields. Of course, the effects of the Auroville force field itself on the body are more difficult to measure but they are intended to be transformative.

Bill

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