

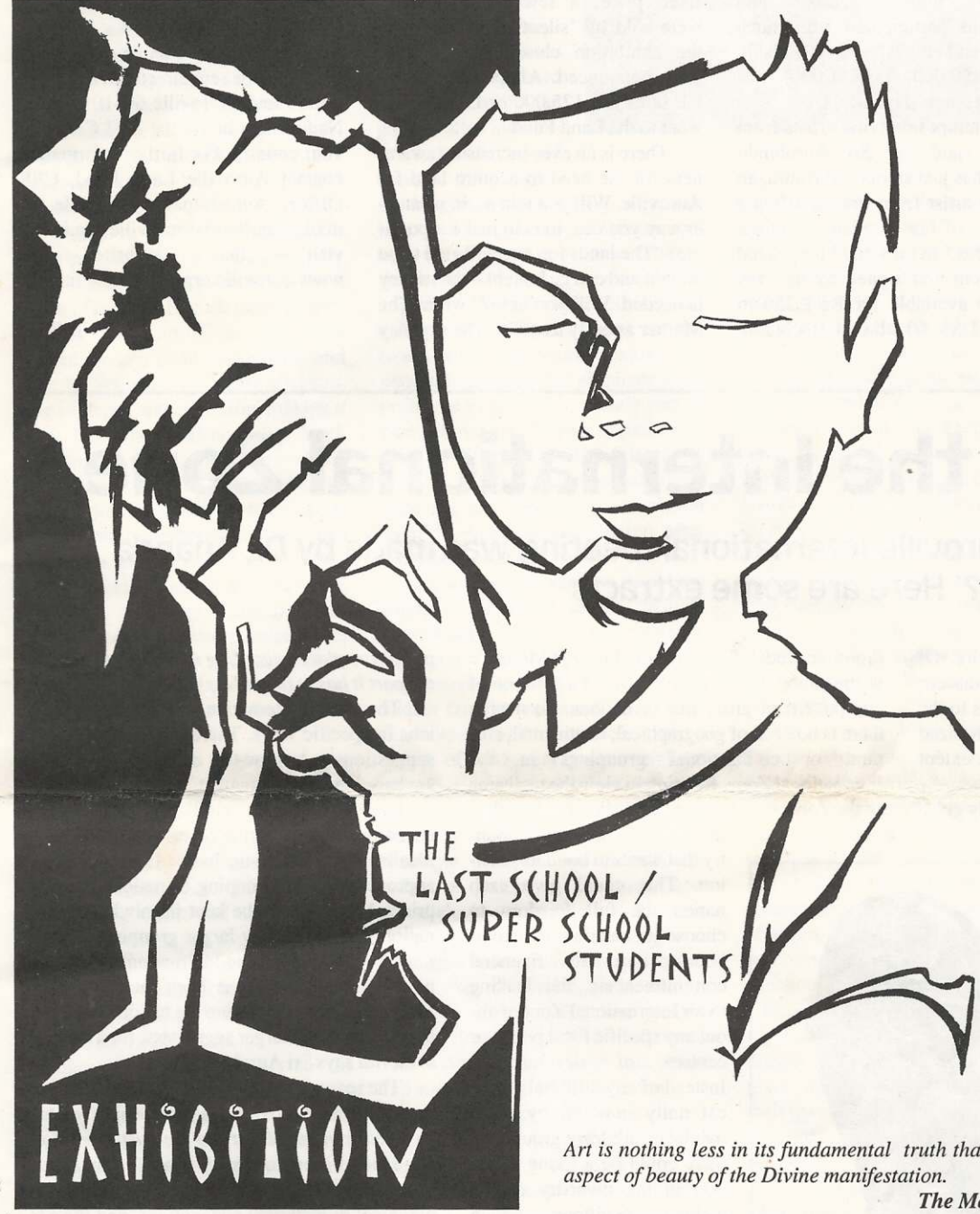
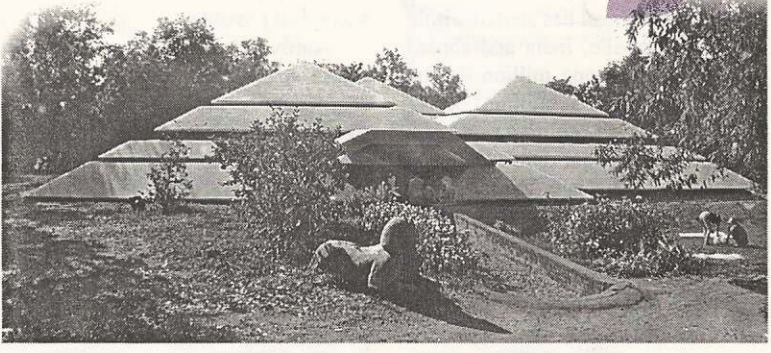
Auroville Today

APRIL 2003, No.171

MAIN ISSUE: Young artists Pages 1 and 4 – 5

- Padmanabhan
- Fanny
- K. Ganesh
- Djenane
- Bettina
- Anan
- Aron

Right: The Pyramids Art Centre



Child holding a shell to his ear. This study in black and white by Fanny was selected to illustrate the poster announcing the exhibition

Art is nothing less in its fundamental truth than the aspect of beauty of the Divine manifestation.
The Mother

Musings on a walk through the exhibition

The haunting sounds of the shakuhachi pipes soulfully as Auroville flowers float in water in shallow clay bowls. It is the opening day of the Students Art show at the Pyramids. The studio space has been transformed into a gallery and I find my way through the maze of displays. Here is art work of students from various Auroville schools – each piece unique in individuality yet harmonious as a collective, a microcosm of Auroville's own aspiration perhaps.

Devi's triptych of 'Timid' welcomes at the entrance – a human form repeated in ephemeral grays, a floating figure against a backdrop of pale blue and sea foam green. In each panel the same scene is rendered with a subtle

difference hinting at a barely disappearing self-reticent, bashful, and shy. This is who I am, it seems to whisper and then it inquires softly, Do you see me in you?

I also observe the viewers: there is Rajavelu pointing and nodding excitedly, and Shankar beams widely, everyone around seems open and delighted. From the French school in Pondy, a van load of little children have arrived. They dart about, reading aloud the artists' names in softly enunciated delicious French accents.

What is art – beauty pouring from the soul, a fleeting expression captured in physical form? A Paul Klee quote besides a painting reads *Art doesn't produce the visible, it makes visible.*

The works speak for themselves. Delicately executed pencil and charcoal sketches of Muriel as the human model suggest the solid physicality behind. Djenane's mystical cobalt blue and sand-coloured paintings presented as a vertical array mushrooming up stir up memories of New Mexico. Agathe's figures standing in intense solitude – a collage of gold, violets and browns – whose piercing loneliness cut through to one's own. Jonas's exuberance painted in yellows and white, an interpretation of Schubert's music, shines with a divine luminosity; Bettina's expression of her personal experience shimmers like an *aurora borealis*.

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The aesthetic side of the being

From February 21st to 28th, the Pyramids Art Centre exhibited works of students from Deepanam and Transition primary schools, from the high schools Future School, Last School, and After School, and from free students.

T rue art means the expression of beauty in the material world. In a world wholly converted, that is to say, expressing integrally the divine reality, art must serve as the revealer and the teacher of this divine beauty in life. The words of the Mother are a beacon of light guiding the Art Exhibition at the Pyramids, an exhibition put together after a break of four years. The primary aim of this exhibition was to be an exercise in collective learning for the students of Last School-Super School.

Art and creativity have a very important place in the Free Progress system of education visualized by the Mother for Auroville. They aspire to awaken in students a sense, perception, conception and intuition of beauty. According to Sri Aurobindo, *The mind is profoundly influenced by what it sees and, if the eye is trained from the days of childhood to the contemplation and understanding of beauty, harmony and just arrangement in line and colour, the tastes, habits and character will be insensibly trained to follow a similar law of beauty, harmony and just arrangement in life of the adult man.*

The Pyramids Art Centre receives students of all ages from many of the Auroville schools. In their approach to teaching art, the teachers believe in four stages of development and have formulated appropriate methods for each stage. The first stage is the stage of the child/youth who has little contact with his aesthetic being or with the materials of art. In stage two, a certain level of interest has been awakened in the pupil, which often results in a spontaneous expression of concentration, a primary quality demanded in art. In the third stage, the teacher reverses the approach and begins to require more, to limit and to create a stricter frame of reference, always and only with the conscious collaboration of the student. Here the student discovers the *tapasya* of creativity. The final stage, which the teachers at the Pyramids confess has not yet been fully explored, aims to *enter into domains of intuition, to know through experience the capacity to fly high and see far, so that finally one can identify with the object of work.* This stage is said to correspond to the 'No School' phase of self-development. The Mother describes artists at this final stage as yogis: *For like a Yogi, an artist goes into deep contemplation to await and receive his inspiration. To*

create something truly beautiful, he has first to see it within, to realize it as a whole in his inner consciousness; only when so found, seen, held within, can he execute it outwardly; he creates according to this greater inner vision. This too is a kind of Yogic discipline, for by it he enters into intimate communion with the inner worlds.

The setting-up of this exhibition had three aspects to it: the physical dimension, the psychological dimension, and the educational dimension. The challenges in the physical dimension included the full commitment of all students for at least two weeks to plan and execute the installation, and to make a choice of the art work and the area of the Pyramids where these would be displayed. As a collective learning exercise, the students of Last School were given the full responsibility of creating and putting up the exhibition, only assisted by the teachers when necessary. The students were divided into groups, who created displays for the different types of artwork and mounted them in various areas of the Pyramids. Equal space, effort and consideration were to be given to all the work to be displayed – stained glass, sculpture, sketches, drawings based on architectural perspective, abstract paintings and craft work, as well as studies of various kinds and explorations in colour and matter and contrasts in black and white.

The psychological dimension was more complex, and demanded several innate strengths and behaviour patterns from the students and teachers. For the students, this included the necessity to maintain a collective harmony, to discover for oneself a source of self-confidence within, to have the ability to make decisions yet harmonize them with the other team members, to take responsibility and meet the commitment within the two-week time-frame, and most importantly, to awaken care and concern for all others in the team. The challenge for teachers was in their ability to remain available yet as far in the background as possible.

