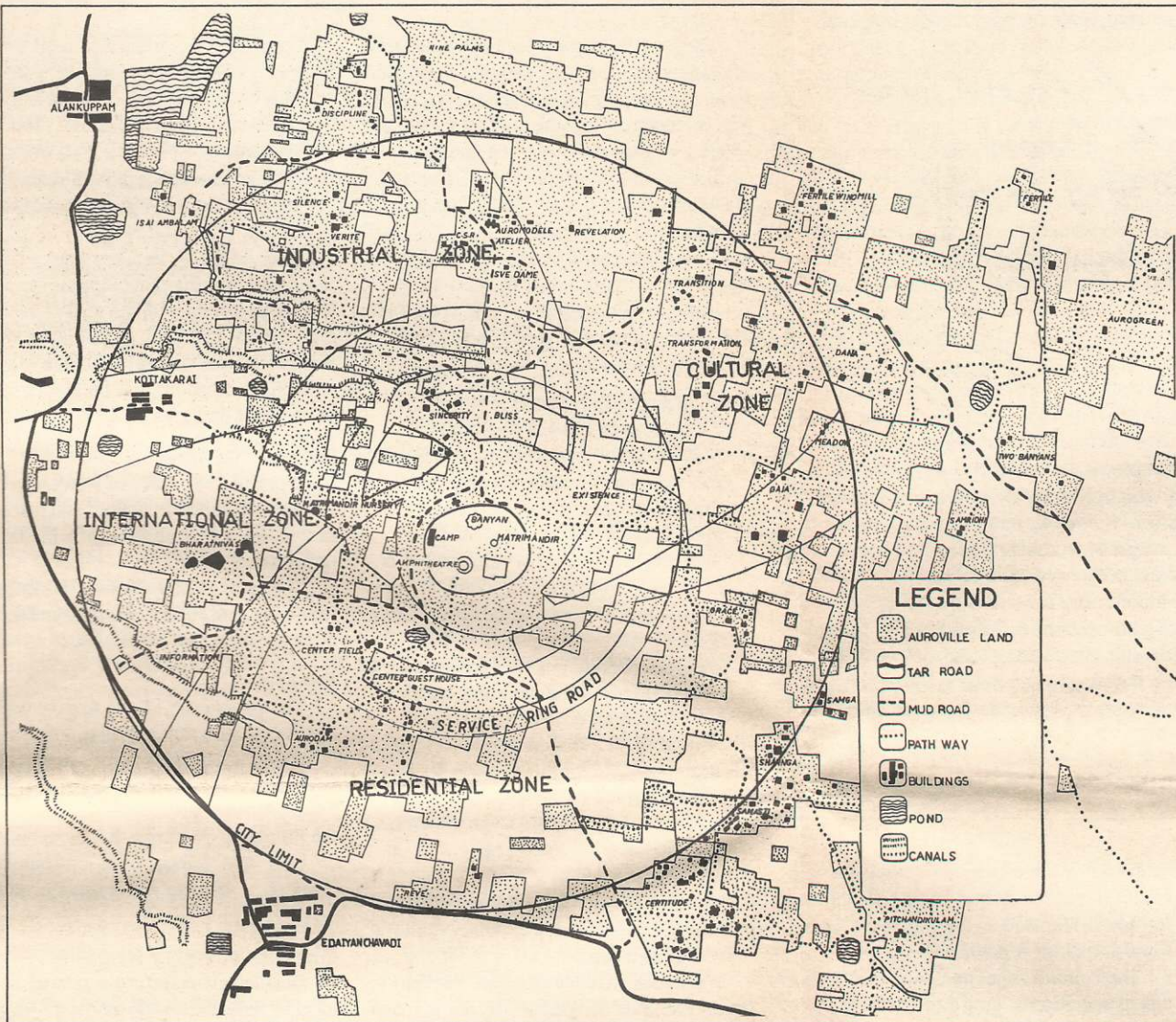


AUROVILLE TODAY

May 1992 - Number Forty



The city area. It shows, in addition to the present situation, the planned demarcation of the four zones and the service ring road. City parks will separate the industrial and cultural zones, the cultural and residential zones, and the residential and international zones. (Map prepared by 'Aurofuture'.)

Opinions differ about the present state of the Auroville community. Some of our diagnosticians seem to feel that the condition is potentially terminal—that we are well on the way to becoming just another "New Age" or, worse, Old Age community—while others believe that a judicious injection of 'spirituality' will put the patient back on his feet. Yet others see the collective aches, twinges and groans more as birth pangs than death rattles, as the struggle to slough off chronic ailments and bad habits that have handicapped us almost from birth. Others, again, feel the patient is essentially healthy—but the doctors are running a fever!

The Auroville Today team are as generous with their diagnoses and instant prescriptions as anybody else. Nevertheless, we are also aware of the dangers of confusing symptoms with causes, and of making diagnoses upon the basis of insufficient data. As one of the major information sources for what is happening in Auroville, we bear some responsibility here. For while we attempt to represent the significant perspectives upon any major topic, our inevitable predispositions or lack of awareness sometimes results in important omissions—and we get accused of bias. In past issues, for example, we've dealt quite extensively with ecological and environmental issues, but have focussed rather less on the challenges facing our town planners.

In this issue, therefore, we try to remedy this by giving 'Aurofuture'—the town-planning 'think tank'—the opportunity to present their vision of how Auroville should develop over the next few years, and we accompany this with another interview with Roger Anger. We also include an article on Chandigarh, the dream city of Le Corbusier which turned sour, as a salutary reminder of what happens when an inappropriate architectural 'medicine' is prescribed. We return to natural remedies with a description of the earth-healing energies at work in 'Annapurna'. Finally, we document the differing efforts of Auroville cycle fanatics and visiting psychosynthesis trainers to unblock clogged circulation patterns and open up new pathways—both physical and psychological—in the body of the community. □

It has been apparent to us for quite a while—given the demand for information and the desire for clarification as regards the nature of the work of Aurofuture—that an exhibition outlining and presenting Aurofuture's contribution to the concept of the city was necessary.

This exhibition, called Horizon '95, occurred on Auroville's birthday (February 28th, 1991) and coincided with the first visit of the Governing Board to Auroville.

By establishing a living and evolutionary link between the initial concept of the Galaxy that was approved by Mother, and the physical reality of Auroville today, it proposes long and short term planning studies in different areas of activity.

One of the major points highlighted by this exhibition is the need for Auroville's population to grow and reach the level of two thousand inhabitants, a necessary figure if present habits and patterns of behaviour are to be modified, and a consciousness of the city reawakened. This consciousness has over the years—due to daily difficulties and struggles—ceased to become a priority for some, and for others has been relegated to the realm of mere hypothesis.

HORIZON '95

Auroville's town planning group presents the first phase of a master plan.

Some essential problems to be studied are:

- Man's innate need to occupy and appropriate more or less large areas of space. A tendency which then leads to a general paralysis of growth.
- Conservatism, born of habit and the need to defend one's goods and privileges, and the risk that this entails of creating a bourgeois society totally opposed to the spirit of Auroville.
- The fear that exists in ourselves of Auroville actually finding its true dimension, so necessary in terms of its vocation of research and experimentation.
- Finally the very concept of the city itself, varying according to cultural or ideological tendencies, to the point that some even challenge Mother's original sketch and plan, and advocate a spontaneous and anarchical form of growth to replace it.

This exhibition—held in the Bharat Nivas for three months—consisted of panels that combined texts and illustrative maps of various aspects of the town plan, which we summarize here as

1. The Matrimandir. All the work of Aurofuture, past, present, and future, is summed up in this call: "The Matrimandir must be."

2. The Four Zones, the land, transport, infrastructure, services, etc. More about these below.

THE FOUR ZONES

The Residential Zone

With Auroville's population reaching the level of fifty thousand inhabitants in its final phase, it is necessary as of now to undertake studies in terms of the area to be designated the residential zone. The goal of this first

continued on page 2

The lands for Auroville have to be bought... Will you help?

Purchasing the land upon which to conduct the Auroville experiment has always been a problem. Three years before Auroville's official inauguration, Mother urged that all the land be bought quickly in order to avoid speculation and other difficulties. It didn't happen. In 1970, Mother again underlined the need.

Yet, twenty years later, only half the land for the City—and even less for the Green Belt—has been purchased. Recently, something happened. An unusual American lady, Blanche Sherwood, came to Auroville. She could often be seen, in her straw hat festooned with flowers, walking to Matrimandir to help polish the columns. Then, late last year, she died peacefully while staying in an Auroville community. Some months later we were astonished to hear that she had left \$163,000 to Auroville, the major part of which was to be used for land purchase.

