

AUROVILLE TODAY

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PHOTO RENO

YOUNG AUROVILIANS RETURN

IN THE EDITORIAL of the very first AUROVILLE TODAY (November, 1988) we wrote about wanting "to open a window upon the diverse activities and dreams that are Auroville today". Hopefully, in some respects we have succeeded. But at least one important component of the Auroville experience has largely eluded our lens—the experience and preoccupations of young Aurovilians. It's not that we haven't tried. In AUROVILLE TODAY No. 18 we touched upon education and youth, but since then we've never known quite how to come at the issue.

This summer, however, a number of young Aurovilians, who are studying or working in the West, came back to Auroville for a brief visit and AUROVILLE TODAY took the opportunity to ask them to write or talk to us about their experiences. What does it mean to be brought up in Auroville and then have to 'make it' in the West? Have they been changed by the experience? How does Auroville appear to them now? And is it still part of their future? We also talked to young Aurovilians who have come back "to stay"; and we glance at a new project called the 'Youth Camp'. All of which doesn't mean that we think we've covered the 'youth scene' in Auroville. We've only focussed upon a particular group with particular experiences. But, hopefully, we've come a little closer to understanding the concerns of some of those who, in the not too distant future, may be playing a crucial role in the development of Auroville.

In this issue we also offer a sampling of that controversial publication, the *Auroville News*, the weekly update on the good, the bad and the ugly, which recently celebrated its 500th issue. Is it as bad as some people make out? Should it be censored, even discontinued? Or is it an invaluable mirror of the inner and outer condition of the community as a whole? Turn to our centre pages and decide for yourself!

A Home to Return to

by AKASH KAPUR

Akash, born in India, settled and came to school in Auroville when he was eight. He left Last School two years ago at 16, and did his last two years of high school at Phillips Academy Andover in the United States. He will be going to Harvard this September, "maybe to study English Literature". Besides Auroville, his guiding influences have been *Tintin*, Tennis and Butter Chicken.

WHEN YOU leave this place, you carry with you a confused bag of emotions. There is the relief at leaving a place whose potential for your growth has apparently been used up. There is the excitement of all the new challenges and the new faces that you imagine populate the world outside these red boundaries. There is, too, the fear of those new challenges and faces; the sudden lack of faith in your ability to meet them. Then there is the guilt, born of a sense of betrayal, of walking away from a true cause. Finally, there is a distant anxiety, an almost subconscious questioning of whether these roots you are about to uproot will ever take hold again in another soil.

It is this dim awareness of Auroville's uniqueness that gradually grows into a deep

longing, a feeling that far transcends any simple yearning for home. It is more than just homesickness, and it is not simply the result of an inability to adapt to a strange world. Rather, it seemed to me, this feeling (which I find so hard to define or put clearly into words) came from a recognition of the central and defining role that Auroville was playing in my life even outside of India; it came from a realization that if I were indeed truly to grow, it was to be under the guiding influence of my years spent in Auroville.

I had wanted to title this something like, "How I became an Aurovilian when I left Auroville." But this is not about becoming an Aurovilian. There were no sudden Epiphanies, no transforming moments. This is simply about a gradual recognition, the realization that I was an Aurovilian. There is no escaping growing up in Auroville, there is no denying that my years spent in Auroville are indelibly imprinted on some sort of very essence of my being. I began to see that everything I did, everything I said, even the way I interpreted an essay in English class, came from a part of me that was inescapably and undeniably Aurovilian. In the concluding words of an essay that was supposed to explain to a complete stranger who I was: "The earth

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One of the Lost Generation

Binah came to Auroville in 1969 when she was 8 months old. She left for the USA when she was 18. AUROVILLE TODAY asked her about her life in Auroville, her views on Auroville at present and her hopes for the future. Some excerpts follow.

My first memories of Auroville are of the red earth and the hole for the foundation of Matrimandir. It was the time that Mother was everywhere, at the center of everything. Later memories include a childhood without school, and the revolution against the Sri Aurobindo Society. The school closed when I was seven and we children were left to ourselves. At 8, I was sent to the Kodaikanal International School, but hated it for its strictness and Christian background. I managed only two terms. I came back and joined Ami, a children community of 13 girls aged between seven and thirteen years old. That was an amazing time. There was gymnastics at 5 a.m. for all of us. Rock music was banned, as it was bad for the plants. Each girl had a cooking day, cooking for 13 children. We organized circuses. But we had to ask people to teach us, and we learned from

Kalya and Johnny and other adults who welcomed us.

The lack of any formal education in Auroville at that time earned us later the unoriginal 'epitaph' "the lost generation". I finally said that I was not getting any proper education and my mother sent me to the school of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in New Delhi. This was really hard and very disciplined. I had a lot of trouble conforming, as I did not understand the why of many regulations; such as standing up when speaking to the teachers. It was a relief to come back to Auroville in the holidays, where the children of my age group had meanwhile turned into quite a rowdy bunch. The Delhi experience was followed by another year in Ami, by which time rock music was good for the plants. Then I went for a few years to the Kodaikanal International school. At 18, I received a full scholarship for college in the USA, from which I graduated with honors in 1991. I also worked in a theatre doing make up and costume design. At present I am preparing my Masters degree in International Development Management, writing my thesis on "participatory rural appraisal" as done by an ashram in the Indian state of Maharashtra. This technique uses dialogue with the villagers to execute development

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(AKASH, continued from page 1)

clings, forever a part of me. It just sticks and sticks and sticks; and I am red all over."

I returned the next summer with my newly-strengthened faith and my new dreams; I returned, in my mind, as an exile who has finally recognized the truth and is now coming home to live it. There is no reason to explain the unavoidable disappointment, the brutal confrontation with hard facts that immediately followed my arrival. There is nothing unique or special in my fall from my lofty heights, the dream of Auroville I had built myself. It did not take long, however, after my initial disappointment, to find a new source of hope in the faith and sincerity of the community. There was so much to admire in Auroville, and if the reality was somewhat shaky, then the dreams at least were well secured. In this, I doubted not a single person: that they truly cherished and believed in the goals and aspirations of Auroville.

But I saw, or rather I recognized within myself, the inability to live out those beliefs, my intellectual conception of Auroville. I saw people who truly sought an inner strength, yet repeatedly lost their composure when confronted by the endless rite of punctures, power failures, insects, and runny infections. I saw people who truly believed in human unity, yet were simply unable to forgive their neighbours' smallest transgressions, unable even to smile on the road. It was apparent that no matter how strong my faith, or how deeply I believed, I too (as with most Aurovilians) was yet too weak to live out that faith in my daily life. If I came back to Auroville now, all my noble impulses would crumble under



Akash

Schooling for Teenagers

By Kripa

Kripa was born and brought up in Auroville by her French parents. Three years ago, she went to France where, after having passed her Baccalaureate, she is presently studying to become a social worker.

"Until I was 14, my life in Auroville was very pleasant, and the schooling was satisfactory. However, I left Auroville three years ago to study in France as, after a certain level, nothing is offered in Auroville. Many Auroville teenagers still have to go to schools in Kodaikanal or Pondicherry or even abroad if they want higher education. There certainly is a problem with the education of teenagers in Auroville. The hope of any society is its youth, because with their different capacities they will one day take over responsibility for the functioning of the city. Auroville more than anywhere else needs a golden future and a youth which is capable of taking us there.