The educational dimension was aimed at going beyond the outer forms of aesthetics and skills, aspiring towards a truer measure of achievement, such as the extent to which deeper issues were consciously met, understood and surmounted.

Emmanuelle and Priya Sundaravalli

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Land matters!

Join hands and help to raise one million dollars before August 15th, 2003

A movement has started within Auroville, India and abroad to raise one million dollars (approximately Rs 50 million) before August 15th, the birthday of Sri Aurobindo and India's Independence Day. The amount is required to buy land needed for the city and greenbelt area, which is presently on offer. The owner of a major piece of land, a real estate developer who recently bought a 50-acre plot in the Green Belt, has expressed his willingness to accept Auroville's offer of US\$ 200,000 (Rs 10 million) and the exchange of a plot of far-off, unutilized land outside the Auroville Township area which has been owned by Auroville since the early years. There are many other important pieces of land for sale as well, especially in the city area.

One million dollars is a big sum, but if it is divided in small pieces, the amounts are manageable. For example, divided by one thousand, the challenge changes into raising US\$ 1,000 or Rs 50,000 in one thousand different

ways. Is it possible?

Auroville's Land Fund definitely thinks so. It gives as an example a recent success in the USA. Last year, two donors joined hands with the Auroville Land Fund and Auroville International USA in a matching programme designed to raise at least US\$ 34,000 for the 'Land for Auroville' cause. Thanks to the generosity and enthusiastic response of many friends and well-wishers, Joining Hands became a success. The campaign generated over US \$53,000.

Within Auroville, efforts have taken off as well. Under the motto "Let's all together save the land for Auroville" a new fundraising campaign has been launched. With the help of Auroville youth, booths were installed at Pour Tous and the Solar Kitchen inviting Aurovilians and guests to join hands in a sustained effort to secure the land for Auroville. The aim is to create a steady income for land purchase by asking for regular monthly contributions. As the invita-

tion aimed at all Aurovilians puts it: "We want to create a flow, a continuous flow of funds and goodwill and support. We are not necessarily asking for big amounts; we are just asking that you join us according to your capacity." So far, over 250 people have signed up for regular monthly donations and the attempt has resulted so far in a monthly income for the land of almost Rs. 50,000 or US\$ 1,000.

Another success was the flea market of February 16th. This time Auroville units, guests, and Aurovilians participated with much goodwill and enthusiasm. As a result, over Rs 50,000 (US\$ 1,000) was raised in a single day.

An attempt involving artists from Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, has just started. Mayaura, an Auroville artist from France, offered 101 prints of her exquisite painting, "Interspaces," to the Land Fund. Sized 55 x 43 cm and signed by her, the prints are available for Rs 2,250 in India or US\$ 60 abroad (including

packing and postage).

In the third week of March, an exhibition "Creations for Land", opened in the Bharat Nivas art gallery in the foyer of the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium, where works from more than 25 artists – paintings, calligraphy, bonsai, glass works, pottery, tiles and cloth – were offered for sale. While most pieces had a fixed price, a few items were sold by 'silent auction'. When the exhibition closed, the winners were announced. All proceeds from the sales (Rs 125,000 or US \$ 2,500) went to the Land Fund.

There is an ever-increasing awareness for the need to acquire land for Auroville. Will you join us, in whatever way you can, to help make it possible? "The lands for Auroville are to be bought and can be bought – the money is needed. Will you help?" wrote The Mother as early as 1970. The urgency

May 1970.
The lands for Auroville
are to be bought and
can be bought -
The money is needed
will you help?
J.

is greater now than ever.

Donations by cheque or Demand Draft may be sent directly to Auroville Land Fund, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, India or via the AVI Centre in your country. For further information contact Auroville Land Fund, CSR Office, Auroshilpam, Auroville, e-mail: landfund@auroville.org.in or visit the website at www.auroville.org/index/land.htm

Editors

INTERNATIONAL ZONE

The nation-soul and the International Zone

One of the key presentations during the recent Auroville International meeting was made by Dr. Ananda Reddy on the topic of 'How to find the nation soul?' Here are some extracts

Sri Aurobindo tells us that the nation and the individual are very similar. *The nation or society, like the individual, has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul behind all these signs and powers for the sake of which they exist. One may see even that, like the individual, it essentially is a soul rather than having one; it is a group-soul that, once having attained to a separate distinctness, must become more and more self-conscious and find itself more and more fully as it develops its corporate action and mentality and its organic self-expressive life.*

The soul is behind everything a nation does. It is its true being and moulds its destiny from behind the veil: it is...the national genius, the spirit of the people, the centre of national aspiration, the fountainhead of all that is beautiful, noble, great and generous in the life of the country. Just as my soul is not just this body but utilizes the cells in this body, so the nation soul utilizes each of its members to express itself. Moreover, just as an individual dies and his soul retires to its soul state, so also a nation can die when its soul retires. And just as a soul is reborn to take up a new experience, so the nation soul can return for a different experience.

Can smaller groupings, like Auroville, also have group souls? Yes, but they can take many years to manifest. For example, after many years of its existence The Mother said that the Ashram still did not have a group soul. So it is not merely a question of people living together. There is a need for a common aspiration and expression as well as a stable form: Sri Aurobindo explained that a body has to be there before the soul enters. Thus the first expression of a nation soul is through geography, through the land. Then it starts expressing itself through the next level which is the vital life, where it may remain for many centuries before it may come to the mental level. So there is an evolutionary process of the country's growth of soul.

be seen as a clue to that country's future. Of course, in our investigations we have to discern what belongs to the past and what belongs to the future, as Sri Aurobindo and Mother emphasized that the past should be eliminated to the extent that it is not useful to the future.

Sri Aurobindo and Mother have already given us many hints about the soul of some countries. For example, Mother pointed out that *India's role is to be the spiritual heart of the terrestrial body just as the role of Germany is to express skill, or that of Russia the brotherhood of man, or that of the United States, enthusiasm for adventure and practical organization. France meant generosity of sentiment, newness and boldness of ideas and chivalry in action...*

In *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Sri Aurobindo talks of four dimensions of the human being. He says that each human being is not only an individual, but also belongs to a nation, to humanity as a whole and, ultimately, to God. Interestingly, many Aurovilians don't seem to relate to their native country. Maybe that's why you're all in Auroville now – because you've gone to the next level of humanity where you want to express that oneness with humanity. And in Auroville one's relationship to humanity as a whole, the human unity aspect, will be expressed preeminently through the development of the International Zone. So it's very beautiful that now we have come to focus on the International Zone because that represents a very important evolutionary step for Auroville.

The aim and grouping of the pavilions

The aim of the pavilions, explained Mother, would be to help individuals to become aware of the fundamental genius of the nation to which they belong and at the same time to bring them into contact with the ways of life of other nations, so that they learn to know and respect equally the true spirit of all the countries of the world. The Mother emphasizes that this will pave the way for human unity.

Regarding the grouping of the national pavilions there seem to be two options. I've made a

thorough study of Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's writings and nowhere have I found a mention of any pattern of groupings of nations. So maybe there is no need of geographical, continental, cultural or civilisational groupings in the International Zone. Keeping in view the total area of the Zone, the planners could allot areas or plots of variable sizes to each country that wants to build its pavilion. This could give each nation the full freedom to choose its location, its neighbour-country, its financial commitment etc., thus leading to an International Zone without any specific focal points or centres of development. Instead of any artificial physical unity imposed by some mental or arbitrary groupings, there could be a living variation in the diversity of the national pavilions, which could be accommodated in a living elastic framework which perpetually adjusts itself to new phenomena. The free union will give full opportunity for intellectual and psychological changes. The individuals and the groups will be held together by the living idea of humanity... (Atindranath Bose, 'Beyond the National State')

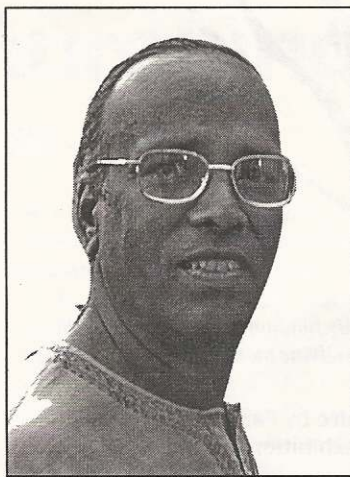
Maybe this is the 'central idea' that The Mother refers to when she speaks of, *a central idea that is as wide and as high as possible, in which all tendencies, even the most contradictory, may find their respective places.* On the level of planning, the central idea could be a principle that would insist on freedom, diversity, unity, peace and equality of every nation irrespective of its size. And that principle would be one of a synthetic organisation in which each nation could occu-

py its true place according to its own genius and the part it has to play in the whole.

The second alternative is to group the pavilions in specific ways. There are by now several suggestions as to how this could be done. Some are based on purely pragmatic approaches of convenience, others are civilizational groupings based on the past, while others are based on an idealistic and futuristic basis. However, in all approaches to the grouping of nations the basic principle that has to be kept in mind is that the nation rather than any larger grouping or union must be the focus of the International Zone. Till now the family-idea has been the basis of all aggregates, but in the future the nation-idea would be the basis of all larger aggregates, for a nation is immortal says Sri Aurobindo.

The second principle that may need to be kept in view is that Auroville is a place which wants to be freed from all slavery to the past. Therefore, any kind of grouping that is proposed must keep out all past notions of continents or social, geographical or historical conventions, and the contending religious parameters. Thirdly, just as Matrimandir is the living symbol of Auroville's aspiration for the Divine, so too the International Zone is the symbol of Auroville's aim of an effective human unity. Therefore all things done rightly and based on the teaching of Sri Aurobindo will have their own effect on the world consciousness. This is what I've been emphasizing since day one. Auroville is not just a city which is being built: it is a vision of Sri Aurobindo which has tremendous repercussions on the consciousness of the world.