It came at the right time. A new momentum had been established by the Land Service and by the implementation of the Auroville Foundation, and some of Blanche's bequest was immediately used to buy badly needed plots of land in the Matrimandir area. However, further funding for land purchase remains very urgent. For at this stage of Auroville's growth there is an urgent need to purchase the remaining lands in the city area to facilitate further development. In addition, there are many inflationary pressures on land prices in the area, and our proximity to the expanding urban centre of Pondicherry means that outsiders are increasingly showing interest in purchasing land in Auroville.

More than two decades after Mother's message, Auroville's Development Group has adopted land purchase as a top priority for Auroville this year. Can you contribute and inform others about the need? Cheques should be made out to 'Auroville Fund' (Bharat Nivas, Auroville 605101) and specified for 'land purchase'.

May 1970.

*The lands for Auroville
are to be bought and
can be bought.
The money is needed
will you help?*



continued from page 1

study is to achieve a harmonious balance between buildings and green areas in the zone.

In this first phase of Horizon '95, the masterplan of a project for two thousand inhabitants is proposed. It would integrate a diversity of habitats, to be evolved and developed by teams of architects, interested by experiments such as the 'Vikas' one.

Different types of dwellings have already been worked upon. These range from individual houses to apartments gathered together in small, one to three storey buildings, containing collective areas such as kitchens, cafeterias, laundromats etc. Some guiding principles behind the elaboration of this work include:

- The search for a more equal sharing when it comes to the basic needs of Aurovilians, to be translated in the surface area of the dwellings.
- The setting up of a common fund—created by the contributions of those interested in a habitat—which would also provide, through a system of fraternal participation, for the creation of dwellings for those without the financial means to build.
- All constructions within the perimeter of the city will have to conform to standards as regards the quality of the architecture, harmony with the environment and the search for another quality of life that integrates individual needs with collective spaces.

The Cultural Zone

"The education of a human being should begin at birth and continue throughout the person's life." - Mother.

In order to realize this goal set forth by Mother, the city in its entirety must be a site

of unending education. This implies a particular concept of its buildings, a direction in its activities, and a commitment by all towards making it possible.

The cultural zone, however, must maintain its specific vocation through the integration of research laboratories that would explore and study the physical, vital and mental realms of human experience.

Within this zone, near the Matrimandir Gardens, a campus is envisaged which would consist of a series of buildings to be used for the experimental education of children aged 2 to 16.

Within the context of the Horizon '95 exhibition plans and models were exhibited for:

- A model building for experimental education.
- A gymnasium and other sporting facilities.
- A series of buildings connected with the activities and work of the Sri Aurobindo Institute of Educational Research.

The International Zone

The concept of this zone has changed completely from the initial plan of the Galaxy, and a grouping together of pavilions by continents is now envisaged.

The Bharat Nivas—the Pavilion of India—situated in the centre of this zone is, for the time being, the only pavilion extant.

The beginning of building work for the pavilions of Tibet, France and Austria, is envisaged as part of the programme of Horizon '95. The plans for these buildings are presently being worked upon.

Each of the five continental areas of the zone will be surrounded by large parks that will be an expression of their particular environments.

In its entirety the project of Auroville is spread out over some 4,400 hectares, including the city area, the greenbelt, and other areas to be developed. The city itself covers 486 hectares of which 223 have been already acquired. The plan for acquisition of land over the next five years is as follows (the price per hectare varies according to location):

The city: 252.8 hectares at approximately Rs. 100,000 per hectare.

The greenbelt: 100 hectares at approximately Rs. 75,000 per hectare.

Organic farms: 40 hectares at approximately Rs. 90,000 per hectare.

Experimental village: 12 hectares at approximately Rs. 80,000 per hectare.

Water Service: 4 hectares at approximately Rs. 90,000 per hectare.

Pour Tous: 1.2 hectares at approximately Rs. 90,000 per hectare.

Total: More than 410 hectares. (1 hectare = 2.47 acres)

They will be interconnected by a network of roads connected to the present Information Centre. A parking lot is planned for visitors near this centre. From this parking lot electric shuttles will serve the International zone.

Buffering this zone, near Matrimandir, the International Centre For Research into Human Unity is planned.

This Centre will be the focal point for researches in human unity in Auroville.

Each of the pavilions will contribute through the participation of its researchers in the Centre's activities.

The Industrial Zone

The Industrial Zone is meant to:

- Make the products that are necessary for the community's basic needs.
- Sustain the economy of Auroville.
- Participate in the growth of the city.
- Seek out new forms of relationship between Aurovilians and workers.
- Incorporate educational facilities within working units
- Pay particular attention to protecting the environment and safeguarding standards of architectural quality.

As part of the Horizon '95 project a plan has been proposed for the area that stretches from Revelation to Kottakarai. It envisages the setting up there of small and medium size industries, offices, handicraft units and workshops.

The larger and noisier industries are planned to be set up outside the city limits on the Morattandi road.

It is in this area that Horizon '95 plans to set up the units of Altecs, Shradanjali, and Aurosarjan, alongside other smaller ones. This area will attempt to create exemplary working conditions, and provide a model that breaks with traditional concepts of industrial zones.

The Land

At the time of Auroville's foundation in 1968, most of the land was eroded, barren and close to becoming a desert. Today this process has been reversed and large areas of Auroville have become forested.

In the five years to come, in the area set out for the city, 30 hectares of permanent gardens and parks could be planted, as well as 40 hectares of temporary plantations that would be cut down once the actual construction of the city began. This will help counteract the disturbing effects of construction, particularly those related to noise, while at the same time helping contribute towards the creation of a favourable micro-climate.

With green spaces making up 55% of its total area, Auroville—truly a garden city—will seek to establish new relationships between urban spaces and nature.

Transport

The principles of approach to and circulation throughout the city:

- All heavy traffic will be limited to the existing peripheral roads.
- All other forms of transport such as cars, motorbikes, mopeds, etc. will be allowed up to the borders of the crown/service road.

— From the Crown/Service road up to the green belt surrounding the gardens of Matrimandir, only individual and collective electric vehicles, and bicycles will be allowed.

— Only pedestrians will be allowed beyond this zone and in the gardens of Matrimandir.

This proposal is a temporary solution during the construction of the city and would later be modified with the goal of eventually eliminating all forms of polluting vehicles from within the city. A preliminary study for collective transportation on the crown/service road is underway.

Infrastructure

A preliminary study of water, electricity, sewage, telecommunications and roads in the first phase of the city's growth has been undertaken.

The network of the town's infrastructures follow the route of the ring road and the other main access routes to the city.

Services

The site chosen for the service buildings has been chosen because of its close proximity to one of the city's main entrance points.

Within the time-frame of Horizon '95, the following buildings should be built:

Post and telecommunications, bank, cafeteria, Auroville Water service, and Pour Tous.

Outside the city limits

Detailed plans and projects exist, some of them already underway, for the development of communities outside the city limits, such as Djaima and Auromodèle.

Auroville's participation in the evolution of the surrounding villages

The existence of villages, with a combined population of 30,000 inhabitants in close proximity to Auroville, confronts us with the challenge of our interdependent cultural and economic growth.

New Creation

There are plans to extend the already existing classrooms as well as the cafeteria. Boarding facilities as well as housing for those responsible for this educational experiment have already been finished and other buildings are under construction.

Utility

The Utility Project aims at providing a site of integration for workers who want to involve themselves in a closer way with Auroville. A habitat complex, collective buildings, and educational sites, that take into consideration the Tamil way of life, have been studied with the intent of getting this project underway as soon as possible.

Fifteen months after the presentation of this exhibition a question remains:

Can we once again discover the faith, the courage, and the necessary receptivity, along with the indispensable unity, to bring down onto earth that city which, as Mother said in 1969, is already 'there', already built?

Roger A., Luigi, Bhagwandas

"I do not want to build a city for the rich, but one for everybody"

It was on June 23rd, 1965, that Mother spoke for the first time about Auroville in detail. She mentioned that since the beginning of this century the idea of an ideal city had been present in her consciousness, and how suddenly the plan of Auroville had come again to the forefront. In this conversation, which is recorded in Mother's Agenda (VI, 139-150), she says: "I am waiting for Roger to make the detailed plans because since the beginning I have said 'Roger will be the architect', and I have written to Roger".