In Auroville at present, we have all kinds of people with all kinds of qualifications who, with a little bit of effort, will and

the weight of the more direct and brutal and harsh realities of living in Auroville. If I came back to Auroville at this point in my life, still so young and still so inexperienced, I would join the bitter ranks of all those fragmented believers whose mental aspirations are as yet unreconciled to the physical realities of their existences.

I identify with the disappointment, the let-down that so many of my friends have felt upon returning to Auroville. I too believe, I too seek, and, looking around, I too am frightened by the prospect of a failed quest. But still, the abundance of courage, the ceaseless efforts of so many, and the example of those individuals who are apparently strong enough to lead their lives along the path of their convictions; all these are my hopes and my consolation. Like I said, there is so much to be admired, so much to aspire towards, in Auroville.

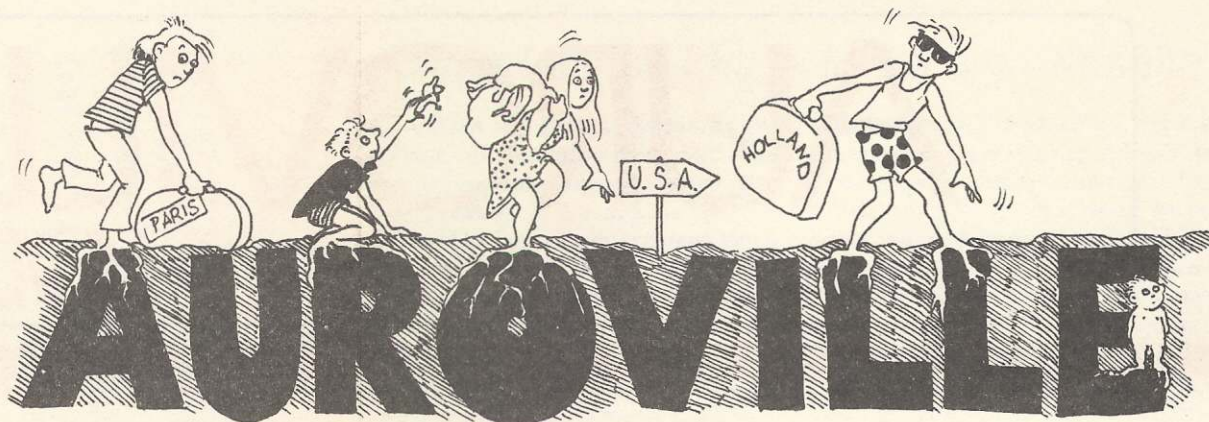
I could never write about becoming an Aurovillian. The seeds for that were planted much too long ago. Apparently, it is all within us; the seeds have sprouted, the roots have taken hold, and have only to reach their potential. Similarly, this is not about leaving, or living outside of, Auroville. Rather, it is about returning to Auroville.

This last summer has convinced me that there is no reason whatsoever to doubt Auroville's security. I don't care what they are saying in the streets. I feel the faith in the air, I feel the belief. Between Auroville and me, the only remaining question it seems, is my own identity. We are all carrying within us our own unassailable patch of red earth, our own true conception of Auroville and its beauty. And when I am strong enough to live by my own convictions, I will know there is a Home to return to. □

organisation, could give so much to youth. But these people don't care to teach, or don't organise themselves and get along well enough together to create a proper structure for and give a proper education to kids. By 'proper' I mean a large enough cultural understanding which would allow us to fit in any school in the world.

It is not up to the Auroville teenagers to go around looking for the people who would be kind enough to give them a few classes a week. We should have a good school with competent people so that we can follow proper studies from beginning to end.

My criticisms of Auroville relate to schooling for teenagers in particular, because, as far as living is concerned, I don't think you can find a better place anywhere. When I was in France, I realized that I have come from a very interesting and rich background. Even though I lacked a certain mental structure, I managed to pursue my studies and to live over there without any problems. And I discovered that many people over there are interested in learning about Auroville and India..." □



CARTOON BY LAURA LOMBARDI

(BINAH, continued from page 1)

projects, rather than imposing them from outside.

Do you intend to come back after your studies are finished?

I would like to come back to Auroville after my studies, but I won't be able to do that immediately as I'll have to work to repay the loans I took to pay for my graduate studies. That's one reason. Another reason is that it's an interesting planet we are living on. And a last reason might be that feeling of lack of safety or lack of support that one has in Auroville. Auroville is hard. Auroville produces human beings who have become very hard. One of the things I learned in the USA is how to be soft. When I see a friend over there, I go out to her and have a heart to heart conversation. Here, I am lucky if my friends stop on the road and say hi. You learn to be cool and tough in this place. Auroville children in particular really learn to survive. And these survival tactics give a certain edge, part of which is that you are not so sweet, and a little more cool to people, and you do not let people so easily into your life; you keep them a little out. Because that is the way you survive. You might say it is only painful for the ego, but as a child it is painful for your whole being. It is very hard to distinguish what is happening, especially when it is happening to you when you are very young. I experience the Auroville children to be tougher than any children I have met anywhere else in the world. They will survive anywhere, but at what cost?

It took me a while to get 'defrosted' in the USA. "Binah floats" was the general comment in my first year—"she is everywhere but not really anywhere". Which was my way to be safe. To open up and allow people into my world and life, that takes a lot of courage. And it is not so easy to do... Auroville may have turned a little softer since I left, but still I experience Aurovilians as being very harsh to each other for no apparent reason.

The educational opportunities in Auroville have improved a lot since you left. Auroville has now two crèches, one Kindergarten, two primary schools and one high school...



Binah

Yes, there has been a lot of growth, but it is not sufficient. Whenever I talk to the 18- to 19-year olds of Auroville, I hear of unrest. In itself that's nothing new. Youth probably are always dissatisfied and believe that there is more to the world than they are getting. But for the Auroville adolescents there are a few particular problems. One is that the education Auroville offers is obviously inadequate. There are still many children who continue their education in Kodaikanal or the Lycée Français in Pondicherry. Another problem is that there is a missing link between the school and what the adolescents are going to do when they stop going to school. That is a very hard time in their lives, because they have never worked. And just to tell them: go out and find things to do, there is so much to do in Auroville, and let them loose—that is too easy and for some a too big task.

Auroville has not yet developed a point where the Auroville children become adult, there is no rite of passage. You even hear people speaking about 30 year olds as Auroville children because they grew up here!

Auroville will have to create options. A group of people should sit together and find options for those who leave school every year. For example, inspire participation in education in commercial units and other working groups and offer some incentives to work. Auroville needs to do something for the youth. It is a tough question and people have got to think about it, as otherwise Auroville will continue to have lost generations—generations that will be lost for the future Auroville.

I am really grateful I have had the opportunity to study in the USA. But it would be nice if this wasn't the average recipe for every Auroville child, wouldn't it? Nearly all of my age group have felt the need to go out of Auroville for some time, only very few of them have not needed the experience. And from those who have gone out, hardly anybody has yet returned for good.

You mentioned that when you were young, Mother was very present. Do you feel that Auroville has changed in this respect?

I find that Auroville has greatly changed. When I was a child, Mother was around and that was that. When I was a teenager I was very busy rebelling and being grumpy, but I started my inner work again when I was at school. When I was leaving Auroville, I considered that there was little spirituality here. But now I actually hear many more people talking about it. The Chamber makes all the difference and I am enjoying it. There is also still a streak of religiosity in Auroville, a streak of rigidity which has come in with a few people. But I have not encountered too much of it.

What about your future and Auroville?