The "anchoring course of logic" of the International Zone could thus be the flexible vision of the Mother vis-à-vis the International Zone and the basic principle of human unity as enunciated by Sri Aurobindo in his grand and prophetic vision of the future of humanity in *The Ideal of Human Unity*. Edited by Alan



Dr. Ananda Reddy

Finding the nation soul

How to find the nation soul? It is by finding one's own soul. Mother always told us that if you want to discover anything of importance, you must first find it in yourself. Does this mean that the International Zone has to wait until we have all found our individual souls? No. A small group may take up this work while an outer circle can meanwhile work out the aspiration, the genius of a country, by exploring that country's history. For as each nation soul has a mission which will not change, what a nation manifested in the past can

EXHIBITION AND SEMINAR

Auroville at UNESCO

On the occasion of Auroville's 35th birthday, UNESCO will host an exhibition on 'Auroville: An emerging Universal Township' from April 7 – 11, 2003 at UNESCO's headquarters in Place Fontenoy, Paris. The exhibition will be inaugurated on April 10th by Mr Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, followed by speeches by Dr Kireet Joshi, Chairman, Auroville Foundation; Dr L. M. Singhvi, Indian Member of the Executive Board of UNESCO and member Governing Board, Auroville Foundation; Mme Neelam D. Sabharwal, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of India to UNESCO; and Mr Mounir Bouchenaki, Assistant Director-General for Culture, UNESCO. On April 11th, there will be a seminar on the Evolution of Human Consciousness within the Auroville society, taken as an example of cultural diversity. The exhibition is organized in collaboration with Auroville International France.

Not all sun, sea and sand

Repos, a beach community, works to create a relaxing place for residents of Auroville while facing many challenges

Entering the gates of Repos, you find yourself on sandy grounds shaded by tall coconut trees. Children are running about bare-bottomed while surfers clean their boards in the sun. Groups of people sit around small circular tables discussing life in a leisurely fashion. Some lie in hammocks reading or simply relax to the methodical sound of crashing waves. Rainbow colours splash the walls of the Sunbliss Café where you can buy fresh fruit juices and sandwiches. A small blue gate leads you out to the beach where groups of people or individuals lounge on their blankets and beach towels as others swim out into the warm waters.

Residents of Repos work hard to keep this Auroville beach community as it was originally intended to be: a place of rest (the English translation of Repos) for Aurovilians and their guests. Today, eight Aurovilians and five Newcomers, including children, live in Repos and aside from making it their full time residence, they work together to provide two recreational outlets for Auroville. One outlet is the community itself and the other is the beach area lying between Repos and the ocean where beach-goers can feel comfortable spending an afternoon. But there are many challenges concerning beach harassment, sweet water depletion, relations with the neighbouring villages and the expectations of visitors, as well as the unpredictable waters of the Bay.

For some years after the Repos community was established, the beach remained a place for fishermen and was used as a local toilet. The arrival of Aurovilians in their western swimwear brought disturbance for everyone. Beach harassment and thefts were a constant concern and Repos residents worked to find solutions to these problems. One of the most important initiatives was building a good relationship with the neighboring villages. Chinnamudaliarchavady lies to the south of Repos and survives as a fishing village. With their fishing rights, they felt that the beach was theirs and the new influx of visitors was threatening their position. Through communication and contributions to the village, conflicts were eventually settled and the fishermen agreed to share the space. Bommayarpalayam, lying to the north of Repos, is also the home of many fishing families and similar approaches had to be taken. Although today there is a much greater understanding between these villages and Repos, it is still a delicate situation and a relationship that can't be taken for

granted.

Another challenge for the Repos community is dealing with the harassment from beach visitors. Western swimwear is far more revealing than any dress a Tamil woman would wear in public. This is a temptation for many men with nothing better to do. They arrive in groups, often inebriated, and walk up and down the beach gawking at women, trying to get the best view possible and sometimes verbally harassing them. Another temptation is there for petty thieves who see expensive cameras, and other valuables lying in tourists bags on the beach while the owner enjoys the waters. In an attempt to eliminate these problems as well as to protect people from drowning, Repos organized a team of life guards. The lifeguard's work is a difficult one on all these accounts and deserves appreciation from the Auroville community. After receiving permission from the local police, sign boards were put up in both English and Tamil saying "Kindly respect our privacy." This is only calling upon a natural sense of courtesy and restraint and works very well with Indian families and most individuals. Yet some people react, feeling that a bunch of foreigners have no right to dictate boundaries on an Indian beach, especially considering that beaches in India cannot be privately owned. An example occurred two months ago when a group of six men from Pondicherry nearly drowned after consuming alcohol. One of the lifeguards managed to bring all six men to safety who, after recovering, proceeded to roam the beach and harass women. When the lifeguard asked them to move down the beach, he was beaten up and the police had to be called.

The Bay of Bengal is unpredictable with its strong currents. Individuals have drowned over the years (though none from Auroville), despite the presence of the lifeguards who undergo intensive training once a year with a Swiss swimming master and regularly practice with an experienced swimmer from the Repos community. However, many Indian passers-by who don't know how to swim shouldn't be an additional responsibility for the life guards as is the case now.

The infrastructure of the Repos



The notice board at Repos beach

community faces its own daily challenges. Over the years, it has grown to have two showers for swimmers, a hand-pump for rinsing bodies or surfboards, toilet facilities and a friendly little café called Sunbliss. But the public area is not that large and the facilities are ill-equipped to support the increasing influx of those seeking a day at the beach. For example, salt water percolated into one of the two wells last month and the community members are trying to raise the needed Rs.50,000 to buy a desalination device. With this and other concerns on their minds, residents of Repos feel very strongly that Repos is not meant to be a commercial beach resort. However, it is a continuous work to keep drawing lines and one that is not very gratifying.

On a more local level, many Tamils who are not residents of Auroville but who live in close proximity and perhaps work in Auroville feel they too should have access to Repos, which is granted whenever possible. Also, tourists from abroad who have no connection with Auroville see the gates of Repos as the public entrance to the beach and want access. At one point the watchman at the Repos gate was given a list of Aurovilians so that he could regulate those who entered. But it was difficult to do this and eventually it was given up. Auroville guests do show their guest card, and an Auroville identity card may help solve the problem in the future.

On a wider level, Repos receives calls from cities like Bangalore from families asking to rent ten capsules for two weeks. Why? A lot of the interest is due to the efforts of the Pondicherry Tourism Department which has been marketing the area as a beach resort. As Pondicherry is a seaside city, this has attracted many vacationers. Unfortunately, the beach in Pondicherry has vanished and there are few other resorts nearby. Repos

residents would like to encourage the Pondicherry Tourist Department to create attractive resorts, which could benefit all. In the meantime, many tourists learn about Repos and come in the hope of finding a place to stay. When they are told at the entrance that they cannot come in and must follow a narrow path cluttered with trash that leads around Repos to the beach, negative reactions can be expected.

Another challenging relationship is with Periyamudaliarchavady. This is the village bordering the road that leads to Repos. Often in villages, the main road is used as a social ground for the community. Men and women sit on their front porches while the children play games in the street. With the increase of traffic from beach goers, this has become a dangerous situation. Many families have chosen to put metal grills around their porches to keep their children safe. But this is not a very satisfying solution for people who naturally live in community. Repos residents tried to create a parking space on the main road but it did not work. On a more positive note, Periyamudaliarchavady residents have seen ways to benefit from visitors and many have opened little shops, café's and guest houses.

Yet, with all these daily challenges, a space for relaxation has been created and many enjoy this community and the beach beyond during their time off. The process of communication with neighbours and friends is also seen by residents as an opportunity for a wonderful learning experience and is especially important where one is consciously working to live without cultural boundaries. And in the early morning hours, when the colors of the morning sun glaze the waters, or at night when the full moon rises with an illuminating orange glow, all the problems seem far away.

Sunaura

AUROVILLE TODAY

A warm thanks to all our readers who took the time to answer the questionnaire that had been included in our January and February 2003 issues. The following is a quick look at some of the responses to the questions that were posed in order to improve the existing content and format of the magazine.

To the question of which topics readers enjoy the most and which interest them least, respondents cited a range of topics with Aurovillian initiatives in art, education, science, environment, and alternative healing as the most interesting. Profiles of Aurovilians was in second place, closely followed by articles relating to Tamil village life and the interaction of the villages with Auroville. Of least

Readers' Responses

interest were topics such as travelogues of places and profiles of people unrelated to Auroville. A regular readers' letters column was requested by nearly 30% of people who answered.

Regarding topics that readers would like to see more of, there were contradictory responses. If fifty percent of the respondents felt AVToday's focus should be on the economy and environmental and social developments in Auroville, others, like a reader from Germany wondered why the "relation to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother [was]

hardly mentioned." Was Auroville "only an ecological, futuristic, social experiment that had no relation to the Mother"?

Ninety percent of the readers who responded to the questionnaire vetoed the inclusion of more articles or references to issues of Indian/global interest. A subscriber from Pondicherry summed up the overall opinion: "Not at all! Kashmir, Hindutva, dowry...? Bush's crusade against Islam, AIDS, or globalization? AVT should keep its respectable reputation."

The existing format of the magazine was liked by most. There were,

however, requests for more photos, cartoons, and also for more pages, albeit of a smaller size. The 'Additional Comments' section was by far the most interesting and varied part of the completed questionnaires. Here is a random selection:

"Do not stop your 'In Brief' column - it covers much."

"Oh yes, and dump the plastic envelopes."

"Thank you!"

"AVT shows the mainstream in Auroville in clear lines. The other Auroville publications are, at least for me, mentally out of limits."

Happy reading and keep writing to us!

Abha Prakash

In brief

Unity Pavilion

The Government of India has agreed to donate Rs 50 lakhs (about US\$ 100,000) to the building of the Unity Pavilion. With this donation the ground floor of the main building of the Unity Pavilion will be completed.

Financial sustainability

The Project Coordination Group (PCG), which reviews grant proposals for seeking funds from the US Foundation for World Education and the Dutch Stichting De Zaaier, raised concerns about the sustainability factor of Auroville projects in general and construction programmes in particular. The running expenses and the maintenance and repair of such projects are generally not funded by outside organizations. The PCG called for reflection on how to maintain all these assets and activities in the future, in view of the present acceleration in Auroville's development.