Since then, Roger Anger has been intimately connected with Auroville, with the exception of about ten years when he was absent due to the problems between the Aurovilians and the Sri Aurobindo Society.

His return to Auroville was not welcomed by all. "For a long time", said Roger in an interview with *Auroville Today* in 1988, "individual Aurovilians tried to deny my existence", and with it, rejected the masterplan for Auroville known as the Galaxy as a non-feasible fixed idea. Nowadays, at least within the Development Group, we witness another atmosphere—one of goodwill, of attempts at understanding and looking for the truth behind this city concept—have taken the place of the initial mistrust, and Roger's guidance for the realisation of this galaxy planned city is increasingly accepted.

In the first interview we had with you, in December 1988, (see *Auroville Today* no 2) you explained that the Galaxy town plan is not yours, but was directly inspired by Mother.

Roger: Yes, Mother had given a couple of parameters: the division of the city into four areas, or zones, and for how many people the city is envisaged (50,000). The division into those 4 zones (industrial, residential, international and cultural) is unique, and has no precedent in townplanning. On the basis of this scheme, we, the architects and townplanners, started to make suggestions to her. This was done in several stages, and finally the Galaxy came out and was presented as a model to Mother, and accepted by Her as a plan that answered to her parameters. She inspired and guided the work. When I talked one day about Auroville to Mother, she said that the city is already constructed, that it already exists on a subtle level, that it is only necessary to pull it down, to make it descend to earth.

The galaxy plan shows the four zones, which are interconnected through the

'Crown', the second circular road around Matrimandir. From the Crown, 12 radial roads radiate outwards, as part of the infrastructure. Some of them are accompanied by a succession of high rise buildings which constitute the so-called 'Lines of Force', essential for the silhouette of the city and for the integration of all access to the city centre.

It is now up to the Aurovilians to 'pull it down', to start gradually to understand what it all means, and commence its realization. It is too early to discuss detailed matters of architecture. The plan is being defined in terms of its relationship to the environment. For example in terms of perspectives, schemes of building heights, so that there is an interesting variation between lower individual mansions, 'kasbah' types of dwellings and larger buildings that potentially exist. But, the plan is not finished. On the contrary, the city is still to be invented, everything still has to be done through the daily experience and rhythm of the Aurovilians. Apart from these Lines of Force, everything is flexible, nothing is fixed.

At present practically nothing of this plan has yet materialized, and individuals have been discouraged from building inside the city area. Can you explain this?

Individuals should not be allowed to build within the city area. That area is intended for collective dwelling units, and I am happy that more Auroville architects now start thinking in terms of blocks of houses, collective units that fit completely in the set parameters of the city. These projects provide for apartments for individuals, for family units and for collective spaces. What is impossible is a wild, uncontrolled or uncoordinated development. In the city area, we cannot allow anyone to build whatever he fancies and to occupy whatever area he likes. That would create the same fiasco as is presently shown in the outside areas of the city: wild occupation of territories, badly designed houses and so on.

A number of plans for collective dwelling units have been made, which perfectly fit within the galaxy.

They are not realized because Auroville is not yet ready to accept a certain number of conditions, and because there has, for various reasons, not been a clear policy which would encourage that type of buildings to start. In fact, we should build original, collective buildings, that could house a large number of people.

As soon as we have 30 lakhs (approx. US \$ 100,000—eds.) available, we can start doing real collective housing, in harmony with the environment, with an infrastructure that makes sense with regard to the storage and collection of water, with a cafeteria, with collective areas, and so on. It would take a year, a year and a half to construct that. Newcomers would find accommodation ready and adapted to their needs. This accommodation can be built from a common fund, to which the newcomer will donate in

advance his financial participation. That would necessitate quite an organization. And if they do not like the unit, they will be able to change it after some time, when more collective settlements have been realised. We should accept a process of rotation: people live in a house that has been made available to them by Auroville—but they do not own it. That involves a complete change of psychological attitude.

And those who have money, should pay a little extra so that those who have not can also have a decent living space.

I believe that everyone who comes to join Auroville should know that s/he comes first to participate in the construction of a city and through that do a sadhana, and not to live a personal adventure, even if one has the financial means for that. It is absolutely necessary that the Aurovilians liberate themselves from their pre-conceived ideas of cities in general and stop projecting their mistrust on the Galaxy. It is time to understand that Auroville should be experimental, and that idea should be supported and promoted. The fact that one arrives in Auroville and that one insists on having one's own individual house shows that the information on the inner and outer aspects of the city has not been given.

Many people take responsibility for building their own houses, not for the joy of it but because of economic necessity. They are not able to pay the architectural fees, nor the fees of the contractor.

That is true, it is a problem that has to be analysed. I do not want to build a city for the rich, but one for everybody. Our difficulty nowadays is how to construct dwelling units without money being available. We have to invent solutions. But going collective also implies that an incredible amount of energy will be saved. Imagine the enormous efforts and frustration of all those 'do-it-yourself enthusiasts', who normally spend more than a year building their house and then break down and who cannot be of any use to Auroville during all that time!

In an open letter to the Auroville Working Committee you wrote, "It is time to know if the Auroville of today still recognises Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's teaching, her guidelines and the town as forming a totality of a vision to be realised, or whether it gives itself the right to amend this vision". Do you explain the non-realisation of the Galaxy plan inspired by Mother as a result of the "lack of spiritual life" some people claim to witness in Auroville?

Roger: I cannot judge if there is or if there is not spiritual life in Auroville, as spiritual life can be expressed in ways which seem to be the very contradiction of it. For me, spirituality is an engagement that encompasses my life, a relation, a bond with Mother, in particular with what She has asked me to do for Auroville. I have observed that many in Auroville believe that spirituality means to be free to do whatever one wants, and doubtless there is some truth in this. But I cannot escape the impression that dedication in Auroville has been blurred over, that many have partly abandoned what Mother has said, or are not applying it in their daily life. For example, when I see the youth of Auroville, which is to a certain extent comparable to the youth of Europe and the USA, I can only say that we have not fulfilled our job. We have not understood, nor expressed the hope that Mother has given us. Our schools are still the same type as those elsewhere, not schools

that have replaced something old. Does Auroville understand what Mother meant when she gave the names of 'Last School', 'After School' and 'No School'? In the 24 years of Auroville's existence a lot of progress has been made, but I do not believe there has been much on these experimental levels.

If you apply Auroville's Charter to the daily life of Aurovilians, you wonder what has happened with the Charter. Much of Auroville's suffering since its conception has been caused, I would say, by us not understanding what Mother has said in the Charter. How to compare the first line of the Charter, "Auroville belongs to nobody in particular, but to humanity as a whole", with the occupation of territory by an individual? How to translate into the reality of daily life, "To be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness"?

Auroville is obviously an incredible experiment. It is a cauldron in which the chaos, the difficulties, the individual's impossibilities, the egos, the different cultures, the inability to see wider, the attitudes of pettiness, the fears and so on, are daily crushed to give birth to something new. Auroville develops itself with all the problems of a complex human laboratory. Auroville is in full bloom, impossible to explain or justify mentally. All that confirms to me that Auroville is 'on the way', and that gives me confidence in its future.

Interview by Carel, 11-3-1992.

How To Receive Auroville Today

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

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"The plan is not finished. On the contrary, the city is still to be invented, everything still has to be done through the daily experience and rhythm of the Aurovilians. Apart from the Lines of Force, everything is flexible, nothing is fixed."

The farm that most Aurovilians have never seen...

MAKING ANNAPURNA HAPPEN

In our February issue (#37), we gave a general overview on farming in Auroville ('Auroville Farming: a Downhill Business'). On this page, Bill takes a specific look at Annapurna—a farm about 10 kms from Auroville that most Aurovilians have never seen. In July, 1989 (issue # 8) Annapurna was introduced with the question, 'Granary of Auroville'?

"When you see rusty steel peacocks on the fence, turn to the right". This is the crucial part of the directions to find Annapurna which is about as far as Pondicherry from Auroville, but in another direction. The peacock is the emblem of the "Golden Paper Company", part of the industrial estate across the road from Annapurna. The effluent from the factory drains directly into Annapurna. "This is still to be looked into," remarked Bernard, who together with Tomas and Andre, is attempting sustainable agriculture on 20 of the 135 acres of land that had badly degenerated. The soil, which is totally different from that of the rest of Auroville, has great potential for certain crops like rice. However, during the monsoon rains, it is almost a hopeless swamp; and in the dry season, the clay ground cracks open so wide you have to watch where you walk or you step into a crack and fall down — like I did.