Auroville is definitely my place, there is a culture and history which is really mine. And that's why I look forward to come and live in Auroville again.

Interview by Carel on 7.8.93.

Generations go by, but boredom remains

by Baba

AFTER HAVING lived in Auroville for 17 years (almost all my life for I am 18 now) and having participated in the experiment begun by the Aurovilians 25 years ago, I have left Auroville to go to France and continue my studies there at the University of Montpellier.

Why did I leave? Why this longing for something different? Why this ardent need of change; this need to leave Auroville and go look elsewhere?

To all these questions there are evidently several answers. First of all, I think that every child that has been brought up in Auroville dreams of the West. The only thing is, when you have lived all your life in a small lost corner in the south of India (even if this lost corner is called Auroville), you develop a fairly wrong idea of what life really is like in Europe or America. The fact that we see the West exclusively through films and through spending a few months' holidays there, falsifies for us the reality of life in the west with its economical problems, its stress, its violence... The West can appear like a real paradise with its marvellous shop windows, its beautiful cars, and its tasty food. But those dreams disappear quite fast and the confrontation with the reality can sometimes be painful.

But there can be other, more stimulating motivations, and that is the one inherent in every human being: the need to breathe a different air, to discover another way of life, to have other kinds of experiences, and last but not least the will to know what you are able to do in a 'normal' world when you have spent your life in a marginal world.

Also, there arrives a moment when Auroville is not able any more to offer its young people all the stimuli the West has. Life ends up looking always the same and invariably boredom sets in, opening the door for all kinds of outbursts. What can be worse than being bored at 18? And so the West appears like a true lifebuoy for the castaways of boredom.

The third reason which made me leave Auroville was that after obtaining my *baccalaureate* at the Lycée in Pondicherry, I decided that I should continue my university studies in France.

Although I wanted very much to leave, the departure was difficult. However, adapting myself to life in France did not seem very hard, although there were some fleeting moments of depression.

After a fascinating year and interesting studies, I had the opportunity to come back and spend the summer holidays in Auroville. Coming back—I had been dreaming of it. The only problem with



Baba

dreams is that they are often more enjoyable than the reality. The first encounter with India was the way down from Madras, the dreams went up in smoke very fast, and I woke up in an inferno of heat and noise, somewhat compensated by the *dosais* of Madurantakam.

From the moment of arrival in Auroville, a sense of happiness, a feeling of homecoming after a long voyage took hold of me, and I believe that Auroville will remain my true home for a long time. Why did I have to come back? In fact I have no idea about it! I could have spent my holidays very easily in Europe, earning some money or travelling, but no, I felt like coming back, to see my friends, to see how Auroville was and

the Aurovilians. Some people might perhaps like to hear me say that it was to come back to the source, to get a breath of oxygen again before returning to the 'inferno of the western civilization'. I don't believe it, but who knows?

Once more I came very quickly to the conclusion that dream and reality are different. In France, my memory had selected only the good moments I had experienced at Auroville. But here, life is also having a flat tyre in a canyon in the mid-day heat, feeling your t-shirt wet with sweat, being subjected to the dust and the hot winds... In Europe these details had lost their reality, and yet, finding them again meant finding again a part of my life in Auroville that I missed.

There's something else too that struck me. I wondered why one generation was following another while boredom remained. Is Auroville to blame? Or do the young people themselves not manage to motivate themselves?

I think boredom is everywhere. Whether you are in Auroville or in Paris, you can be bored in the same way. The problems encountered in the suburbs of the big cities are often due to negligence of the governments who do not take sufficient care of the youth. There has to be a real infrastructure parallel to the schools to allow them to open out. The same goes for Auroville. There are of course those who aren't interested in anything, but those will have the same problem wherever they are in the world.

I would like to conclude by re-emphasizing that Auroville is truly a very special place and that you have to leave it in order to understand it better.

"I missed the entire way of life here"

Bastiaan and Stefan were born in Holland and came to Auroville in 1983 with their mother and sister; Bastiaan was 11 years old, Stefan 8. After spending ten years in different communities, and getting involved in horses, rock groups, computers etc. first Bastiaan and, later, Stefan and their mother, Yvonne, returned for some time to Holland. They all reappeared in Auroville about four months ago—"To stay!"

AVT: Why did you want to return to the West?

Bastiaan: I wanted to meet my father again, but also I really wanted to know what it was like to live there. I soon found out—and then I wanted to get back to Auroville as soon as possible! But I stayed on because I felt I should go through the experience; also I had to go into the army for a year.

Why did you want to come back so quickly?

Bastiaan: I missed the entire way of life here, the openness. In Holland I found the people were very closed up, it was difficult to make contact with them, and because everybody sticks to their own scene and own friends, it's difficult to break in. Also, there's a lot of stress over there. All the kids are pushed by their parents to get diplomas, because without diplomas you get stuck in really low jobs, whereas here it's what you can do that's important, not what diplomas you have. And money is the big thing for everybody there, it drives everything.

Stefan: People kept telling us we were different because we were open and laughed a lot. Two months after I arrived in Holland we got an opportunity to run a launderette for 6 months while the owner was away. It was a real fun thing because we could do it the way we liked. We played music, talked to the people who came there,

and the customers really liked it. When we left, some of them wanted to come to Auroville with us!

So you talked about Auroville?

Stefan: We said things like it is a place where lots of people from different cultures are trying to live and work together, trying something new. But trying to explain what was behind it was very difficult.

Bastiaan: Of course, we tended to idealize Auroville a bit...

What was it like coming back to Auroville?

Bastiaan: For the last two months in Holland, we'd only been thinking about Auroville. When we actually arrived, it was evening, the sun was setting over the trees... You could really feel something special.

Stefan: The grown-ups kept asking us, "Are you going back again?" "No way," we said, "We're staying!" They were so happy. And we readjusted real fast; it was as if we'd never been away.

Bastiaan: Coming back, I realized that in one sense I'd never left. Now I just can't imagine myself living permanently in the West.

But has the experience changed you?

Bastiaan: In one way. Because when you go out, you really find out if you want to be



Bastiaan (left), Stefan

in Auroville or not, particularly if you came here when you were young. In this sense, I'm here now out of conscious choice. The ideal behind Auroville, where it's meant to be going, really interests me now—that's also what I came back for.

And Auroville? Do you think it has changed since you've been away?

Stefan: One of the things I noticed is that the small kids have really grown up during the year I was away, and the young people are much more together now—age differences don't matter much. That feels good. But over a longer period, from the time we first came to Auroville 10 years ago, the place has really changed. People don't push so hard towards the ideal. They sit back and think it's just going to happen.

Bastiaan: It feels like more and more people are making their money in the West and living a cool life here. They don't really have an urge to change anything. But that's

wrong because Auroville has to go through many changes.

Do you think that at the moment young Aurovilians want to get involved with changing this place, or are they more concerned with getting their own lives together?

Bastiaan: It's more the latter. But at the same time, while I see so much going on in Auroville that I don't agree with, right now I don't see any possibility for me to do something about it. At the moment, there are too few of us around to make a difference; many of the young people are out at the moment, completing their education, and the young scene here is very dull. But in a few years, a lot of these young Aurovilians will come back, and then I think the young people will really jump into changing Auroville.

What kind of changes would you like to see happen?