Development strategies

According to Helmut Ernst, a friend of Auroville, Auroville must grow faster than it has in the past 35 years by putting itself at the service of the world and so generating the funds to develop the envisioned city. His idea to turn Auroville into a large international and multicultural campus focusing on integral education and research has been worked out in model calculations, available on CD from economy@auroville.org.in.

Arka

The foundation stone for the first residential block of the ARKA project for the elderly was laid on Sunday March 2nd.

Industrial Zone

A 2-day workshop was held to analyze the Auroville Master Plan in light of the ground reality and immediate needs and to prepare for the first detailed 5 year development plan of the Industrial Zone. A wide range of issues were discussed, such as land ownership, present land use, access to the Zone, water resources, power connections, the possibility to build larger buildings that could provide common facilities for small units, the social infrastructure for people working and living in this zone and environmental concerns. Village development and expansion are to be included in the development plan if the villages are situated within the town or greenbelt areas. Satellite economic zones, one in the Aspiration/Aurelec area and the other to the North-west near Koot Road, should also be included in the development plan.

Auroville Health Fund

The Auroville Health Fund announced that it has concluded its first year of existence with a positive balance. The Health Fund is a co-operative insurance system, where all participants bear together their health costs. The Health Fund paid for 21 operations, 8 deliveries, 18 pairs of eye-glasses and contact lenses, and for the treatment of 10 bone fractures, 6 traffic accidents and 142 other diseases. During its first year, around 1000 Aurovilians and newcomers joined the Health Fund.



K. Ganesh taking a fresh look at his stained-glass work

K. Ganesh

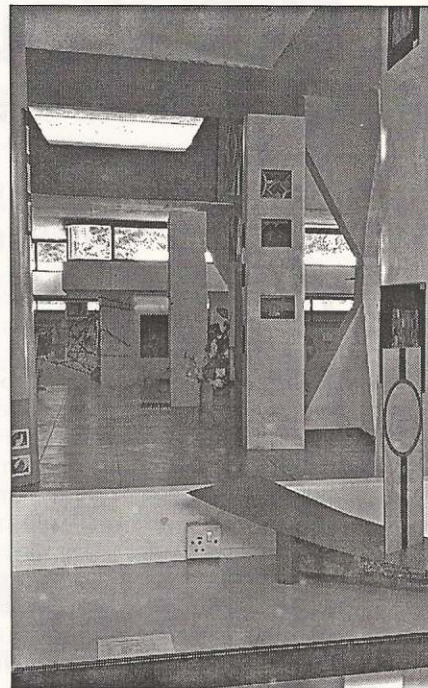
Hanging delicately from two fine wires, the long and narrow stained-glass panel swings gently with Ganesh's light touch. This piece is his creation – a geometry of circles and rectangles created in glass in self-textured white interspersed with blue. Sunlight dances off it and a rainbow appears for a moment on the red terracotta floor.

K. Ganesh has been working in different media: an abstract exploration in gouache echoing the geometries that reappear in the glass work; a black and white still life of cups and saucers; a pencil sketch of Kireet Joshi's home. One cannot miss the obvious pride and enthusiasm in his voice as he talks about his works. He speaks about the experience of an intense two-week period when Djenane, Nadia, Chandra and himself, were

responsible for the display of the glass art. "You know at the end of it, just a day before the show, after everything was in its place and there was nothing more to do, it was such an anti-climax, such a let down. Suddenly we all felt so empty, so drained, and disoriented! It was weird."

"I started going to Last School only since this past June," he explains, "In the school that I was in before, my only interest was computers and I thought it would be cool to be a computer engineer; and then I moved to Last School and everything I believed in collapsed!" He speaks about the immense freedom he feels there and the overwhelming discovery of choice at the Pyramids – choices and more choices from painting to glass-work to wood-work to sculpture to ceramics to architectural drawing – and how his world magically changed for ever. "You know, 30 hours per week at school is just not enough."

Priya Sundaravalli



A view of the exhibit

Fanny

Fanny, who studied in Last School for four years, was very involved in the Pyramids Art Centre, doing courses in painting, sketching, sculpture and stained glass. At present she is only taking courses in art history and sketching of live models, as she is concentrating on her studies (she is preparing for her French baccalaureate exam).

As setting up the exhibition demanded a real commitment that she couldn't fulfil, she only helped out when she could. However, a lot of her work from past years was exhibited and her first drawing from a series of three, depicting a child holding a shell to his ear, an interesting study in black and white with a graphic quality, was selected to illustrate the poster announcing the exhibition (see front page).

"In the domain of education, art is very important," feels Fanny. "In society also, it is a great means of expression. When we speak of art, we shouldn't be only speaking of painting, or sculpture, but we should also speak of architecture, landscaping, etc. It includes everything. In a way we can say that everybody is involved in some sort of art. Of course, for different people it has more or less importance, but it is what interests me the most. I must be involved in art, in singing, music and painting...it is a



Work by Fanny

very important part of my life."

Though her studies don't allow her to devote much time to art, Fanny makes it a point to participate in most artist workshops, which are regularly organized by Dimitri and Emily under the 'Artists in Residence' programme.

"As soon as I've got my Baccalaureate, I will devote my time to painting, music and dance," continues Fanny. "I may return to France to join a music school, or stay in Auroville. If I stay, I have plans to work on putting on shows and performances which will incorporate music, live-painting and dance. I would really like to work on that."

Emmanuelle

Anan

"It reminds me of totems of the native American Indian people", says 16 year old Anan of his sculpture in wood with its cylindrical mask-like face, the empty gouged out eye-sockets painted turquoise and a mouth frozen as if in a silent call. It feels alive, as if he has captured the spirit of the tree. Anan reveals that it was created as a gift for Yuval, his father, on his birthday. "I was just fooling around with a square piece of wood when I made the two eyes – and suddenly I saw it in its entirety," he says of its conception.

Anan goes to Last School, where his favourite subject is mathematics. At the Pyramids, he finds himself gravitating towards sculpture. "Sculpture puts me in a good mood," he says and then adds

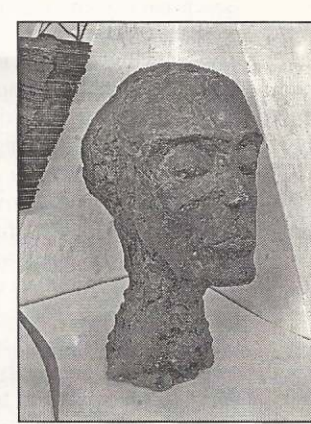
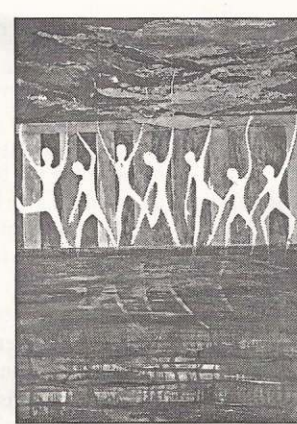


wherever'. From the many models he creates, he always manages to discover the one that matches the vision he feels inside. And then begins the arduous work of hewing it out of stone, the medium that he favours. Anan likes to personally scout for rocks to work with. Recently, he stumbled upon the perfect block of limestone close by his home which he intends to use for his next work.

Anan dreams of fly-

ing and parachute jumping too. But for now he is content with the pleasures of racing his motor bike. Asked about his ambition, Anan states firmly that he wants to become a racer or a sculptor, or maybe both. "What I do in life has to be physical!"

Priya Sundaravalli



Musings on a walk through the exhibition

continued from page 1

Art spills outside as birds chirp and the sun beats down; my feet scorch briefly and I hastily step on to cooler pebbles in the shade. And then suddenly an azure spiral nautilus frozen in glass reveals itself spinning in the afternoon ocean breeze – a deep, deep blue.

I hold my breath, shut my eyes and just sink in...

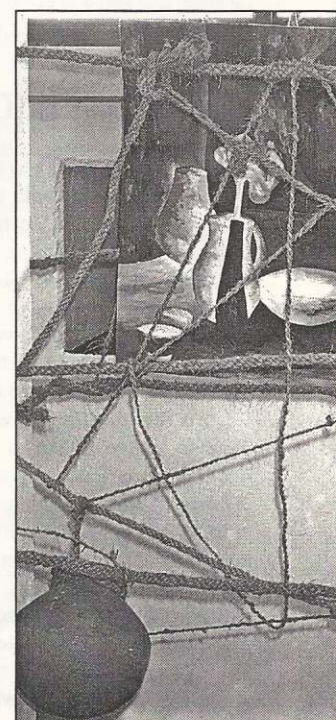
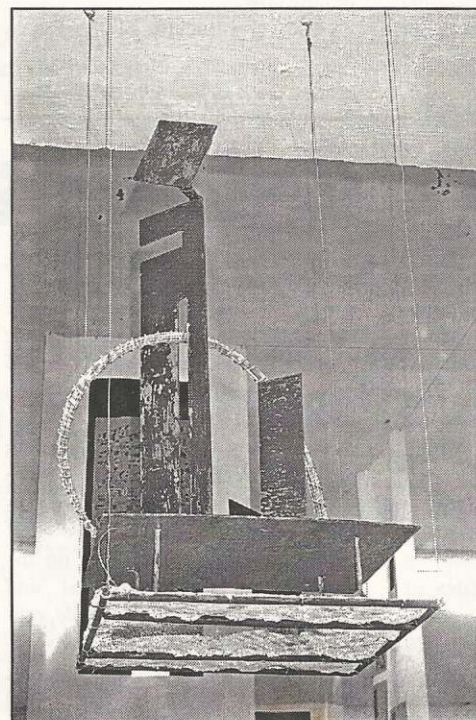
I come back again and again to view the works – three times, four times, I soon lose count. The young artists and their adult guides lingering about now give me a familiar smile. I've completed the circuit, and am at the beginning,

ready once more to leave. My eyes rest on a printed text displayed on a steel frame sculpted in human form. They are the words of Satprem: *I believe that deep inside me, very deep inside, there is something else, someone else, who is wonderful and full and vast, who is everything I call beauty, harmony, splendour. Very deep inside of me, it lives, it hears me. I ask this thing inside me to come and show me the way because I don't know anything, I do not see anything. Then it answers me, it always answers and it helps me. It is only necessary to persist with the faith of a child.*

Priya Sundaravalli



Drawings by Shakti



Top (l. to r.): Self-portrait by Lila in cement, clay unicorn by Mirabelle, painting by Devi, head by Aron. Below left: research in space by Devi, right: a study ropes and kijas by Inge, assisted by Padmanabhan. Behind, a painting by L



tion. In front, glass work by Fanny

Padmanabhan

A lover of theatre and a gifted actor, Padmanabhan is also a student of Last School, and devotes six hours a week to the study of art: painting, stained glass and architectural drawing.