Annapurna is full of surprises. Besides rice, you will find sorghum, oats, saffola, chickpeas and even ducks. General organic farming methods are blended with the specific techniques of Fukuoka (the famous Japanese natural farmer who wrote *One Straw Revolution* and who visited here) as well as the planting among crops of perennial and seasonal groundcovers as advocated by the Dutch tropical specialist Van der Meulen

When I arrived during Auroville's birthday week, Bernard was showing the place to Caroline and Martin from Auroville International U.K. Blocking the way were some of Matrimandir's temporary support pillars that were being cut by Andre for recycling into check dams and a base for the

Fukuoka
(next to Bernard on
the far right) visit-
ing Annapurna
in 1988



Photo Vidyavrata

windmill. We looked at a dry catchment pond (with an island for ducks) where the silt was being dug out to create more capacity for the next season and to provide humus for the fields. Bernard explained that now they could catch enough of the enormous surface runoff to irrigate the rice. He also noted how bad the water situation had become due to the drop in the water table. In 1975, the water level was at three meters and could be continually pumped all day without noticeable effect. Now it is at 24 meters and a little pumping drops it to 40 meters. Subsequently they have had to drill a deep bore well.

We admired the beautiful flowers of the thistle, "Saffola", whose seed makes the well known cooking oil. With this seed and a less known but more valuable "black" oil, Bernard and Tomas hope to someday meet the cooking oil requirement of Auroville. They are sure that Aurovilians are ready to eat the oats, which looked very healthy in their test plot. The colourful grain 'amaranth', also looked very promising as well as some huge corn once grown by native Americans. Giant

sunflowers with a two and a half kilo head of seeds are yet another food and oil to be tried.

Our discussions continued over lunch where 'raskadam' rice was served. This soft, nutty-flavored variety is one of the best of the many varieties they have experimented with over the last two years. At one time, South India had a different rice for nearly every health, nutritional and religious need; there are even scented varieties. However, many of these are being lost as a result of hybrid monoculture. Biologists speak of the phenomenon as "erosion of the gene pool."

As we continued lunch, Tomas emphasized the need for proper infrastructure to make food growing feasible. Only recently have they been able to build a decent storeroom. Now they have to re-do the temporary threshing floor. More people are also needed to share the work. He mentioned that a 30-acre and another 5-acre plot are available for someone to take up but that they had no time to even consider these areas. A few more people plus a phased input of about ten lakhs is all that is necessary to make it that

'Auroville granary' that the Mother expected it to become.

At the end of lunch, Bernard said laughingly: "Doesn't anybody read Sri Aurobindo anymore? He spoke of the importance of agriculture as the sustaining basis of a spiritual community, and the Mother always started vegetable and flower gardens wherever she went." He feels that small gardens in communities could take care of the need for fresh fruit and vegetables—like Thomas and Dietra are doing in Gratitude. Annapurna could eventually supply the whole community with grains, pulses and oils. Actually 'Annapurna' is Sanskrit for 'abundance of nourishment'.

As I went out munching a tomatillo—it's an unusual fruit sweeter and more crunchy than a tomato—I realized that these three farmers on this Auroville frontier are trying to make our future not only possible but prosperous. The message is clear: "Make it happen".

Bill

FOOD FOR THOUGHT...

Water Prudent Rices

They used to be called 'dryland rices', but as water scarcity increases worldwide they have now come to be elegantly known as 'WPR's. Annapurna has twenty varieties collected from Indian farmers over the last few years. They are in red and white, with various tastes but all very high in nutritional value. After 25 years, Auroville has failed so far to provide its own basic staple food—rice.

Water Gun

This recent Auroville invention could be an irrigation boon. More efficient than sprinklers or drip irrigation, it "shoots" 3/4 acre with a heavy mist from a non-clogging nozzle. Water that is rain harvested or from ponds that are muddy can be easily utilized. It could ensure good yields from drylands at low cost.

Black Cotton Soil

The soil of Annapurna is of this type rather than the red laterite found on of the Auroville plateau. It is called cotton soil because it's good for growing cotton, but more important for us is its suitability for rice and millets. However, in Annapurna, because it lay fallow for many years, it was badly degraded and has an alkaline condition as well as areas of salinity. A regenerative process, requiring at least three years is in process.

Soil Regeneration

Reclaiming Annapurna's soil requires a good soil cover of plants during the six dry summer months. This is done by intercropping with deep-rooted leguminous plants that continue after the harvest. For example, there's a creeper that climbs up the two or three meter high sorghum stalks and eventually collapses into a green cover. Likewise minor millets (like our

Alternative Methods of Rice Culture

famous 'varagu' or 'ragi') are planted with pigeon peas (what everybody here calls 'dhal') to do the same thing. The straw from the harvest can also be added to contribute to the soil building process.

Usually rice is transplanted into flooded fields that have been finely plowed into a mud pool. This demands a lot of water and energy. A method being experimented with in Annapurna is to have small trenches at 2 to 4 m intervals. Green manure and grasses are grown from July to September. Then they are cut and left on the field as mulch. Rice is transplanted into the mulch. The mulch hinders evaporation from the beds between the trenches and prevents weeds from growing. The rice grows, the mulch decomposes and when the rice is removed, weeds and grasses return to be recycled into the soil building process. Seeds can also be sown directly in the mulch. The rice straw is also returned to the field speeding up the fertility and regeneration.

Self Sufficiency

Given Auroville's rate of agricultural production over the last 25 years, it will take 225 years to achieve self-sufficiency in rice, dhal and bananas if the population remains at 800!

Auroville produces forty bags of rice per year but needs four hundred to meet the basic need of the community. There are people who have ten lakhs to put into their houses, but Auroville doesn't seem to have ten lakhs to invest in 150 acres of it's agricultural land for food.

□

CHANDIGARH - AUROVILLE: A STRIKING SIMILARITY

François Gautier arrived in Auroville in 1969 when he was nineteen years old. He spent seven years in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram working in an Ashram-garden and then went back to Auroville in 1977. He now teaches sports in the Kindergarten and works as a journalist for the *Journal de Geneva*, *Le Nouvel Observateur* and several other French and Indian newspapers.

While reporting on Punjab during the recent elections there, he passed by Chandigarh, 'City of the Future', capital 'extraordinaire' built by the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier, symbol of a fierce battle between Sikhs and Hindus (Chandigarh is both the capital of Haryana and Punjab). It was the logical conclusion of his travels.

Ah, Chandigarh! After the dust, the ugliness, the tension of Punjab's other cities, such a relief, so much tranquillity, peace, serenity: large avenues bordered by beautiful trees, everywhere parks, flowers, greenness; there, a young girl riding a moped without a veil, a rare sight, in a state where the militants have forced women to wear at all times the

'chuni' (punjabi scarf) on their heads; further on, seated on a bench, a Sikh and a Hindu are laughing together, another rare sight in today's Punjab, where 20.000 human beings have died a violent death since 1985...

Mr Vohra is the chief Architect of Chandigarh and one of the foremost disciples of

Le Corbusier, having worked with him for six years. He tells us the amazing story of Chandigarh. "In 1951, Pandit Nehru was looking for a capital for what was called at that time 'the greater Punjab' and which included Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab (the actual state of Punjab was born out of the Sikhs) will to have a state where they would be in the majority). After failing to do so, he decided to build a new city, which he said "will be free from the bonds of the past".

A site was found on a deserted plateau, at the extreme limit of the present Punjab and several world renowned architects were contacted. All but one were put off by the extreme difficulties of working in India: "Le Corbusier accepted to build Chandigarh, because he had always yearned to create a new city where he could put into practice all his ideas for a revolutionary 'avant-garde' urban concept, gathered during a life-time of experience", says Vohra. (Le Corbusier was already in his late sixties.) The French architect set to work, and in 1965, the first phase of Chandigarh was finished. Two years later, Le Corbusier died...

I was listening absentmindedly, thinking about all the atrocities I had witnessed in Punjab, deciding upon the broad lines of my articles, for which the deadline was fast approaching. Yet, as Vohra kept explaining the concept of Chandigarh, a strange feeling of *déjà vu* was felt, a sort of small bell was frantically ringing in a corner of my mind: "Here is the cultural zone", Mr Vohra was commenting, pointing at a giant map of Chandigarh with a ruler. "On the right, you will find the industrial zone; then all around and through, you have the green belt; and here you can see the Secretariat with its administrative buildings and, just below, the residential zones"...