Bastiaan: One of the big problems is the

THE AUROVILLE NEWS is published weekly and provides the Aurovilians with information, humour, depression, therapy and waste paper. Living in Auroville you cannot do without it. Living outside Auroville you can very well do without it, but many of Auroville's friends insist on receiving this fascinating periodical to keep up to date; certain non-friends of Auroville also manage to regularly procure a copy. Aurovilians, friends and non-friends alike complain about the general low level of consciousness that is frequently expressed. Undoubtedly, this is true in certain cases. But is it always so? AUROVILLE TODAY dived into the 'Auroville News' of the last 6 months and surfaced with the following catch. (Note: the original spellings and syntax have been scrupulously adhered to. Do not adjust your set or blame our proof-reader.)

"Since the Auroville News has fallen under my wings, due to my inaccuracy the spelling is not always accurate. For this I offer my apollogize". (Santo, an Italian Aurovilian, after taking over the editorship of the News)

"Ten commercial units, Auroville's Central Fund and one Aurovilian have contributed a total of Rs 277,800 (approximately US \$ 9,000) towards major repairs and maintenance costs of the Auroville schools, which is habitually done in the summer holidays. These contributions were given on top of their normal support for Auroville. (SAIIR in a public expression of gratitude)

"Question them to find out whether they are Aurovilian or not, in the rudest possible way, shout at them for being irresponsible and tell them that the rules have changed to Mother's way". (Rauf Ali, proposing new rules for the Bharat Nivas librarian after claiming that the above mentioned treatment was meted out to him for not returning books in time and dog-eared them)

"Maybe we employed too many staff, maybe we are too liberal with the free dispensing of medicines—we shall be less, we will prescribe more. Maybe we are not careful enough as regards many minor items and overheads. We can make a tremendous effort and probably cut down our budget for a few thousands. And then? We still lack every paisa above Rs 50,000. We touched bottom. To tell the truth, we are below bottom. Our monthly budget of recurring expenses is Rs 100,000, of which only half is covered by guaranteed contributions from Auroville and a German NGO. An NGO from Luxembourg is funding the building of public toilets in Edayanchavadi. Spanish NGO funds have been earmarked for the purchase of a lab and X-ray equipment... but still, the running budget is short of money!!! Anybody who can help by constructive criticism or funds is welcome to



contact the Auroville Health Center, Auroville." (The Health Center Team)

"Black stones. Against scorpions, snakes, spiders, centipedes etc. New load available at the 'Children and Trees' building. WARNING: In case of large swelling or poisoned arrows and rabies cats and dogs, please do consult urgently doctor." (Bonaventure, the Auroville supplier of 'black stones')

"As there have recently been cases of snake-bites an IRULA, the traditional snake catcher of India, will come to Auroville. The snake will be brought to the IRULA-coop at the Crock-bank, poison will be extracted and they will be released in the wild. If you want to have your place cleared of snakes, give your name to Santo. P.S. He also catches rats." (Information provided by Frederick)

"Brother Aurovilians, who are living beside us, within us, don't let your hearts become hardened towards ourselves. We all came here attracted by something... 'Her'... or That. Our old human being has followed with all its human luggage... These luggage are still encumbering us, pulling us constantly back towards the old human trail. We have given to Mother, to the Lord, our whole being for adventure, the Transformation with Auroville as a laboratory for experiments and fields of action. Oh brother, let's wake up. Everything is here, right now, if we want it. OM JAY MA." (Goupi, to his fellow Aurovilians during the long hot summer)

"There is a cut in supply for about three weeks due to the incompetency of our chicks suppliers. This note is for all Aurovilians who care about their health and prefer 100% organic chicken to Pondicherry steroid and chemical pumped meat". (Revelation Poultry Management)

"We have received some protest from the Regional Registration Office (RRO) in Pondicherry concerning the impossible attitude from some Aurovilians in their office, impatient, intolerable, shouting and even insulting!" (The Auroville Visa Service, calling for good humour and a friendly attitude from Aurovilians towards the RRO officials when registering themselves)

"Deviam is a new small community in the green belt, between Pichandikulam, Sharnaga, Sangha and Samriddhi. The land has some cashew and work trees, and two Aurovilians have taken the responsibility to develop the land into a small farm. Monetary support estimated at Rs 71,000 is needed for the necessary infrastructure and the building of small accommodation." (From a new project proposal)

"Lost my keys: On Sunday between Certitude a mid of the main road. One long key,

Don't Shoc

2 small ones with a brass appendix." (Santo again)

"Auroville is an experiment. One description of what we are doing here is Karma Yoga. Another description could be we are trying to push a load of sh-t uphill, and are in danger of it gliding back downhill and crushing us... The planet is dying and here in Auroville we do not love each other, trust each other but justify bad will... We have people fighting, hating and hurting another. There is a terrible amount of pain around the heart chakra in Auroville. We have to learn to be together with joy, peace, harmony. Goodwill towards all, goodwill from all is the basis of peace and harmony." (Jocelyn of Silence, a regular contributor to the Auroville News, trying to answer the question, "What are you trying to say?")

"The Government schools in Tamil Nadu re-open in June for their new school year. At this time the school children are supposedly given textbooks and other materials that they need for the year's study. This is not, however, always the case. Often the books arrive late and the parents must find other ways of securing the books; also, the more expensive books are not given, and only insufficient notebooks.

Last year, as an experiment, we offered to purchase the books and notebooks of our workers' children. Our workers were extremely grateful, in fact it is the first time that many of them came and specifically thanked us. We plan to continue this scheme and wonder if others might like to do the same." (From Suzy of Aurogreen)



"URGENT: Please bring back: Our hot/cold-packs, we have had 8 and now only 3 left! Please, please we need them always for emergencies, so look in your ice boxes! Also we are missing balys and pulling formes." (Ursula and Juan appealing for the return of physiotherapy equipment)

"All people who work with 'balys and pulling formes' know what it is!! For all the others who don't know that is: A rehabilitation gymnastik home home trainer!!" (Ursula 'clarifying' the previous note in the subsequent News for those who didn't fully grasp its purport)

"In an undisturbed environment, every creature exists in a niche in a tightly woven web of life. Mankind has disrupted this system, causing havoc in the natural control



mechanisms that limit the growth of any one species to pest proportions. Biological Pest Control is an attempt to use Nature's own tools to restore balance. At present, Biological Pest Control uses 4 main types of weapons:

Pheromones —Male or female chemical sexual signals

Predators —Insects that devour the pests

Parasitoids—Insects that use the pest as a host in their reproductive cycle

Pathogens—Viruses and Bacteria that kill the pest

We need to study the complete life cycle of the pest in detail and try to discover what weapon would limit the pest population in a natural undisturbed environment; find ways of propagating the appropriate control mechanisms in the laboratory; produce this mechanism in quantity and in a form that is easy to use; get the product to the farmer and convince him to try it. Initially, we will survey the area, to find out what the main cash crops are, which pests destroy them, what the main pesticides used are and which biological weapons control these pests in nature; conduct research to develop possible control mechanisms for the T-mosquito which is the main pest affecting cashew and neem; begin commercial production of Nuclear Polyhydrosis Virus, for supply to Biological Research Laboratories. Our long term goal is to eradicate the use of pesticides in Auroville and the surrounding areas."

(The Aurobrindavan community, announcing their plans for Biological Pest Control research)

"About 700 species of ants are known in India. Probably there are less than half of those in existence here. Only a few tropical ants are well-known, for example the comparatively big Indian Black Ant (Camponotus compressus or macoda) and the Red Tree Ant (Oecophylla smaragdida). People have been bitten by both from time to time.