He was involved in putting up the exhibition and, together with Inge, his working partner, mounted a display in a corner of the building, using steel mesh, coconut rope and red clay kijas, creating a beautiful ensemble which revealed a great sense of aesthetics.

"Putting up this exhibition together was an interesting learning experience," says Padmanabhan. "Of course, we also experienced the drawbacks of working in a group. Sometimes, there were arguments. It is not always easy for people to agree, to

avoid clashes of ideas, to be positive... But on the whole, it was great."

Padmanabhan likes to paint, work on collage and colour and movement compositions. He also likes to experiment with the effects different materials can create.

Padmanabhan's personal experience piece is a small painting on a square sheet. It took him six months to develop following a period of intense brush work experimentation. It is the image of a few blurred figures in a speckled grey setting, suggesting the monsoons. He shyly admits that when he finally finished that work, he experienced an acute physical sensation of smell – that of 'mann-vasanai' – the fragrance of the parched earth after the very first rains.

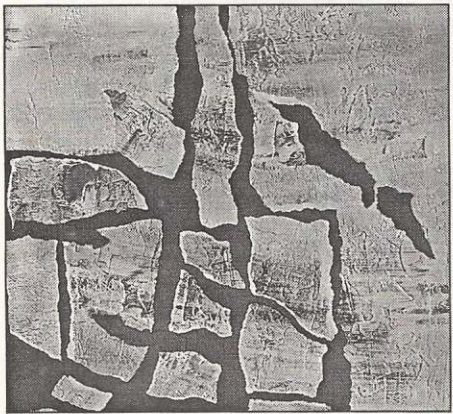


Padmanabhan in front of one of his paintings

"I've learned that the mood I'm in is very important. Depending on the mood I'm in, what I express through my art is very different. When I'm happy and quiet, I can spend hours painting, and be totally involved. If I'm in a bad mood, it's difficult, I get blocked and cannot go on, and know nothing good will come out of it," explains Padmanabhan. "Being involved in art means

experimenting, trying to find out. For me it is like that: trying to find out, go on, learn patience, change... One learns so much through art. One also learns about oneself, one's character, one's moods, and how to express them. One also begins to be more attentive, to observe, to see things from different angles. I see art as a great adventure!"

Emmanuelle



Tile collage (above), sketch of Aron (below) by Bettina



Bettina

From the time she joined Last School four years ago, Bettina has experimented with art. During the past one and a half years art became increasingly important and now she only takes a few classes in Last School, while spending up to thirty hours a week at the Pyramids Art Centre.

She had been exploring four areas of art – crafts, painting, stained glass and sculpture – which are taught at the Pyramids by Jean-Jacques, Lola, Veronique and Michel respectively. Eventually, she started concentrating more on painting.

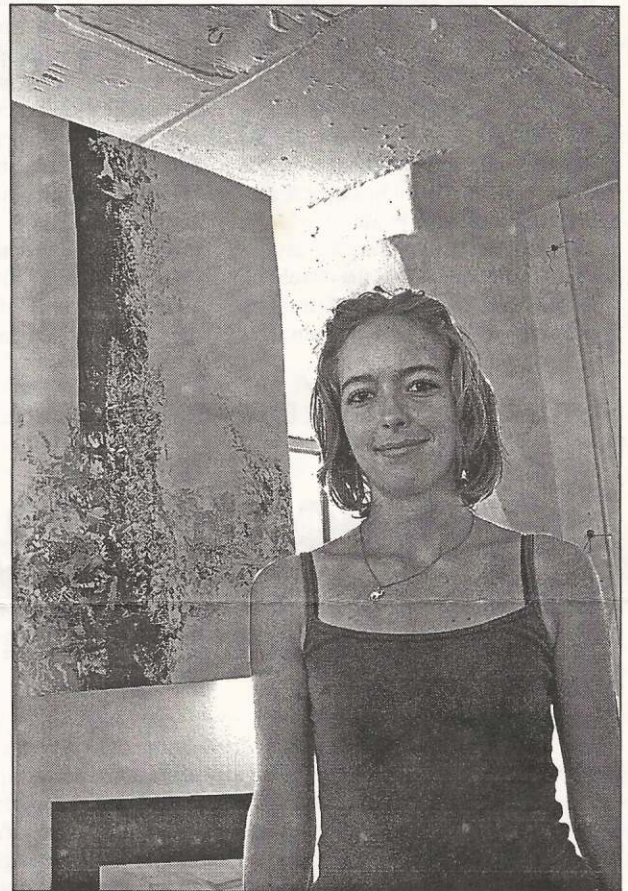
Having been involved in setting up the last Pyramids exhibition four years ago, Bettina was amongst the more experienced students who organized the setting up of this year's exhibition, and guided the new students. "It was interesting in many ways," she says. "It wasn't only about drawing straight lines and framing pictures, we also had to climb up ladders, hang up panels with steel wire... It was a collective experience. People had different ideas, which we all discussed together. There was an input from everybody. The

teachers were present, but in the background and only to assist us. We, the students, had the full responsibility. I also got to know the new students better. It made it possible for us to get to know each other in a different way, while working together. We really all shared something and discovered a lot."

Lola has asked Bettina to start giving art courses during the next school year, as she has, over the years, gained experience and maturity in the domain. "I don't know if I would want to really become an art teacher," she says. "But it will be a different learning experience."

"Art, for me, is a way to express what is inside myself," Bettina continues. "Sometimes, it is not always possible to express it in words, as there are no words to describe this beauty, or anger, or joy, or whatever one has inside oneself. Art is not only about beauty, although there is always this tendency of wanting to create something beautiful. There has to be something else too, it has to have depth. I love working with colours. All those colour, for me it is a great palette of words, of language... When a painting creates a reaction in the onlooker, whether pleasant or unpleasant, it means it has touched something in that person."

Emmanuelle



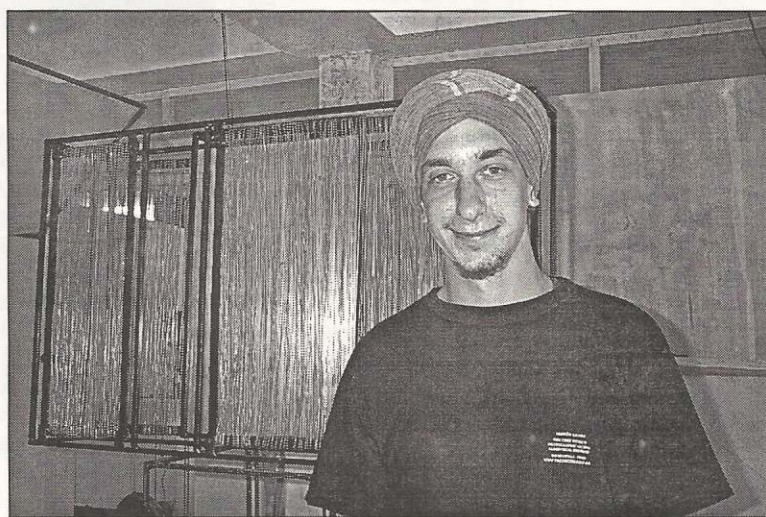
Bettina and one of her paintings

Aron

He assisted in setting up the Pyramids exhibition, though Aron only takes live model sketching and architectural drawing classes there. For two years, he spent a lot of time working at the Pyramids, where, he felt, there was a "beautiful atmosphere of creativity." But eventually he felt he needed to break free from the frame and start art exploration on his own.

A year ago, he set up his own art studio where he paints with oils on canvas and sculpts. That is also where he works on creating stage settings and props for theatre. "Painting and sculpting are my individual pursuits," explains Aron, "Doing the stage settings and creating the scenery for theatre is my way of participating in the collective – working with people in Auroville."

Being involved in theatre has since childhood always been a big dream of Aron's. He would eventually also like to explore acting, to gain a more global understanding of the art. "Creating stage settings for theatre is very different from painting, or sculpting. One has to approach it in a different way. It is a world of suggestions. It is about creating effects, atmosphere, suggesting perspective, and volume," he says. The stage settings of the last two theatre



Aron preparing a stage set

plays, which have been performed in Auroville, 'Sacrifice', and 'The Museum', were demonstrations of Aron's skill and creativity in the area.

"Art is the only means I have found for my own development," explains Aron. "In art one has to be as sincere, as true as possible. Art, I feel, is in relation with the soul. It is about opening doors. Of course it depends on how one approaches it. It also has to do with culture, and one's environment. Here in Auroville, because of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and their teachings, we have been shown a direction which goes towards a new dimension. Art is not only about creating beauty, but

also about learning and gaining knowledge."

Aron feels that art shouldn't be just art for art's sake; it has to be incorporated into daily life. "Even in the building of the city," he says, "we shouldn't only be thinking of the practical, the utilitarian. There has to be beauty and harmony. Architects and artists should collaborate."

"Auroville is very rich, there is a lot of artistic potential here," he continues, "But we could experiment much more – in the fields of dance and theatre for example – we could do more research, develop further, and gain more depth."

Emmanuelle

Djenane

Since her arrival in Auroville a year and a half ago, Djenane, has been a student at the Pyramids Art Centre. "I hadn't studied art before," says she, "So it was all very new to me. It has really been a great discovery!" She is most interested in the art of stained glass, although she is also involved in drawing and painting, and spends twenty hours a week at the Pyramids.