Then suddenly, it was like an intuitive flash, like an instant illumination: "Was it HERE that Roger Anger found the base for the inspiration of Auroville? Is Le Corbusier the architectural mentor of Roger, the source of his fascination for using concrete? Was the architectural concept of Auroville borrowed from Chandigarh? Roger developed it, improved it, according to the Mother's instructions and his own creativity. But is it possible that the great lines of Auroville were born in Chandigarh?"

Then suddenly another flash of inspiration. I put a question to Mr Vohra: "Did Le Corbusier live permanently in Chandigarh, while building the city?" "No", answers the chief architect, "he came here for only two months a year; but his cousin, Mr Janneret, an architect himself, stayed here so as to put into practice the Master's concepts".

Then I understood, too, why Roger has always thought in the past 25 years that he could build Auroville by being here for only a few weeks a year. If Le Corbusier did it, why not him! Maybe Le Corbusier even believed that it was not good for an architect to identify himself totally with his city; perhaps too, he asserted that a builder must consecrate himself to other projects elsewhere... But can 'Aurofuture' play the role of Janneret, Le Corbusier's cousin, in Auroville?

What is certain is that, from an ecological point of view, Le Corbusier was much ahead of his time. He was one of the first who understood that greenness is the lungs and the lifeline of a city and that one has to concentrate all industries in a single zone,

with strict regulations. Thus Chandigarh is the first ecological city in the world and it is in this that it is revolutionary.

But for the rest, unfortunately, Chandigarh is a monstrous failure. Concrete ages badly in India, and Chandigarh, futuristic and avant-garde as it may be, remains a city made up completely of cement: heat, humidity and the monsoons have taken their toll and polyester, a revolutionary material for its time which was extensively used, has totally lost its looks. The famous system of 'louvres', shutters of all sizes, which are supposed to let fresh air in while keeping the sun out, never really worked; and most of them are now hanging rusted on their hinges. This system was used by Roger in all the original houses of Auromodel and the practical result was not very brilliant, as the Auromodellians can testify! One hopes that the experience will not be renewed in Auroville.

The road system of Chandigarh, which Le Corbusier had called 'vectors', was also ahead of its time as it tended to decentralize traffic. But today it is outdated: there are too many cars and too much pollution (however, Le Corbusier did think about including cycle paths in Chandigarh, which we are only starting to do now).

So what then? Are we going to repeat the same mistakes of Chandigarh? Are we going to redo all over again a concrete city, unadapted to the Indian climate and conditions? Are we going to reenact the same inanities done all over the world? How far is Roger willing to adapt his craft to the new environmental awareness of Auroville, which is not the same as it was in 1968? And is he prepared to listen to all points of view as expressed in the community? Roger never really lived in Auroville, monsoon after monsoon, summer after summer, undergoing day after day the small bothers which make life here sometimes difficult, but which would have allowed him to improve practically his architectural creations, and understand too, the Aurovillians and their aspirations.

I feel however, that Roger has his place in the building of Auroville. There is no doubt that the Mother utilized him as Her instrument, at least from an architectural point of view. Of all the Auroville architects, Roger, in spite of whatever is said, has the best aesthetic vision, the one nearest to an ideal future. Let's be fair.

Roger, is it not time for you to cut your ties with whatever binds you over there, to come to us and share our joys and our problems, and the tension of living permanently under this pressure of transformation that the Mother constantly exerts upon us in Auroville and which makes life sometimes so difficult, but also often so wonderful?

You would be here permanently to defend your ideas, to put them into practice and to assimilate in your creations the parameters of life in Auroville and its different pulls and opinions, which are only an expression of the same hidden unity.

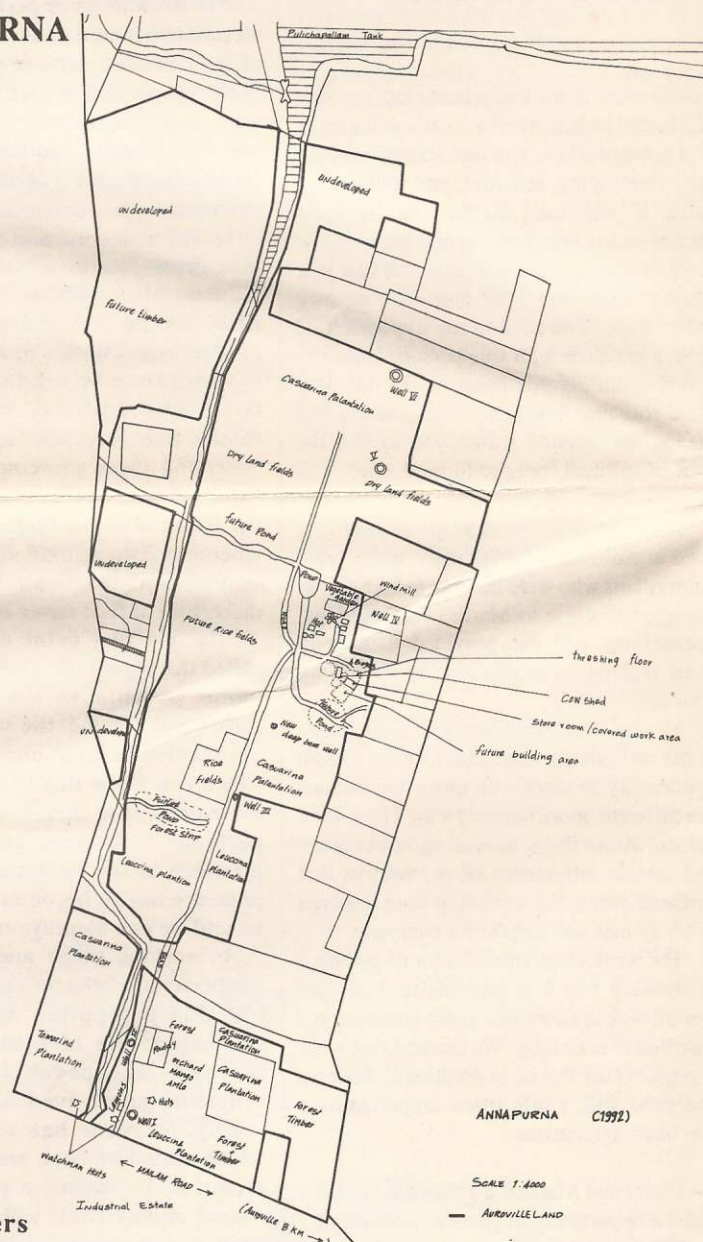
Thus, you will accomplish the destiny of your life, in all its fullness, without any bitterness, arrogance, or sadness, which for all of us are but the visible signs of our own secret sense of failure—and not the failure of Auroville and Aurovillians, as we would sometimes like to believe.

Because, the simple truth is that, like all of us, it is more YOU who needs Auroville, than Auroville which needs you...

FRANÇOIS GA.

(continued from previous page)

ANNAPURNA



The Pioneers

Annapurna is presently managed by three Aurovillians:

Tomas was the first one to go to Annapurna in 1986. He is a qualified farmer who majored in horticulture in Holland. He came to Auroville through an agricultural project that he undertook in Bengal in 1983.

Bernard came first to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1975 from a farming background in Belgium. He did construction work at Matrimandir and then took over La Ferme near Aspiration in 1978. Since then, in several communities, he has dedicated himself to researching and promoting promising varieties of indigenous grains and methods of organic cultivation. In 1988 he joined Tomas in Annapurna.

André came to Auroville in 1981 and worked continuously at Matrimandir until he joined the team in Annapurna in 1989. He was a student of agriculture in Holland but dropped it because of the agro-business orientation. He is also a builder of experimental bicycles.

Working on Relationships

You can follow plenty of workshops in Auroville. There are regular courses in Hatha Yoga, T'ai Chi, dance, horseback riding, music, Reiki, languages... you name it. But a workshop of the kind and quality that was offered during the weekend starting the 21st February is a little more rare.

The leaders of the workshop were Marlies and Dieter, a Swiss-German couple who came to stay in Auroville for a few months and who are using Psychosynthesis (see box) as a tool for personal growth.

When Dieter and Marlies arrived in Auroville after having spent five months in the Findhorn community in Scotland, they found it at first difficult to relate to the Aurovilians they happened to meet. "We thought, 'What's going on here? They don't look into each other's eyes, they don't smile. They are just busy most of the time.'"