Men are not rarely inclined to see the dark side of these beings. Jonathan Swift (the Irish satirist, 1667-1745) wrote:

Big fleas have little fleas
Upon their back to bite 'em
And little fleas have lesser fleas,
And so ad infinitum

Of course, Swift's poem is a fable about human society, with which perhaps most Aurovilians may not agree." (Nature notes submitted by Boris)

ot the Editor

"Before becoming rich by selling our antspowder to desperate Aurovilians we would like to know if our helpful product will do any harm to the environment. Our recipe: 1 part Borax, 1 part Sulphur, 1 part Sugar. The ants take it to their nest and slowly they come less inside the house." (Tency)

"We should ask all Aurovilians to contribute 33% of their wealth to the collective. With these donations, we should create a Financial Corpus, which should be invested in Bank Deposits, loans to financially sound commercial organisations and in stocks and shares of Multinational Corporations. The Interest and Dividend income from these investments should be used to meet the needs of the community. The capital should not be spent. This way not only will Auroville have a solid financial base but there would be an ever increasing income to meet the needs of the Collective. Looking from another angle, it would give Aurovilians an opportunity to renew their commitment to the Ideal for which we have come to this great experiment. This is a rather radical and may be a drastic step but then this would renew our faith in the Mother's Dream." (Sent by Prem Malik from the Himalayas)

"I did not say about X what people are saying I said and I wish they weren't saying I said it. What I did say has been widely misunderstood and it is better I don't repeat it. I never wanted a public discussion anyway. In general I don't think I'm any more destructive, jealous, unscrupulous minded, devilish or negative than the next person." (An ex- teacher from New Creation School)



"On the question of the restructuring of our internal organization, the Chairman pointed out a vacuum in our present set-up. This refers to situations where members of the community refuse to recognize decisions taken by Working Groups or behave in a manner not acceptable to the community. He suggested that a group be formed consisting of senior Aurovilians with the authority to deal with such cases in an appropriate manner." (From the minutes of the 6th meeting between the Working Committee and the Governing Board on 14th August, 1993)

"At its meeting of August 23, 1993, the Working Committee and the repre-

sentatives of the Working Groups agreed to establish a Study Group to review the present system of self-management in Auroville, and to revise the organization of that system to fit contemporary conditions, including the development of suitable guidelines." (Janet, introducing a new study group)

"1st Sunday
14.30 Reike: VIP Room (upstairs)
14.30 Video: E.T.
18.00 to 20.00 Dinner
tomato soup, spring rolls, stir fried vegetables, chicken and prawns in batter with sweet & sour sauce.
20.00 Women on the edge of a nerves breakdown (comedy)"
(Part of the week's programme at the Visitors Centre)

"French dinner: Poisson a l'Americain..."
(Further delights from the Visitors centre)

"We are failing in our personal development process and growth and are so unable to embody Mother's spiritual vision and direction. We do not want to accept that in many dominant parts of our being we are still frustrated and imperfect. We meditate, we aspire, we surrender and reject, but somehow we do not manage very well. If we fail to accept that we are not that perfect, we are easily tempted to build structures to cover this. We start making an imitation of spiritual life, we start doing the yoga of the cells, without knowing how to swim in Love. We are trying to be angels sitting on top of the lid of our own toilets and don't dare to really move. We become the chosen few, the spiritual arrogants, trying to do the yoga through an assumed mental understanding of it...The process of spiritual growth has to be preceded or in the beginning of it accompanied by a will and effort to become a more natural, a loving human being. In other words, we have to dare to face and overcome those things which prevent us from being ourselves..." (Jerome)

"There are still a few places available in the CSR superfast van which will be plying to Yercaud on June 21st. Rush to avail of this wonderful opportunity. Be the cynosure of all eyes and enjoy the holiday of a lifetime in this idyllic hill station of coffee plantations, meandering lanes and a sun-kiss'd lake." (Alan and Annemarie, in an unsuccessful attempt to decrease their holiday travel costs)

"For many participants the concept of ecological development was exciting and new, and convincing because of the Auroville demonstration. But especially interesting was the reaction of many of the Pondicherry participants, who had for years thought of Auroville only as a "spiritual" community with nothing to offer to their aspirations for social reform. From both their side and ours, we perceived a possibility to combine our skills: our research and applied technology, and their ability to carry information to the people. We see our dream of ecological development of the whole Kaliveli tank bioregion coming closer to fulfillment." (Bhavana reporting on a recent Sustainable Future workshop organized by AGRC for members of 'Science Forum', India)

"Attention all indiscriminate dumpers! You seem to be under the misconception that if you dump your rubble (i.e. broken bricks, cement etc.) just outside of your property it will be used by the road service, or even stranger, that it will just disappear! Wrong! Please cease this uncouth procedure, and instead contact me—not that I can always use rubble—but, I will try and find a proper place for disposal." (Auroson, at Her 'Road' service.)

"All Auroville yooofs. Are you a young enthusiastic, environmentally conscious yooof? Biolab offer the opportunity for a few Aurovillian Yooofs to get involved in this amazing and useful attempt to make a dent in the local use of chemical pesticides. We need fieldworkers, 2 or 3 teams who will each monitor particular farms and gardens in the Auroville area. If you want to find out more about this fantastic career opportunity in this burgeoning growth industry, contact your probation officer now or call us at Aurobrindavan."
(Appeal from the Aurobrindavan community for youthful participation.)

"A small stall will appear shortly next to the Ganesh Bakery that will serve solar produced food items such as Lemon Cordial, Lemon Pickles, Ragi Malt, Mango Bar, Orange Bar, Mixed Fruit Bar, Dried Vegetable Soup, Hibiscus Lemon Cordial and many jams such as Tamarind, Mango, Guava and Starfruit." (Sharanam, who is already producing these preservative-free foods)

"Our call last week for help for VIKAS got no answer at all from the Auroville community. Last week we could manage with the last rupees from the Vikas residents, but were obliged to fire 1/3 of the team and this week again 1/3 will go if nothing happens because we need a minimum of Rs 10,000 a week... Is it true that there is no money anymore in Auroville? The problem does not lie in our external development, because everybody visiting us recognizes the quality of all the realizations achieved in only 15 months of work. The problem lies in our inner development, because despite some efforts we did not create yet the basis for a harmonious community life." (Aurosaprem on financial difficulties confronting the 'Vikas' residential project)

"Considering Auroville's present housing shortage, it was agreed that Newcomers who have amply beforehand reserved a place in one of the Newcomer Units, can move into the same straight away without having first to sit in a guest house or other place before moving in." (From an Entry Group report)

"Don't kill large mosquitoes!!! We have begun a programme of controlled release in Aurodam. And drop a note to me at Aurodam saying where you saw them, how many and the date. This will help us monitor the success of the releases."

(Rauf Ali, stimulating Aurovilians to recognize the Toxorhynchites splendens mosquito, a harmless, nectar feeding species that is four times larger than ordinary mosquitoes. It's larvae eat up the larvae of other mosquitoes, and thus control the populations of the pesky biting mosquitoes.)

"Did people not understand that the honoured guest there with us at the bonfire last Sunday was Sri Aurobindo himself? Did those who stayed in the central area, chattering and joking noisily in His presence, not notice that they were drowning out his quiet message to us, that we had

all come to receive. Did they not notice, as they knocked over, spilled and broke the oil lamps even before the music started, that there was a return to darkness, and it became more difficult to see Him there?" (Tim, commenting on the bonfire of August 15th)

"Few opportunities arise for us to sit together as a community, not to discuss our problems, but just be together to remind ourselves why we are here. The last bonfire had more oil lamps than Aurovilians in attendance." (Francis, also commenting on the bonfire of August 15th).