The mounting of the exhibition, in which she participated was, in her words, "a wonderful experience." "Sometimes, it was-

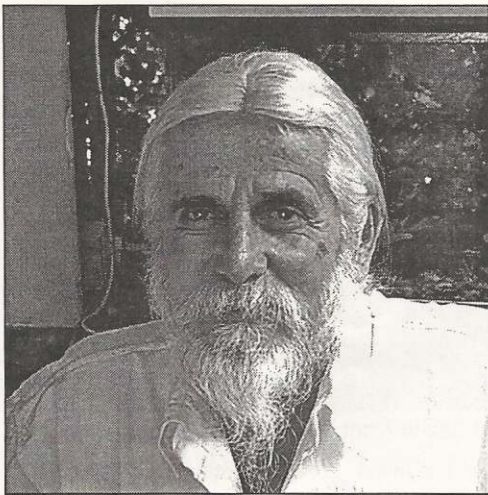
n't easy," she says. "We all had different ideas, which we expressed, and we all had to agree. But it was also very interesting. During art classes, we each mostly concentrate on our own work. For the setting up of the exhibition, it was different; there was a lot more interaction between the students. We really became a team working together."

Asked what art means to her, Djenane explains, "I'm learning a lot every day. It's a new way of expression, of expressing oneself. I'm constantly making discoveries."

Emmanuelle



Djenane next to her black and white study of an athletic shoe



André

"Children learn what they live"

The vision and work of André Tardeil

When I first met André Tardeil in 1993, he was struggling for the future of New Creation, the community and its school that he had started some years before. The school for the 200 day scholars from surrounding villages was running on a meagre budget. Money for the mid-day meal, for school supplies, for sports facilities was scarce but André, putting on a brave front, was convinced that the money would come from the Mother. And it did.

Over subsequent years, I saw New Creation grow in terms of its material reality. The school acquired a complete staff of enthusiastic teachers who, under the guidance of Roy, the headmaster, took over the day-to-day running of the school. Workshops for vocational training were in process, and the students

were responding well to computer and other facilities that were offered to them. Small industries related to carpentry, metalworking, stone carving and weaving were established. The village cooperative boutique, Arhandicrafts, was doing well, the reasonably-priced New Creation Guesthouse

was full of visitors, and New Creation Corner had become the most popular eatery in Auroville. In the late 90s André's business acumen was much in evidence and seemed to go hand-in-hand with his idealistic fervour. He had a large network of people aiding him in his various ventures, though there were individuals who were unsupportive of him and his work. For all his engaging simplicity, André's is a charismatic personality capable of drawing people with little difficulty. Guests who have visited New Creation once have usually returned for longer periods of time. Whether they are attracted solely to his vision of integrating Aurovilians and the villagers is difficult to surmise. To many, André represents a mix of vision and pragmatism. Whether it is his joyful indulgence of the village children in the newly-

begun crèche or his unfailing presence at the community meal every evening, they see him giving a good part of his energies to the community and its concerns. Alongside all this they encounter him in his business avatar, his cell phone in his shirt pocket, engaged in various aspects of the self-employed businesses he has encouraged over the years.

André is perhaps one of the handful of Aurovilians who have never felt the need to take holidays or return to their home countries even for a short visit. Well-acclimatized, physically and socially to the South Indian milieu, he speaks Tamil with ease but has still not developed the taste for his wife's spicy curry dishes. Originally from France, André came to Pondicherry in 1972, having worked with the Auroville Association in Paris for two years before that. Having come with the Mother's approval, he gave his whole-hearted support and commitment to the "Auroville Dream." In the thirty odd years he has spent in Auroville, his focus has primarily been to assist in the creation of better conditions for the local villagers and their children whom the Mother named the First Aurovilians.

Since 1973, André has been an enthusiastic supporter of schools for village children in the immediate

vicinity of Auroville. In 1973 he helped start the Udavi school in Edyanchavady and, in 1978, began New Creation School. Over the last twenty years he has also provided boarding facilities for children coming from financially unstable backgrounds or dysfunctional homes. Today many of these boarders are responsible adults who are working full-time in Auroville. Shiva and Kumar at the financial service are good examples. André also participated in the founding of the Kulapalayam Higher Secondary School. Most with the support of Aurelec. Trust of the children passing out of these institutions are able to get the education necessary to becoming self-reliant individuals in some capacity. Some of them have even opted for further studies in their chosen subjects. André believes "children learn what they live," which is why goodwill and harmony are essential elements in his educational experiments.

André's views on education are largely responsible for how he has been able to influence the economic development of the local population. He perceives education to be more than bookish learning, and something that makes its way out of classrooms into vocational training workshops that can more effectively enable stu-

dents to independently run activities of their choice. "My vision is very simple. We didn't come to Auroville to do business. But part of what we should do is to educate the local villagers and entrust them to run activities for their benefit and also for the benefit of Auroville. Through training programs and through helping them create their own handicraft enterprises these people have the chance to grow and reach their fuller potential."

For all his achievements, the going has not been easy for André. Despite his single-minded zeal and enterprise, he has faced criticism and obstacles of varying degrees from within Auroville. His latest venture is helping Savitri, the initiator and manager of the popular New Creation Gym, in the construction of the first Auroville Swimming Pool for which 10 lakhs in funding is still needed. Anxiety relating to the completion of this project sometimes dampens André's spirits. But he does manage to bounce back much like the tennis balls he thwacks daily. In his late fifties, André is in good form. Perhaps playing one hour of hardball tennis barefoot on the gravel court may have something to do with it. Perhaps not...

Abha Prakash

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Eurobic language training

Problems associated with learning a foreign language may soon be overcome by the efforts of Auroville's language laboratory and their Electronic Ear

The Auroville Language Laboratory plans to import an "Electronic Ear," a machine devised by the late French scientist Dr. Tomatis, to facilitate language learning. The function of this machine is to train a language learner to hear and reproduce the sounds of the selected language accurately before the normal learning of a language begins. "You could say that we'll introduce an adult kindergarten for language studies," says Indian Mita Radhakrishnan smilingly. Together with French Tapas Desrousseaux, she is the driving force behind the research and development activities of the Auroville Language Laboratory.

Dr. Alfred Tomatis was a French ear, nose and throat specialist, who, along with his wife, Léna Tomatis, conducted research in audiology, phonology and psychology for over 50 years. Focusing on the ear as a primary organ of the body, his approach integrated the study of hearing, voice, speech, language, social-emotional functioning and behaviour. The interaction between hearing and the production of sound is called the "Tomatis Effect", for which he was honoured by the French Academy of Science and Medicine in 1957.

"The voice can only produce what the ear hears," is a major axiom of Tomatis' work. If the ear hears properly, the voice is properly produced. Especially during infancy and childhood, an intense and continuous learning process occurs on both listening and movement levels. But these processes can be disturbed by numerous factors, for example by ear infections, emotional difficulties such as distress, sensory-motor deprivation etc. He discovered that the reduced ability to neuro-cognitively process sound and to listen well is one of the leading causes of learning disorders such as dyslexia, or in related challenges such as autism. He devised a machine called 'the electronic ear' to help solve these problems. This machine helps a person to hear again properly.

But the machine has more than only medical applications. We know today that during the first

half of pregnancy the foetus already begins to experience and learn, both through listening to its mother's voice, and through her and its movement. Tomatis has shown in his experiments how, while already in the womb, we incorporate the rhythm and melody of our mother's language into our developing body's movement and respond to them. This influences our later language skills. Tomatis also discovered that every language has a particular range of sound frequencies and that a person's ears are gradually 'set' to that particular set of frequencies. With the growth of the body, the ear tends to become closed to other frequencies, making the process of learning a foreign language more difficult.

Tomatis' research led him to discover the frequency ranges of all the European languages, as well as of some non-European languages such as Hebrew, Arabic, Japanese and Chinese. He has installed these frequencies in the 'electronic ear.' Using this machine one undergoes a kind of "eurobics", whereby the ear is trained to actually hear the frequencies that one is not used to hearing.

Mita explains, "There is a passive and an active phase when one undergoes 'language ear training' using the electronic ear. In the first passive phase, one listens to the filtered sounds of the language one wants to learn. You don't hear fully discernible words. The machine replicates the sounds that a baby hears in the mother's womb. When Tomatis did studies with pregnant women, he found that the amniotic fluid that surrounds the embryo acts as a filter. The filters in the machine perform the same function. Through the Electronic Ear one is bathed in the language as a baby would be in its mother's womb. In the active part there is a repetition of the words by the individual. There is a kind of voice control which helps you to gradually come closer to the correct pronunciation of the language you want to learn. So the machine gives an ear training which precedes the language class. Once the ear is open to the frequencies of

a particular language, it is a lot easier to learn that language. It has been found that in some cases the learning time was reduced by nearly half.

"We had been trying to get in touch with Dr. Tomatis since 1998," continues Mita. "Finally, in December 2001 we had an opportunity to meet him and his wife, Léna. When we arrived, he had just been admitted to a hospital, where we had a truly incredible meeting with them. It appeared that he very much knew and respected Sri Aurobindo's work, and was very open to our proposal that the machine would be set to include Indian languages and that the Auroville Language Laboratory would bring the method to India. Dr. Tomatis passed away a few days after our meeting."

The Tomatis project will be of great importance to the work of the language laboratory. Says Mita, "Mother has called us to build Auroville and one of the crucial steps is to become a multi-lingual society. She has given four languages to be taught here, namely Tamil, French, simplified Sanskrit to replace Hindi as the language of India, and English as the international language. Our role is to help in this process, for it would be a tremendous step if all Aurovilians would become multi-lingual, speaking these four languages, apart from their mother tongue."

The work of the language laboratory is now to select the texts to be recorded, make audio-recordings and send them to Belgium where the sound frequency analyses and the adjustments of the Electronic Ear will be done. "We aim for the time being at three languages: Tamil, Sanskrit and Hindi," says Mita. "For the Tamil recordings we have been selecting Ramana Maharshi's hymns to Arunachala, Sri Ramalingam's poems, and some works from Thirukural, Periya Puranam as well as Subramania Bharati; for



Tapas and Mita

Sanskrit it will be selected passages from the Bhagavad Gita, Vedic hymns, stories from the Panchatantra; Hindi we have not yet decided. After the analysis has been done, we'll both go for an extensive training period to Belgium. Hopefully, the machine will be operational in Auroville by the beginning of 2004. It will help those who want to study any of these three Indian languages, as well as the other languages in which Dr. Tomatis has done research. As ten users at a time can be connected to the machine, we expect that the machine will be tremendously helpful for future language teaching."