They quickly saw that Aurovilians are quite clear about their spiritual goals, but that they need to work more on their attitudes.

"We experienced that there was a longing to share and to open up."

Marlies: "It seems as if people here have their own package of problems in their backpack, and they try to deal with them on their own. If people have a problem, and if they only turn it around mentally, they most likely will not be very successful in solving it. It needs to be approached from a different angle than their own. Through the support of another person who stays detached there are greater chances to work it out and arrive at a satisfying solution."

There were two weekend workshops. Each time, 20 people turned up in the yoga-hall in Verité, willing to take the plunge into a three-day workshop on 'relationships' and see where they would arrive at the end of it. We made contact with each other through 'warming-up' games ('warming-up' might be replaced by a more appropriate term here in tropical Tamil Nadu) and we were asked



Psychosynthesis workshop at the Verité Yoga Hall—a heart-warming experience...

to sit quietly, close our eyes and relax, and visualize certain images or a particular incident that happened to us in our lives. We were then asked to talk about it with another person in the group. These exercises were designed to make us aware of set behavioural patterns we might have acquired in the past. Once aware, we can let go of them so that we can grow into a more harmonious 'here-and-now' relationship with everyone around us and with ourselves.

How did the Aurovilians react to the workshops?

Marlies: "I was very astonished that the workshops filled up so quickly—the first one in a few days. We experienced that there was a longing to share and to open up. During the workshop I saw so much beauty in the people and so much glow—I was inspired and thought, 'Oh, if these people would share more with one another, their everyday life could be a lot more joyful and meaningful.' It seemed that the people just needed to have a structure to allow them, in very small steps, to start to open up. And this is actually what happened in the workshops."

If people in Auroville do not deal with their emotions adequately, what is the reason for this?

For Marlies it has to do with the gap between how people actually are and what they want to become. "The joy of being together on a path seems to be missing here. You all have a common goal and you could enjoy going together towards it. I think it's

so important to see that it is not just a matter of, 'I need to become that'—it's a matter of first accepting how you are, accepting yourself, developing self-love and self-acceptance. If you really do that, this in itself creates enough momentum and joy to move forward on your spiritual path. But first you have to clean out your house—your own inner house. You need to say to yourself, 'I have a problem with this person, I need to sort that out'. If you proceed like this, you clear your emotions, empower yourself and unclog the channel within you to free the flow of spiritual energies through you."

It seems these workshops answered a need in Auroville. Additionally, quite a few Aurovilians who were hesitant to take part in a workshop came to Marlies for individual counselling, and she provided them with some techniques to continue to work with their problems.

Most of the Aurovilians who participated in the workshops were glad to have had an opportunity to meet with other Aurovilians in a different, more intimate way. There were veteran Aurovilians as well as newcomers, and certain differences of perspective that surfaced during the workshop were resolved in a way that was helpful for everyone.

The workshops carried a lot of potential in showing that it is possible to deal with emotions or tensions in a group situation in a way that is enriching. We learned that what is required for this is, in addition to honesty and good will, a safe space supported by a few basic agreements.

Dieter and Marlies are both glad to have had the opportunity to give the workshops:

"These workshops were definitely an experience for us that we cherish and we are very grateful for the opportunity that was provided for us to get to know Auroville and the people this way, because it opened a door for us and after the door was opened there was a whole new universe!"

Annemarie and Tineke

Note: For those who are interested in the concept of Psychosynthesis, Dieter and Marlies recommend Piero Ferrucci's book, What We May Be, which offers a variety of different exercises and is available in various translations.

♥
"The focus of Roberto Assagioli's system of Psychosynthesis, as its name implies, is not analysis, but a synthesis of the various conflicting parts of the personality—called sub-personalities—by bringing them to function more and more in harmony with one another and in subordination to what is regarded as the core of the personality, namely, the Self. Though Psychosynthesis is avowedly anti-analytical, its methods, like those of the analytical and non-analytical systems, lead to a greater awareness of aspects of personality of which an individual is largely unconscious. Thus by means of various techniques, such as visualisation, guided imagery, etc., Psychosynthesis seeks to make a person aware of the multiple parts which make up the personality with a view to enabling the person to synthesize and harmonize them.

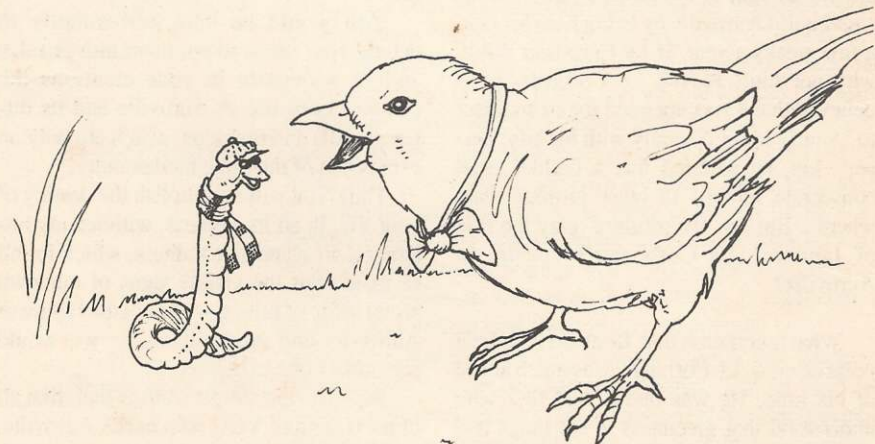
From: A. S. Dalal—Psychology, Mental Health and Yoga, p. 54-55.

♥
"To work for your perfection, the first step is to become conscious of yourself, of the different parts of your being and their respective activities. You must learn to distinguish these different parts one from another, so that you may become clearly aware of the origin of the movements that occur in you, the many impulses, reactions and conflicting wills that drive you to action. It is an assiduous study which demands much perseverance and sincerity. For man's nature, especially his mental nature, has a spontaneous tendency to give a favourable explanation for everything he thinks, feels, says and does. It is only by observing these movements with great care, by bringing them, as it were, before the tribunal of our highest ideal, with a sincere will to submit to its judgment, that we can hope to form in ourselves a discernment that never errs. . . .

The starting point is what can be called the psychic discipline. We give the name 'psychic' to the psychological centre of our being, the seat within us of the highest truth of our existence, that which can know this truth and set it in movement. It is therefore of capital importance to become conscious of its presence in us, to concentrate on this presence until it becomes a living fact for us and we can identify ourselves with it.

In various times and places many methods have been prescribed for attaining this perception and ultimately achieving this identification. Some methods are psychological, some religious, some even mechanical. In reality, everyone has to find the one which suits him best, and if one has an ardent and steadfast aspiration, a persistent and dynamic will, one is sure to meet, in one way or another—outwardly through reading and study, inwardly through concentration, meditation, revelation and experience—the help one needs to reach the goal. Only one thing is absolutely indispensable: the will to discover and to realise. This discovery and realisation should be the primary preoccupation of our being, the pearl of great price which we must acquire at any cost. Whatever you do, whatever your occupations and activities, the will to find the truth of your being and to unite with it must be always living and present behind all that you do, all that you feel, all that you think."

The Mother, 'The Science of Living' in *On Education*, p. 3.



Drawing by Peyo

YOUTH COUNCIL

The month of March saw the birth of the Auroville Youth Council (AYC). About sixteen young Aurovilians under 25 years of age meet regularly every week and publish notes of their meetings in the *Auroville News*. Their main objectives are education, entertainment and activities (to be further defined) and environment—local and international.

They wish to see the activities they will undertake as an opportunity to come together and have fun while working. They found a temporary office and a meeting place at Kottakarai Guest-house. An Auroville Youth Centre is planned.

TAKE-OVER OF ASSETS

From the 1st April, the Auroville Foundation has taken over all the assets held in custody by the Central Government since 1980, when the Auroville Foundation Act came into force. The Auroville Foundation needs to take stock of all these assets, for which the Secretary intends to start a number of registers. The Working Committee has asked the Development Group to help preparing the registers under various headings which will include Residential Houses; Public Buildings; Farms, Orchards, Afforestations areas etc.; Commercial Units; and Guest-houses. The question concerning the position of the commercial units such as Aurélec, Auromodèle Atelier and Maroma, which have expressed their need to operate under separate legal bodies, is still not resolved but work is being done by the Secretary to find suitable arrangements.