"Hi! I'm looking to see if anyone would like to split a taxi to Madras—either the afternoon of 25th July or 28th July."
(From a visitor about to return home)

"Revelation Farm has reached the bottom. Lack of funds and man power are the main reason for our difficulty... We did our best so far. We call the Community and the concerned Working Groups for help. We need at least Rs 12,000 per month for two years." (Cristo, announcing the difficult situation of Revelation farm).

"I've just finished reading Proust: it was too heavy! Now: does anybody have any copies of Tintin comics (preferably in English, but also in French) sitting around that they would like to give or sell to me? I would be infinitely grateful!" (Akash, going down-market)

"To the male Vellakara (Milkface) motorbike driver who pushed Mira (a blonde, 8 year old girl on cycle) off the cycle path between Bliss and Transition on 25th of August without a word of apology. As you displayed such a highly spiritualized behaviour in Auroville's public traffic, I want to invite you to receive my special initiation for reaching Satori instantly (for non-Japanese enlightenment) as well as—in the true Auroville spirit absolutely free of charge—two deflated tyres on your bike." (Edzard, fresh back from the West, who added "and, well, yes, it's nice to be back again.")

"The opinions expressed on the 'Letters' page and the description of Auroville's reality that sometimes appear in those letters are the point of view of the authors only. They don't necessarily correspond to REALITY, and, it goes without saying, don't necessarily correspond to the opinion of the editors."

(The indispensable weekly disclaimer from the editors of the Auroville News)

The Youth Camp

... and reflections on Auroville youth

IF YOU cycle through Fraternity on the way to New Creation, you will discover, beside the basketball court, four thatch-roofed 'capsules' and two 'pukka' constructions. This is the beginning of the Youth Camp project. But what is the purpose of this project, and who is it intended for? AUROVILLE TODAY spoke to Selvaraj and Rathinam who, along with Frederick and Rajiv, are coordinating the project, about the Youth Camp in particular and the situation of Auroville youth in general.

AVT: What is the idea behind the Youth Camp?

Selvaraj: The basic idea is to host young people, both from India and abroad, who want to experience Auroville for a short time, but who cannot afford to stay in an Auroville guest-house.

Rathinam: It's a bit like the Youth Hostel idea, except we will be selective about whom we accept. We want people who are really interested in Auroville, and don't just want a nice holiday. So we'll get Aurovilians to run introduction programmes to the community, and if the visitors have special interests, we'll try to put them in touch with the appropriate Aurovilians.

Selvaraj: And, since this Youth Camp is located next to New Creation sports facilities, it can also provide accommodation for outside participants in state and national level sports tournaments, as well as for sports coaches who come to train us.

What does the Youth Camp consist of at present?

Rathinam: At the moment, the Youth camp is located on two sites, one in Fraternity and the other on the beach, next to Gokulam. In Fraternity we have four capsules, a shower-cum-changing-room block, a community kitchen, a caretaker room and storeroom. On the beach there are three capsules. At present, we can accommodate eight young people in Fraternity and six on the beach, but in the future we would like to accommodate up to 20 people on the Fraternity site. For the next phase, we want to add some pukka accommodation in both places.

From where do you get your funding?

Rathinam: Mainly from the Government of India, and from the Auroville International centre in Germany. An American lady, who lived in Auroville years ago and

has now returned, has also helped with the construction of the shower block.

Is this a project that young Aurovilians can be involved with?

Selvaraj: Very much so. We want Auroville youth to run this place. At the moment, we have only a small organizing group because not very much has happened yet, but when it starts moving, I'm sure more young Aurovilians will get involved. Actually, next February we are expecting a group from America, and in December, 1994, we are helping organize another international 'Peace Trees' conference, and some of the participants will stay in the Youth Camp.

Rathinam: At the moment, we have mainly Ami and New Creation as places where young Aurovilians can live and meet, and we need more. So we hope the Youth Camp in Fraternity can be a focus for young people in the New Creation/Aspiration area who want a place where they can be creative, or study, or just stay for short periods.

Young Aurovilians told us recently that the Auroville youth scene is very dull at the moment; there is little energy and not much commitment to helping the larger community. From your contact with young Aurovilians, do you get the same impression?

Selvaraj: Yes, it's true. But at that age, they are not so clear about what they want to do. That's the main problem. Because if they really want to get involved, there are so many things they can do. Also, Auroville is still young and many of those who were born here are now at the stage where they want to finish their studies outside, or just to see something of the larger world.

Rathinam: Another factor is that many young people don't want to get involved in what they call Auroville 'politics'. Basically, it's part of a revolt by the young people against meetings and groups because they don't think anything useful comes out of them.

When you were younger, both of you went out of Auroville temporarily and spent some time in the United States. Did going out change your perspective on Auroville?

Rathinam: Definitely. Once I was outside, I saw Auroville differently. Actually, what I saw happening here was very encouraging, and I came back wanting to put my energy into working for the community. In this sense, going out can really



Selvaraj (left) and Rathinam

help motivate some of the young people. At the same time, when you live in the West, you are put under great pressure to choose and take up a job. But in Auroville, although there is no shortage of jobs, there is no such pressure, and this can make it difficult for young people to choose and commit themselves.

Selvaraj: But far more Western than young Indian Aurovilians go out.

Is this a matter of choice or circumstance?

Selvaraj: Choice. If either Rathinam or myself had wanted to stay out of Auroville, we would have found a way, and similarly those who want to go out can usually make it. What we do notice, however, is that the first generation of Auroville children whose parents came from the West were much more in touch with India and the local villages than the present generation. And they mixed much more with the young Aurovilians who were born locally. For example, the young people who are living in Ami are almost all Western, and the young people in 'New Creation' are all Indian. In one way, of course, it's natural that people group with people of their own background, but in connection with the ideal of Auroville, it's not healthy.

Rathinam: We are very concerned by this, we've talked a lot about it, but we don't know what to do. In Transition School it's fine. But when the young people get to Last School, although there is no ill-will towards the others, they tend to stick with other kids of their own background and culture.

Selvaraj: In the old days, there was much more of a sense of community, and the kids mixed together much more. Maybe

if we make collective kitchens, collective transport etc. a community priority now, we can help solve this separation problem.

But do you feel that Auroville is supportive enough of its young people?

Selvaraj: It's not unsupportive—and, anyway, Auroville has so many different needs that it's difficult to prioritize them.

Rathinam: But I think that some young Aurovilians need more help from trusted older Aurovilians in understanding and solving their problems because, on a collective level, not much is done in this area. Also, while a number of youth activities are taking place at the moment, they are not coordinated, and many of the young people don't know what is happening.

Some years ago, there was an attempt to create a Youth Council for young Aurovilians...

Rathinam: This was a very good idea, but it folded up when the key person left. This is a real problem. Many young people from New Creation and After School are willing to help with the Youth Camp, but they need guidance, and it's difficult to get a day in day out commitment from them.

Selvaraj: What is very encouraging, however, is to see that young Aurovilians who have been out for some time are now coming back and getting involved in community work.

Rathinam: When you've grown up here, the roots are very deep. I'm sure that in a few years many more of them will return after finishing their studies or making their experiences, and then they will really start changing things around here.