Though enjoying a high priority, the Tomatis project is not the sole preoccupation of the Language Laboratory. "We have just moved into our new location in the Last School compound, which offers great potential. We are setting up a modern media centre which will give access to audio-visual materials in various languages through computer workstations. Each workstation will be equipped with headphones to enable guided and self-study, in addition to re-organizing the teaching schedule for different languages. We are also engaged in producing material such as the Spoken Tamil Book and CD. Then there are other language research projects such as the 'super-learning' system of the Bulgarian Ivanov, and our software programme for Tamil and Sanskrit which combines sound and colour frequencies. But," concludes Mita, "that's for another article."

Carel

For more information contact
mita@auroville.org.in.

New photos of the Mother

To think that ten thousand pictures of the Mother exist and that we have seen so few of them. Tara Jauhar, a long-term ashramite who now runs the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Delhi, knew Mother from her childhood and took many photographs of her, especially in the late nineteen sixties and early seventies. Her huge collection of Mother's photos include many from sequences that have yet to be made public. When Loretta, an Aurovilian from the United States, came to know of this collective wealth, she contacted Tara in order to organize exhibitions where devotees could get the chance to look at Mother in a different light. Surprisingly no one had taken this initiative before. The photos are special in that they reveal Mother interacting with select people, usually in her room. Her fluid moods and expressions,

and most of all, the range of emotion – compassion, laughter, understanding – that filter through these black and white photos endow them with an almost living power. For those who did not have the chance to view Mother in person, and even for those few who did, here is good news indeed.

"Mother's Love" is the most recent exhibition organized by Loretta in Auroville, this time at Savitri Bhavan. Some people, especially from the ashram, have been visiting the exhibition daily, the present spacious venue affording a more relaxed viewing. Loretta plans to hold such exhibitions twice a year where people will also have the opportunity to order reprints of the photos if they wish. The previous exhibition "In Mother's Room" was held at Pitanga and was widely appreciated as well.

Abha Prakash



Loretta in front of photos of The Mother

The museum

The Museum by Tina Howe was the latest in the series of plays to be presented in Auroville. Directed by Ellen E., this was probably the production with the largest cast ever to perform in a play in Auroville. The roles were enacted

the good-spirited and patient guard played very convincingly by Rowland who perks up at the attention of the flirtatious young woman Anandamayi (who also plays the serious art student); Jeff, the shifty saboteur with his can of spray paint; the snooty museum curator Srimoyi interpreting high art; the free-spirited hippie Liliana who licks sculptures in a sensuous abandon; Srinivasan, the foreigner noting his trademark video-camera; the passionate French couple played by Jacky and Veronique – the list is endless.

The nature of the play did seem to raise issues for some in the audience who could not relate to the sometimes coarse and raw humanity of the characters and felt the plot to be rather superficial or frivolous and inappropriate for Auroville, while others enjoyed it. The sheer entertainment it provided, the recognition of the same human frailties, the insecurities, the comedy and the drama that plays itself out in

some of our own lives.

For this reviewer, the play became elevated to sublime levels in the very final scene, when the deaf-mute parents (Bobby and André) of one of the artists on display appear in the now deserted and empty gallery. The delight and ecstasy on their faces when they identify their son's work and their spontaneous display of love erased any and all crudeness of the human drama enacted. The set and the 'art' displayed in the make-believe gallery was finely conceived and created by Aaron. A masterful production by Ellen and her team!

Priya Sundaravalli

Swinging the choir

Entertaining it certainly was. Even when the choir was slightly off-key – and this did not happen too often – viewing the energetic exertions of conductor Eugene more than made up for it. For he conducts very physically. Broad movements are indicated by big body ways and a heavenly smile, while a frown and a crisp movement of the second finger upwards indicates that the pitch is too low, get it up folks. In contrast, Nuria's conducting is more reserved, though by no means less intense. They by turns conducted the Auroville choir before a packed audience in Pitanga. Pieces from J. S. Bach were followed by a selection from unknown contemporary Icelandic composers such as Ragnarsson and Sigurbjörnsson – who would be pleasantly surprised, no doubt, to learn that their music is

being performed in a remote corner of South India. Other contemporary music from Douglas, Górecki and Britten came next, and the evening ended with songs from Elgar and Dvorák. On the whole, it was a worthwhile evening, though a few pieces would profit from a few more rehearsals. But then, the performances were just 'an update of where we are,' in the words of one of the choir members, and were not intended to present fully-finished pieces.

For me the most interesting pieces were the three lullabies from the Polish composer Górecki. "The difficulty here is to perform what the composer hasn't written," explained Eugene rather vaguely. Whatever the composer's intention, written or intuited, the results were quite satisfactory and formed the highlight of a pleasant evening.

Carel

Video reality

On March 1st, in the light of the waning moon, over a hundred Aurovilians and friends gathered at Auroson's home to participate in the second annual video gathering. With the help of other video lovers, Auroson (a resident of Auroville from birth who lives in Certitude with his wife Mukta and their two daughters) had arranged for an evening for viewing videos by local and national artists. A high tech projector from Bharat Nivas displayed the films on a large white wall facing outdoors. The audience sat on mats and pillows, sprawled across the green grass lawns in front of the screen. Festive energy filled the air as the lights dimmed and the first showing began.

All over the world digital video is taking flight. Whereas the world of video-making used to be more for the elite possessing the necessary finances, it is now an art that can be experimented with and enjoyed by the general public. Auroville is not untouched by these advances and along with the increasing number of amateur and professional video artists coming to Auroville to film the community in its varying aspects, those who live here are also participating. This worldwide phenomenon opens new doors for communication about Auroville and its surrounding villages. The diversity of Auroville's inhabitants, cultures, and areas of work adds an additional and unique flavor for local video artists to capture.

Auroson was inspired to create the first Auroville video gathering two years ago after he participated in a video workshop for Aurovilians. Over a period of ten days they had

worked to create a music video. He felt it would be good for Auroville's video creators to have a chance to share their work. "What is interesting," said Auroson, "is that we have, in any field in Auroville, so many people working in one particular direction and they are not involved with each other at all. There is no sort of communication. The first Auroville video gathering was the first time everybody got together to see what others were doing. It was really good."

Nine videos were shown at this second gathering. One was sent from Bombay and another from Chennai. There was also a German video with Auroville participants. From our local artists, Auroson had made a humorous film about blocked Pour Tous accounts, Raman showed an artistic piece with up-beat music while illustrating local men being shaved 'the old fashioned way,' Indian devotion was captured in an illuminating piece by Basil and Estelle, who also contributed an eight minute documentary they had made about a drama troupe from Chennai who perform in villages around Tamil Nadu. Bernard Borg created an eye-catching artistic film about a man with his dancing ball and twirling flame sticks, and Srinivasan, who works devotedly to improve many social aspects in the village, led us through a story of two young boys, lost dentures and educational tit-bits of dentistry.

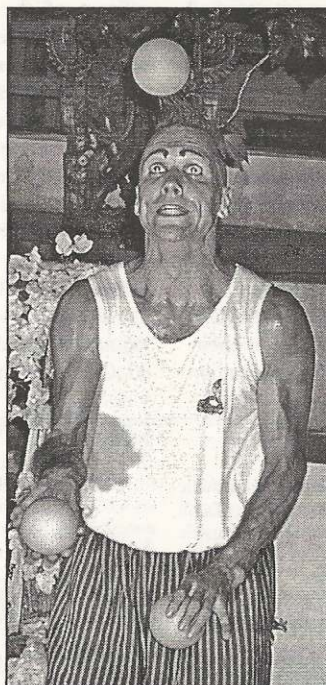
International participation and exposure for the artists are possibilities for future video gatherings. As for this year, everyone thoroughly enjoyed the videos and the ambience created around the event.

Sunaura

Linaz the clown

It was 8.08 pm at the Visitors Centre and Linaz, a clown from Switzerland

without a red nose, but with deep pockets in his long wide coat, entered the stage. Within a short while he had captured both young and old with his clownish behaviour, witty tricks and simple props. For instance, a roll of tape kept sticking to him, then it served as a vacuum cleaner, wall-hanging and, finally, a walking stick. His performance was interspersed with excellent stunts of juggling, acrobatics and pantomime. It



was a delight to see him run down an imaginary staircase behind a waist-high wall or struggle with something as light as a balloon, which he made appear to be as solid as a rock. The show culminated in juggling fire sticks and ropes with the support of two visiting jugglers, Sarah and Eric. They set both their gadgets and the audience a flame. Afterwards Linaz praised the "wonderful vibrations" he received from the audience and they, in turn, left with big smiles on their faces.

Dirk Kievith

In brief

Images from Tibet

An exceptional multimedia presentation by photographer Usha Kris was given at the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture where she presented photos of her recent visit to Tibet.

Indian film festival

Aurofilm continued its successful Indian film festival with a three-day panorama featuring a documentary on Vedic mathematics and films by Marathi, Bengali and Kashmiri movie directors.

Auroville chamber music

The Auroville Chamber Music group presented a programme of light Western classical music and Japanese folk songs in Pitanga.

Indian and South American music

Songs and poems of Indian Rabindranath Tagore and compositions for piano by Brazilian Hector Villa-Lobos were performed by Brazilian visitor Marcus with Suresh on the tabla.

Matrimandir exhibition

An exhibition "Matrimandir, vision for an ever evolving consciousness," was held at Pitanga showing the evolving concept of the town and the Matrimandir through sketches and drawings worked out by Roger Anger under Mother's guidance.

À Toi

An exhibition of a series of stunning oil paintings by Veronique was held at the Tibetan pavilion.

Nadaka in concert

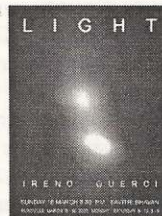
To celebrate Auroville's birthday, Nadaka gave a concert at the Visitors Centre accompanying his songs on his custom-built guitar, with Somnath Nandi on the tabla.

"Discerning" paintings

Imaginative paintings portraying reality or dream by visiting UK artist Sara Bowyer were exhibited at the Centre for Indian Culture at Bharat Nivas. Part of the proceeds of the sale of the paintings will support the Arka residential project for the elderly.