NATIONAL HIGHWAY TO PASS CLOSE TO AUROVILLE

The Government has begun building a 30-metre wide national highway along the coast which will link Madras with Kanyakumari, at the southernmost tip of India. A stretch of the future road north of Auroville has already been cleared and age-old trees are being rapidly cut down. Concern

has been expressed in Auroville that the road may be an ecological disaster and a disturbance to the Auroville region, and steps are being taken by Aurovilians to contact authorities and environmental organizations such as INTACH to try and save special areas along the coast. A list of these areas which includes Auroville is in preparation. More about this topic in the next issue.

'AFFIRMATION OF THE FUTURE'

Anu and Joy presented us with their new performance on March 21. Our expectations were high after we saw them dance one and a half years ago. Anu, trained in Bharat Natyam, and Joy, who took classes in Indian and Western dance, impressed us with their beautifully coordinated movements. They were accompanied by Stefano on the saxophone and Holger on the violin, who also composed the music and who has brought an extra dimension to the performing arts in Auroville. Pierre Legrand's stage-sets were a powerful element in this performance through their simplicity. Let us hope that a larger audience will get a chance to see this great performance and experience what Auroville has to offer culturally.

AV-BC RECEIVES AWARD

The Auroville Building Centre (AV-BC) has just received a certificate stating that it has been granted the 'Hassan Fathy International Award for Architecture for the Poor', 1992. It is for the Auroville Information and Reception Centre designed by Suhasini, which has been recently built using pressed-earth block technology in an innovative and cost-effective way. Hassan Fathy (1900-1989) was a renowned Egyptian architect and author of *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt*.

SKIN REFERENDUM

In early March, Roger Anger informed the community that he favours the ferro-cement option for the Matrimandir skin. At a

subsequent meeting, a number of Aurovilians called for a 'referendum' to gauge the feelings of the community at large. Questionnaires containing a list of different skin options were distributed to all Aurovilians on the master list. Of the 163 questionnaires returned, 43 favoured glass without disks, 41 were for glass with disks and 18 were for ferro-cement and disks. Many Aurovilians did not participate in this process as they felt it was inappropriate. Others who returned the questionnaire cast no 'vote' but expressed a wish that the process of decision-making at Matrimandir be more open and harmonious. The result of the 'referendum' is as yet inconclusive, and the work on erecting the ferro-cement skin continues... □



Let's just do it!

Recycling our Future

On a pleasant afternoon right after the monsoon I was riding my bicycle down the Matrimandir road, when in the distance a large red cloud began rising into the sky. "Oh, no, not again," was the thought that ran through my mind. As it approached, I could see that it was a four-wheeled monster breathing black smoke, and one of the most dreaded sort—a lorry. When it was about a hundred metres away, it actually started to come to my side of the road, with the driver smiling manically all the way. At the very last moment, I plunged bicycle and self off the road, and there I sat choking on all the dust that it so graciously left behind.

As Auroville is growing, so are its problems, and one of them is that there is too much and too many different types of traffic on its very narrow and often unpaved roads. The growing number of construction sites invites lorries, and during the cool season, the number of visitors in taxis is at an all-time high. In fact, during this season Auroville's roads are downright dangerous.

Choking in the dust, on my arse by the side of the road once again, was what it took for me to say 'ENOUGH'. Following through Auroville, I found that there were a large number of people who felt the same. A clandestine meeting was arranged in a secluded hut deep in the green belt. After the venting of much frustration it was decided that a beautiful tree-lined network of bicycle paths was needed for Auroville. For the safety of our children as well as

the adults, this should be a separate system from that of the existing roads wherever possible. We talked about which working group would handle it, and all present came to the same conclusion—that if we appealed to the existing working groups, we could be talking about this for a very long time. After a short silence, one lady pounded her fist on the table and said, "Let's just do it." Many a fist followed hers and that became the battle cry.

Work meetings (as opposed to talk meetings) happened with people from different communities who had to decide where they wanted the bicycle paths to be. Linking up the proposals gave us a map of the system which we would like to create. The next step was to find out what we could do now, and what in the long term. There are questions to be answered such as, How to cross the canyons? How to keep mopeds and motorcycles off the paths? How much land has to be purchased? How to make paths that will hold up under heavy monsoons? How wide should they be? What types of trees should be planted?

We will ask our friends in the Auroville International centres around the world for information about the construction of bicycle paths and the names of organizations that could assist us both with information and financial support. We will put together a detailed project supporting our dreams with facts and figures in order that we may send it to outside agencies for funding.

In the meantime, we will be scraping sand off the paths, filling in the holes with rubble, and trying to build a single culvert over a canyon in Kottakarai. We are asking concerned Aurovilians to take up an active responsibility for making this project succeed.

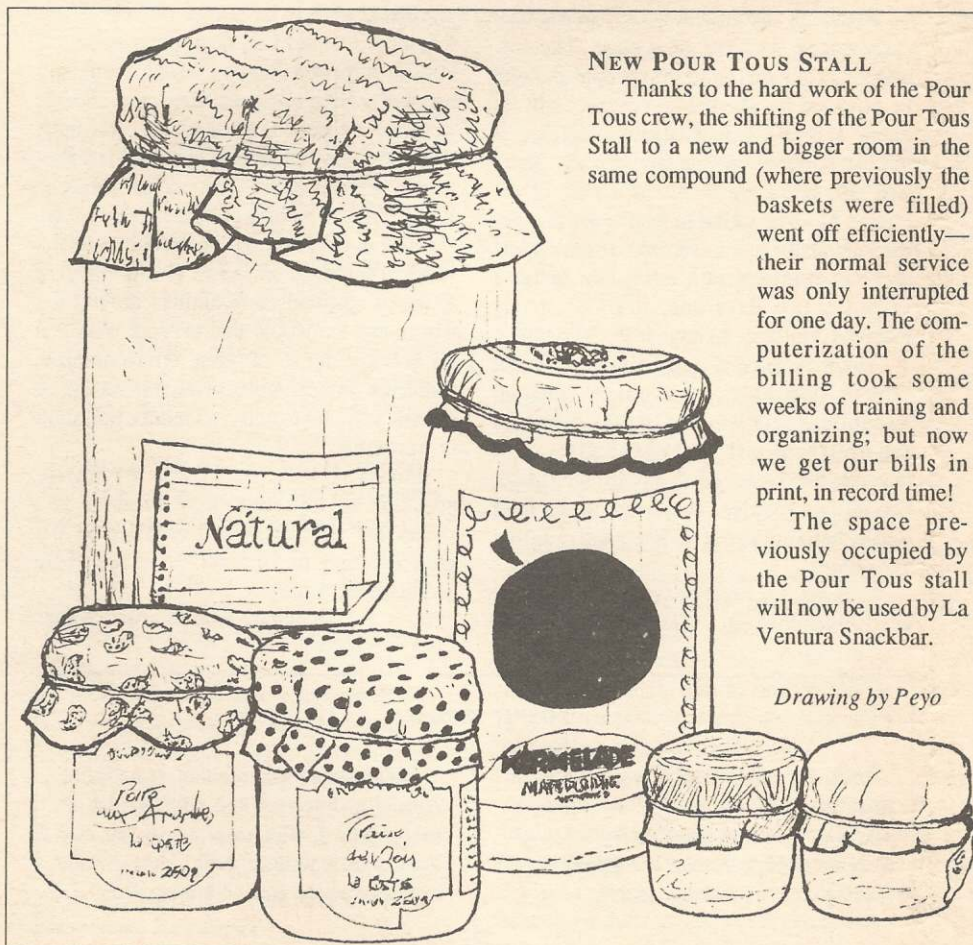
Francis

NEW POUR TOUS STALL

Thanks to the hard work of the Pour Tous crew, the shifting of the Pour Tous Stall to a new and bigger room in the same compound (where previously the baskets were filled) went off efficiently—their normal service was only interrupted for one day. The computerization of the billing took some weeks of training and organizing; but now we get our bills in print, in record time!

The space previously occupied by the Pour Tous stall will now be used by La Ventura Snackbar.