Interview by Alan on 4.9.93

STEFAN & BASTIAAN, continued from page 3

power trips that go down here. In the West, you have to accept authority—it's the only way to work—but here you should be able to express your ideas. But often what happens when there is tension is someone pulls this, "I know how to do this, so nobody else has got anything to say." So, if major decisions have to be taken then it should be taken by more than one group. And the membership of groups should change regularly, so there's more of a flow.

Stefan: The bonfire problem last month was blamed on the young Aurovilians. But we weren't the only Aurovilians who didn't like how it was done. It was such a ritual. I don't feel we need funeral pyres and flowers everywhere to receive Sri Aurobindo's message on his birthday. Perhaps if the organization had not been left to such a small group, this wouldn't have happened.

I feel Auroville is in a big mess these days with all this outside interference; we should

be running the scene ourselves. But I think we'll get out of it. It will take a few years, but we'll make it.

Bastiaan: It's not so much the material level that has to change; it's the consciousness. We have to change inside, to be able to step back from our own ideas and look at the wider picture. We have to be willing to listen more and not keep making assumptions. For example, older Aurovilians think young Aurovilians just roam around, doing nothing. And we see older Aurovilians building big houses and living easily. But all of us, we only see from the outside, we don't really know what's happening.

Nobody knows what Auroville will become because it's so new. It's like stepping into a black hole. But we have to keep moving, it's the only way.

Stefan: At the very least, we can all smile more at each other on the road. It doesn't wear your teeth out!

Interview by Alan on 27/8/93

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A Wisdom Park for the Village

One day while waiting in line at the Pour Tous Stall, Tineke read a notice about funds needed for finishing the 'Wisdom Park'. What was this Park? Some kind of educational Disneyland? She talked to Gillian, the initiator of this project, to find out more.

ABOUT THREE months ago Gillian, a designer of beaded leather bags and garments, noticed some of the women who work for Pour Tous (Auroville's food distribution centre), dumping garbage over the bridge into the canyon near the compound. She was so shocked by this unconscious act (realizing that not only villagers but also Aurovilians were responsible for this) that she took a drastic step and hired a woman from the village to start cleaning up some of the public places around Aspiration. This is how a new service, 'Auroville Clean', came into being, sponsored by three Auroville units. Now every day you can see a woman sweeping the sides of the road that runs between Aspiration and Kuilapalayam village—from Pour Tous along the State Bank, to the Health Center.

While organizing this work, Gillian spent quite a lot of time in this area and noticed piles of garbage under a big tree (*Enterolobium saman* or 'Rain Tree') near the State Bank. As an artist, she could easily visualize a beautiful meeting place for villagers underneath this old tree, to the flowers of which the Mother gave the name 'Wisdom'.

Consequently she asked Francois Grenier, a landscape architect, to help her draw

up a design which would be beautiful. Funding for the project came from various sources in Auroville.

The finished park, just outside the State Bank of India, has completely transformed the original site. The different sitting levels, made out of bricks and big stones, invite people to sit and talk and children to play.

Before she got involved in creating the 'Wisdom Park', Gillian had little contact with life in the village, but the positive feedback, both from Auroville and from the villagers, was very enriching for her.

With help from some villagers who live in Kuilapalayam, she now wants to do something about the problem of water drainage in the village. Opposite the Wisdom Park is a public tap from which excess water runs down the main street of Kuilapalayam, creating big puddles. She had a soak pit dug, and the drainage problem was immediately solved! The people from the village were amazed and very impressed. Gillian's next project, with their help, will be to dig 70 soakpits in the village to absorb the water runoff. But she realizes that more permanent solutions have to be found for treating the waste water in the village. She hopes to find the expertise and funding for this part of the work.

For Gillian the whole experience has been a small miracle. It all started because she did not like plastic bags spread all over. But she had never thought about getting involved in helping to improve the situation. Now she feels the 'Wisdom Park' is only a beginning: "If you put in some effort, the results are just incredible!"

□

WC-Wisdom

A part from a Wisdom Park, Kuilapalayam village is acquiring another new asset: toilets. Twelve toilets, housed in two separate buildings, are rising at the side of the road bordering the village and the State Bank, and overlooking the Wisdom Park. Selvaraj, who was born in Kuilapalayam and grew up in Auroville, is the initiator of the project, which is now nearing completion.

According to Selvaraj, it seems that the people in Kuilapalayam now begin to feel a need for organized toilet facilities—and everybody using the road can attest to this smelly fact. The people in Indian villages generally prefer to 'go' out in the open, at a secluded spot, above having a toilet near their house, something they consider unhygienic. Earlier experiments, with subsidized toilet units for individual families in other villages, have shown that only a very small percentage of the units was indeed used for the intended purpose. But development around the village has gobbled up most of the open 'toilet' space, and there is also the influence of video and cinema—and of course Auroville—slowly changing age-old habits. So recently the village elders agreed to have a public lavatory built for them. The project is sponsored mainly by Maroma, the large Auroville incense unit, and a few other units.

The success of the project depends, as Selvaraj explains, partly on maintenance. Proper supervision and daily cleaning are indispensable. Therefore there will be limited opening hours, morning and evening, and a permanent presence of a paid supervisor.

Up to 500 people may make use of the facility. But the wisdom of this project is still to be proved in the next six months.

Annemarie



PHOTO ALAN

The Saturday morning tree planting team at work at Kuilapalayam in front of the new toilets.

Erratum

In the article "Peace Table for Auroville" in our last issue we mentioned that Georges Nakashima emigrated to the USA during World War II. This should have read "returned". We apologize for the mistake.

Eds

News—Brief News—Brief News—News

♦ A model school for the district

The Auroville Building Centre (AV-BC, a unit of the C.S.R) has just completed the construction of an 80 sq.m. school at a cost of Rs 1.2 lakh (\$ 4000) at Poothurai, a village west of Auroville.

The Collector of South Arcot District, for whom it was built, has recently decided that from now on all schools in the district will be built on the same (Auroville) model.

Bravo to Raman, the architect, and Dhanappal, the builder.

You may remember that the district authorities have already adopted AV-BC's model of low-cost houses for Harijans.

♦ East Coast Road: to be or not to be?

The Environmental Appraisal Committee (EAC) which is a standing committee of the Department of Environment, Govt. of India, has now published its report on the East Coast Road (see AUROVILLE TODAY Nos. 41 and 42). It recommends that construction be allowed to proceed only on four short stretches, and that on the remaining 80% of the route—which includes the stretch that passes by Auroville—work should be frozen or limited to the resurfacing

of the existing road. The EAC report further states that no more trees be cut along the proposed route of the East Coast Road. We are now waiting to see if the Department of Environment will issue an order making the committee's recommendations statutory.

♦ 'Prickly Heat'

On the evening of 27th August, the young and not-so-young gathered at the Visitors Centre to experience the first episode of Auroville's 'soapie', 'Prickly Heat'. Narrated by Johnny, with musical accompaniment provided by Stefano and Holger, and played by young Aurovilians silhouetted behind a large sheet, Prickly Heat tells the story of an unruly town where everybody does what they like. That is, until the new sheriff, complete with 'The Book', arrives and tries to get everybody back on the straight and narrow. In true avant garde fashion, 'Prickly Heat' provides—among other eccentricities—two different endings.

Rumour has it that Johnny has since been deported, on orders from higher authorities, to Australia for three months. We await his return... and episode two. □

✉ — Letters — ✉

✉ Dear Auroville Today

Rockefeller Center (New York): Impressions while reading issue # 55 about the Auroville Foundation, surrounded by the flags of all the Nations next to a golden fountain—it is full of Italian and Chinese tourists.