Light

Ireno exhibited some of his new work in Savitri Bhavan. The exhibits were photos in black and white showing ethereal light emerging from the darkness.



Children see the city

"How do our children see the future city?" was the theme of an exhibition of children's drawings in the Tibetan Pavilion. Participating schools included Transition, Deepanam, New Creation, Udavi, Kulapalayam, Isaiambalam, and the night schools coordinated by SAIER.

"At senses at times"

was the title of a modern dance performance given by professional dancers from Slovenia in the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium, accompanied by live percussion.

Passing

Ms. Lucienne Verré, the mother of Auroville dentist Jacques, passed away peacefully in Ekta on March 7th. She was 87.



Kathy

Studying communities

Kathy, a researcher at CIRHU, is studying the dynamics of community-building

Can you describe the research you're doing?

Creativity is the name of a community which will start soon. It aims to be an experiment in inter-cultural living, with as diverse a population as possible. I am interviewing the future residents, asking them to articulate their concept of the purpose of Creativity, what motivates them to live there, what community values they prioritize and what they imagine the external aspects of life will be. I will interview them one year later, and then again after four or five years, so it's also an attempt to map the evolution of a growing community from the beginning to a mature phase.

The other project is a wider history of community-building in Auroville, where I'm interviewing key respondents from some intentional communities (communities that explicitly share common ideals and are committed to working together to realize them), such as Aspiration, Djajima, Aurodam, Vérité, Vikas and Adventure. These interviews will try to piece together the evolution of the community in terms of how they have dealt with conflict, decision-making, internal organisation and the question of inclusivity and open-

ness. For example, how they deal with entry into the community, or with people not fitting in well, how they relate to guests and how much their vision has changed over time.

What are the most salient points that have emerged so far?

With Creativity, the issue that creates the largest split is the structure of the community. Everyone says they dislike rules and regulations, but some people are advocating regular meetings to deal with practical issues, such as laundry and establishing guidelines for social behaviour. Those with community experience acknowledge the need to discuss how they're going to do things as they're aware that conflict is inevitable. With people who haven't had community experience, I tend to hear things like "it will work itself out", and that structure and organization is artificial. There is a huge range of views regarding the purpose, from the more concrete such as 'helping Auroville overcome the housing shortage', to more abstract spiritual concepts such as 'working together towards the realization of a collective soul'.

With the general community history project, I've only done three interviews so far with residents from Vérité community, but I could say that the respondents have rather different interpretations about the underlying reasons for conflict and the best way to deal with it. For example, Vérité appears to place a high value on inclusivity, meaning that they've tried to absorb anybody

who expresses a desire to live there. However, one consequence of this is that they sometimes have difficulties with compatibility, and this is a particular challenge in their collective process. In my own community of Adventure, we tend to place a bigger emphasis on compatibility than inclusivity.

What is the over-arching intention of this research on community?

Ultimately, it's to try to understand if, within these collective living units, there are some underlying mechanics or recurring patterns that stand out. It's not about looking for a formula as I'm aware these experiments are made up of different complex human beings, but I'm trying to identify the threads and themes that may have relevance for the larger Auroville picture. Examining what works and what doesn't in the small-scale communities may assist with the issues that Auroville grapples with as a whole. If this was more fully understood it might help map the territory more clearly, rather than fumbling around in the dark, which we do a lot!

What do you hope the research will be used for?

With Creativity, the idea is that by reflecting that information back to them, individuals may start to anticipate the range of differences and the complexity of what they're undertaking, recognise areas of potential conflict and better organise themselves to deal with the challenges they will face. The information can be kept as archival material for the community, but it may also be of use to multi-cultural populations in high-density settings such as urban public housing schemes. The other project

will result in a presentation and publication that documents the different experiences of community building in Auroville. For example, the specifics of some of the greenbelt communities may be of interest to people wanting to experiment with eco-village ideas. Also, whatever is revealed in the general research can be given to Creativity, so that they're not reinventing the wheel or starting from scratch!

What's your own experience of living in community and how has that motivated your research?

Essentially, it's been a major motivation for this research. I came into living in community without much idea of what it meant and what it would ask of me, and it has been one of the most significant shaping experiences in my life in Auroville. I see it as a day-to-day experience of moving more consciously in the direction of an awareness of 'us'. The processes of working on conflict and moving towards agreement on contentious issues can cultivate stronger inner qualities, leading to a deeper level of awareness, understanding, compassion and tolerance. I'm also not trying to propagate community as it's a very individual choice – people have to be really sincere in their decision to live in com-

munity and not imagine it's going to be easy.

What's your recipe for a successful community?

In Adventure we've articulated a vision for the community including how we function together and the principles that we align around, rather than expressing them as rules or expectations. This process took a lot of time and is reviewed from time to time. We acknowledge honesty, flexibility and individual freedom as having a high value. We feel it's important to be explicit about the process for making collective decisions, and we've established ways in which conflicts will be addressed, deciding in the beginning that no one would be able to just pull out in the face of conflict and act as they wanted. A serious conflict arose a few years ago which resulted in a member wanting to fence off their area and function in an autonomous way, and as a result of this prior decision it was clear that this was not an acceptable solution and that person left the community. A framework is needed, but preferably one that provides the flexibility and space for something very creative and innovative to take place.

Lesley

AVToday not arrived?

The Indian post sometimes returns to the Auroville Today office copies of the magazine from which the address labels have been removed. Subscribers who have not received their copy of Auroville Today are requested to send an email or write to us, so that we can send a complimentary copy. For addresses see the box below.

RUSSIA

Samizdat and Sri Aurobindo

A short history of illegal publishing in the USSR

In the USSR, all publishing houses belonged to the State, and all these publishing houses received the unremitting attention of the secret police, the KGB. In every publishing house department number one was the main department and it belonged to the secret police. The whole printing process was supervised by that department.

Everybody who wanted to work at a publishing house was checked to see if he or she was loyal to the government and his or her family and parents were investigated with the same aim. The procedure was the same as that for prospective employees of the KGB, and it would take 3-6 months. It was also impossible to buy or to import a copying machine, printer or even a typewriter, and it was forbidden to keep them at home. Only trustworthy members of the Union of Soviet Writers had the right to use and keep a typewriter at home: the typewriter belonged to the Union which was also, of course, a department of the KGB.

Why did the secret police want to check every page of every printed document before it was published? Because

they wanted to prevent the Soviet people knowing the truth about what was happening in the world, as they needed slaves to serve the State. So they deleted from the books of all writers, all references to freedom of will, freedom of speech and faith. Even the works of famous Russian writers who lived before the Russian Revolution, like Tolstoy and Pushkin, were expurgated. And, of course, everything written by Sri Aurobindo was forbidden in the USSR because it revealed to everybody the deep truth about society and humanity.

At that time, it was about thirty years ago, my soul was not satisfied with reading only the books, journals and newspapers published by the Soviet government. I started to look for another kind of knowledge. I was studying at Leningrad Polytechnical Institute where, in between lectures, we students began reading the works of forbidden writers like Michael Bulgakov, Nikolay Roerich, Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud. These had been printed abroad and brought into the USSR illegally. One day somebody brought some typewritten pages. It was an illegal publication

of a small section of *The Letters on Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo. I immediately understood that this was my path.

It has been truly said that the teacher comes when the pupil is ready. Very soon I discovered a small group who had been meeting weekly to discuss questions about Integral Yoga. Of course, such meetings were forbidden and there was a high risk that the participants would be arrested by the KGB. Every time we met somewhere new. Sometimes it was a private flat, sometimes in a library after hours, sometimes it was a club. We even had a meeting in a small room above a sports hall where officers of the KGB were training, thanks to one member of the group who was a karate trainer of the Soviet police.

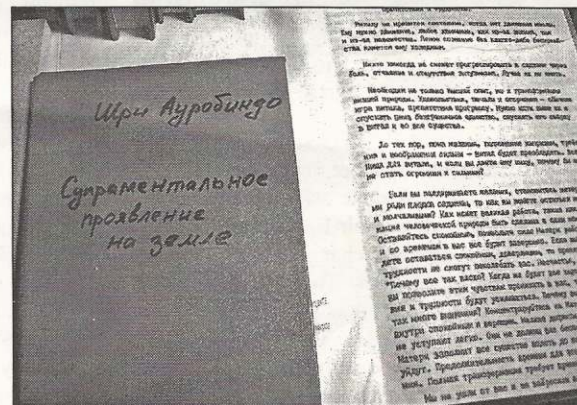
Peter Zorin led our group and it was he who organized the 'illegal' translation and printing of Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's works in Russian. He was not a guru. He always said that he was just the means of getting the information to us. Till today I do not know where he got hold of the originals.

The process by which these compilations were made was quite complicated. One man who knew English read a

text and recorded it on tape. Nobody knew who this man was except Peter.

Only in 1990, after the Soviet dictatorship had been destroyed, I met the man at Peter's home. When I heard his voice I knew it was him. He was also the translator. Peter would bring cassettes recorded by this man to our meetings and pass them on us. Some of us listened to the recordings at home and transcribed them. After that some of us again listened to the cassettes and checked the written text to avoid mistakes. After that somebody typed the texts, making six or seven copies. Peter passed these copies on to people who retyped the texts again and again till everybody who wanted one had a copy of every translation. At home we bound the pages together to make a book. In Russian we call such books 'samizdat'. It means 'self-made books'.

Of course, it was forbidden to have such books, and some people had big problems because of it: they were



Examples of samizdat books

arrested again and again.

During that period we published in this manner all the main writings of Sri Aurobindo, and a few books of The Mother, Satprem and Pavitra. In my library at home I have about fifty books made during those years. I have also works of Vivekananda, Krishnamurti, Rajneesh and Castaneda.

This is a short description of illegal publishing in Russia, something which was happening as recently as fifteen years ago.

Vlad

Vladimir, who lives in St. Petersburg, Russia, has been a follower of Sri Aurobindo for about 30 years. He helped to publish the writings of Sri Aurobindo and Mother in Russian and tries to distribute their books all over Russia.

Subscription information

- ◆ One year subscription rate: India Rs. 250; other countries Can \$51, £ 37, US \$38, UK £25.
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