Drawing by Peyo

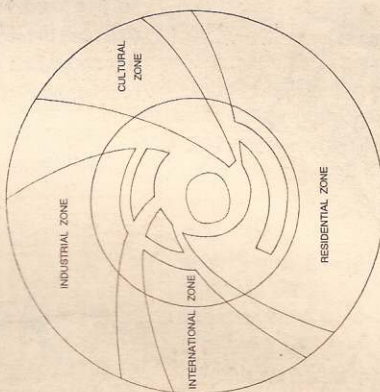


AUROVILLE TODAY

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

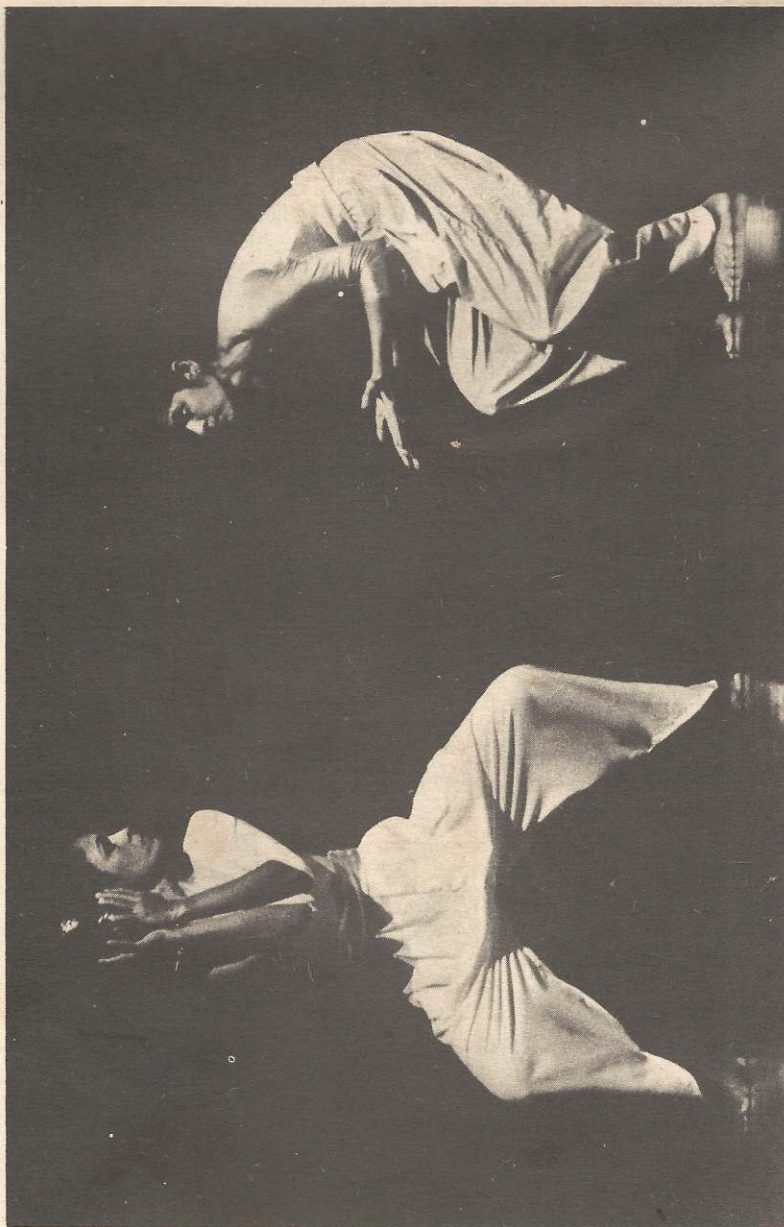
By Airmail
Bookpost

ANNE AND MICHAEL
GRACE
AUROVILLE



May 1992 - Number Forty

In this issue: Townplanning, Annapurna, Psychosynthesis

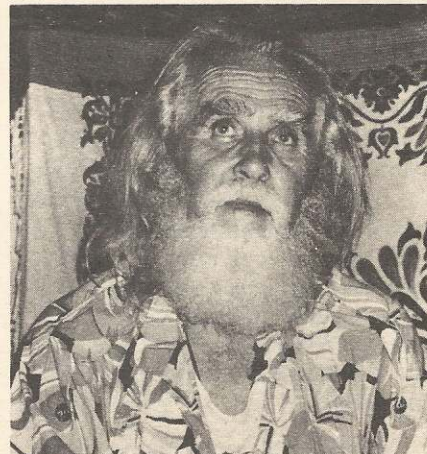


Anu and Joy dancing in 'Affirmation of the Future' (see also page 7)

Photo: Sven

VITAPOLIS: Spiritual City of the Future?

Those who attended the bonfire on Auroville's 24th birthday may have seen a bearded, patriarchal figure pacing the edge of the amphitheatre. This was the same Oles Berdnik who, a few days earlier in the "Auroville News", had communicated fraternal greetings to his Aurovilian brothers and sisters from the Ukrainian Spiritual Republic. But who is Oles Berdnik? And what is the Ukrainian Spiritual Republic?



Oles Berdnik—founder of the Ukrainian Spiritual Republic...

OLEs: "I was born many years ago in the Ukraine. I became a writer and have, in fact, written about 60 books, mainly science and social fiction. About twenty years ago, I had a contact with an inner guru who gave me the idea of individual and collective transformation. On the basis of this, I wrote a book called "Starfighter" about a man who decided to physically transform himself through higher guidance. He managed to attain to a higher level of being and consciousness, and from there he began working to transform humanity as a whole.

However, the government did not like my book. They burnt all copies of it—along with all my other books—and put me in prison for 6 years for 'anti-state activities'. It was while I was in prison that I first heard about and read Sri Aurobindo, and I immediately realized that he was writing about the same problem of transformation. I at once became his devotee.

When, at the beginning of perestroika, I was released from prison, I and some friends decided to set up a new spiritual organization based on the ideas of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. We called it "The Ukrainian Spiritual Republic". We acquired some land close to the Dnieper River on a site where, many years before, Russian princes had united and made a famous vow of brotherhood. On the central site, which is a 5 kilometre crater formed by the impact of a meteorite, we plan to build the city "Vitapolis". Near it will be a satellite town, and four similar towns are planned near the borders of the Ukraine. The purpose of "Vitapolis" is to be a laboratory for experiments in transformation, not only for individuals, but also for the nation as a whole.

Although the project is only in the very early stages, we have great plans. The city, which is planned for 10,000 people and will be powered by alternative energy, will include schools, administrative offices, a marina, museums and an observatory. There will also be in the middle a temple of the Divine Mother, a kind of Matrimandir, with a crystal inside. It's incredible! I didn't know about your crystal in Matrimandir before I visited a few days ago, but I'd already received guidance to have it in "Vitapolis"!

There is already much interest in our project. We have a Ukrainian Spiritual Republic Society with 10,000 members drawn from all walks of life, and businessmen have already contributed about two million roubles. They want to see their money benefitting our children and uplifting the nation.

You see, for seventy years, spiritual life was forbidden in our country. But our people

have a deep well of spirituality, and many spiritual teachings from India and other countries were printed and circulated secretly during this period. This is why Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are well known here. Now that our old power structures have been destroyed, the spiritual aspiration of the people has arisen very strongly again, and many are looking for new ways and spiritual paths. The general idea of transformation is well-understood here, although Mother's work of cellular transformation was something quite new to us. Through our experiments at "Vitapolis", and through our links with other spiritual communities around the world, we would like to give the idea of transformation a new force so that the great Banyan tree that is Sri Aurobindo can put down new roots in other parts of the world.

The most important need today is for the creation of a spiritual fraternity of all nations. The main quality of Slavonic spiritual experience is brotherhood, so we can bring much to the achievement of this ideal. Today, at the highest, supramental level, there is much help and guidance available to us to achieve this spiritual unity. One can see this even in the miraculous events of last August in Russia, which ended with the destruction of the all-powerful KGB.

Specifically, I'm visiting Auroville now to formalise relations between our two communities, and to see how we can work together. I've met very devoted people here, but I'm surprised that you've achieved comparatively little on a practical level after 24 years of existence. Perhaps we can help. When the new Ukrainian currency is established, we can assist with certain projects. We'd like to build a cultural centre of the Ukraine in your International Zone, an international information centre to link together different spiritual communities around the world, and we would like to work with you on solving some of your environmental problems. For example, in the purchasing of electric vehicles to help you reduce pollution in Auroville.

Finally, I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to my Aurovilian brothers and sisters for all that you're creating in the glorious land of Bharata. May the Holy Mother bless you!"

From an interview with Alan

To our readers

Thank you...to all of you who have re-subscribed, and particularly those of you who have sent contributory subscriptions or larger donations. We also enjoyed reading your appreciative letters.

We apologise...for the errors in the Auroville International address list on the yellow leaflet inserted in our last issue. Please replace it with the new one in this issue for your reference. Eds.