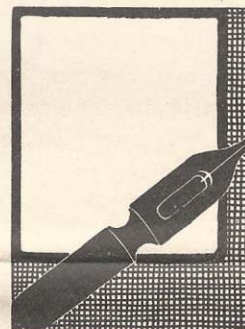
After some months of travel I missed in the interviews the emphasis upon the spiritual dimension of Auroville. The talks touched mostly the material surface of the present difficulties regarding the Foundation. I believe that the situation as it is now mirrors the inner state of Aurovilians and certainly we have to move beyond petty accusations and take the ship (Auroville) out of the harbour to sail freely. We are receiving some sailing lessons now, and let's pray we'll be free soon to move wherever it's necessary to have the experiences needed to become a world model for the new way of living. The Auroville Foundation is only a port on the way and the time we spend in this particular port depends entirely on ourselves. I experience again and again that as soon as we are ready, things open up like magic and release us to face the next challenge. There are no limitations whatsoever. Every limitation we face is the imagined (or real) limitation of our own mind.

Tine, an Aurovillian

✉ Sir,

Your August issue, no. 55 is very interesting reading. Congratulations. It will be interesting to know the Secretary's views. If I am allowed, I may also say something on the matter.

I have lived here in Auroville since 1973 being the conscious witness of the turmoil and transformations, changes etc. I have full faith in the Divine and Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's ideals. The supramental force is working and the world is changing, including Auroville. Our problems are basically our own creations. If we establish within ourselves discipline, things will move faster towards the goal. Let us have unity, harmony and steadfastness to our ideals, i.e. total surrender to The Mother. Let us not interpret The Mother's sayings in



our own way as it suits us. It is not a matter of words or mind, but conscious awareness.

The Auroville Foundation is not ideal for The Mother's dream or its working. The authority to take decisions should be at the centre of Auroville. At present it is not so. If we establish the centre of authority in Auroville by unity, harmony and self-discipline, we can get the Auroville Foundation Act amended. My suggestion: create a Managing Board of Auroville which would be a corporate body under the law. The Board of Management would consist of: (a) the Chairman, Ex-Officio Lt. Governor of Pondicherry. He will represent the Government and co-ordinate Auroville and Government. He will be the general supervisor of the project as far as legal aspects with law and order, security, visas, etc. (b) Two representatives from the International Advisory Council on the Board of Management.

(c) Two members of the National Advisory Council (formerly the Governing Board) (d) Nine members of the Board of Management will be from Auroville residents representing different groups and units. (e) The Secretary will be appointed by the Board of Management responsible to the Board of Management. It will be more suitable to have the Chairman residing in Pondicherry.

Further discussions can be held and concessions arrived at for the final draft. I have taken all the different aspects of the views expressed in the Auroville Today of August 1993, issue no. 55, as far as possible. I know it is a far cry but that is the way I see it.

Let The Mother's will be done and I offer this to Her.

Jayant Thakkar, Auroville.

AUROVILLE TODAY

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KRISHNA

DRAWING BY FRANÇOIS M.
COURTESY SHRADHANJALI

In this issue (8 pages):
Young Aurovillians return; extracts from the Auroville News; a portrait of Saroja; etc.

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ANKE AND MICHAEL
SPACE
AUROVILLE

PORTRAIT

"When I dance I have to become Krishna"

SAROJA was born in the nearby village of Kuilapalayam, but was brought up in the Auroville community New Creation. A few months ago, she returned to Auroville after completing a four-year study of Bharat Natyam (Indian classical) dance at the prestigious Kalakshetra (literally 'Holy Place of the Arts') Academy in Madras. Subsequently she and a fellow student gave a Bharat Natyam performance in Pitanga Hall which was very well received.

The teaching at Kalakshetra was very strict and intensive. I had to get up at five in the morning and do exercises in my hostel. Then I would go to the Academy where the day would begin with dance and yoga theory, and then we would dance for about two hours. After lunch we would have Sanskrit class, vocal class, and then again 1-2 hours of dance practice. And in the evening, after lessons, we had to do more practice! It was tough, and I didn't like being in Madras, but I'd made up my mind I was going to stay there until I had learned all about Bharat Natyam.

Bharat Natyam is a very old dance form; we believe it was created by Brahma the Creator and first danced in front of Lord Siva. The stories are about the gods—Krishna, Rama—as told in books like the 'Ramayana'. In earlier times, the dances were danced in front of Kings and before devotees in temples, but by the beginning of this century Bharat Natyam was dying out. Then the dance teacher Rukmini founded Kalakshetra. She wanted to revive the dance by allowing it to be danced everywhere, so making it available for everyone to enjoy...

You don't have to be Indian to dance Bharat Natyam well, but you do have to believe in what you are dancing. When I dance Krishna, for example, I have to become

PHOTO ALAN



"From a very young age, I was studying with Andre Tardeil when he was still living in Fraternity. Then, when New Creation started in 1984, he took me in as one of the first boarders; I was the only girl. In those days, we had to really learn how to look after ourselves. I was only seven, but we had to wash our own clothes, keep our rooms clean, cook for ourselves etc. It made me more disciplined and independent.

I became interested in dance when I was very small. Mary Babu—Andre's wife—gave me dance classes in Fraternity, and when I moved to New Creation, Andre asked me if I wanted to continue with a professional teacher—Krishna Kumar—who lives in Pondicherry. I said yes, so three times a week I would go to his house. Sometimes Andre would take me, but other times I would cycle or even run there by the sea, dance, swim and then run back! (A distance of about 10 kilometre—eds.)

Later, Krishna Kumar started giving classes in Auroville, but they didn't help me because the classes were too big. It was then that I got the chance to go to Kalakshetra. It happened because Eric and Elizabeth, two Belgians who had been in Auroville when I was young and had seen me dance, offered to pay my tuition there for four years. When I went for the interview at the Academy, they were happy with my dancing, but they were concerned that I didn't have a 10th Standard schooling certificate; I'd been educated in Auroville schools which don't give certificates. Finally, the well-known dancer Chandralekha, who is a good friend of Auroville and was educated at Kalakshetra, spoke for me, and I was allowed to join.

him. If I remain Saroja, everybody will sense that I'm not dancing well. When you learn Bharat Natyam, you learn there are six main Bhavams or types of expression, and sometimes you have to be able to change from one to the other very fast when you are dancing; but you have to really feel the change inside as well as expressing it outwardly.

When I finished my studies at Kalakshetra and returned to Auroville, I didn't like it here. In Madras I was used to strict discipline, but here nobody pushed me to do anything. I felt bored and dull. Most difficult of all, there is no atmosphere of dance, particularly Bharat Natyam, in Auroville; nobody here can do it properly. Now one of my friends from the Academy has come to stay with me, and we can practice together, but I really feel a need to build up the knowledge of Bharat Natyam in Auroville; that's the main reason I came back.

So at the moment I am teaching Bharat Natyam in many of the Auroville schools. I found it difficult at first because I'd never been taught how to teach. And the way they teach you at Kalakshetra—which is very strict—would never be accepted by the kids here! So I had to find my own way, which was to play with them and teach them at the same time.

Have I changed in the last four years? All my friends say so. I used to play a lot, and not be serious about my studies when I was in New Creation. But now when I go there, I tell the students they must study hard, be disciplined, keep clean and neat—sometimes I even find myself shouting at them! But I came back to Auroville because this is still the place I want to be."

From an interview with Alan on 30.7.93