

# AUROVILLE TODAY

Number 102 July 1997

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## Managing our house

**"E**conomy": Somehow the word always manages to convey a sense of gloom. There is always this feeling in Auroville that, despite our best attempts, things in the economic realm are not going right and no one really knows how to set them right. The word itself, economy, is derived from the Greek word, "oikonomos", meaning "managing the house." And yes, there are definitely shortcomings in our attempts to manage the house of Auroville. There is a growing tendency to measure our economic shortcomings in terms of money (the most tangible yardstick of economic forces), in the generation, distribution and expenditure of money. This can be seen in the balancing act that the Central Fund does every month to meet its budget, in the cash maintenance with which the Aurovilians meet their basic needs, and so on. Yet, money, as an American economist, David C. Korten reminds us, "is not wealth." "Wealth," says Korten, "is something that has real value in meeting our needs and fulfilling our wants. Modern money is only a number on a piece of paper or an electronic trace in a computer that by social convention gives its holder a claim on real wealth. In our confusion we concentrate on the money to the neglect of those things that actually sustain a good life." Jonathan Rowe, another leading economic thinker in the USA, goes a step further when he says, "The basic function of money is to bring needs and resources together. But the conventional money system is failing miserably in this regard. Vast human resources sit idle, while vast needs go unmet... Money isn't just a means to carry out transactions, as economists say. The kind of money we use determines, in large measure, the kinds of transactions that occur, and the kind of economy that results. Conventional money is a means of transactions between strangers, and so encourages an economy in which people deal with one another in that way." These lines of thought will be familiar to those acquainted with the Mother's writings. As early as 1958, she said, "Money is meant to circulate...It is the material improvement of

terrestrial life and the growth of the earth's production that must go on expanding, enlarging and not this silly paper or this inert material that is amassed and lifeless. Money is not meant to generate money; money should generate an increase in production, an improvement in the conditions of life and a progress in human consciousness. This is its true use." Auroville has a long way to go before it learns to use money consciously, in the true way. But at present, recognising the limitations of money, making use of things—natural resources, human resources, human services—that sustain a good life, and balancing the needs of the community with the needs of the individual, are some of the steps we can take towards setting our house right.

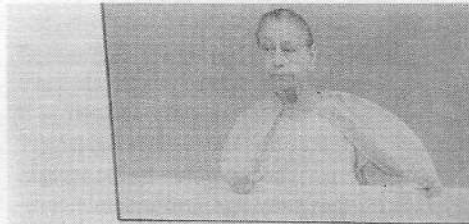
Bindu

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At the Financial Service

In the universe there is an inexhaustible source of energy that asks only to be replenished; if you know how to go about it, it is replenished. Instead of draining life and the energies of our earth and making of it something parch and inert, we must know the practical exercise for replenishing the energy constantly. And these are not just words; I know how it's to be done, and science is in the process of thoroughly finding out—it has found out most admirably. But instead of using it to satisfy human passions, instead of using what science has found so that men may destroy each other more effectively than they are presently doing, it must be used to enrich the earth: to make the earth richer and richer, more active, generous, productive and to make all life grow towards its maximum efficiency. This is the true use of money. And if it's not used like that, it's a vice—a "short circuit" and a vice. But how many people know how to use it in this way? Very few, which is why they have to be taught. What I call "teach" is to show, to give the example. We want to be the example of true living in the world. It's a challenge I am placing before the whole financial world: I am telling them that they are in the process of withering and ruining the earth with their idiotic system; and with even less than they are now spending for useless things—merely for inflating something that has no inherent life, that should be only an instrument at the service of life, that has no reality in itself, that is only a means and not an end (they make an end of something that is only a means)—well then, instead of making of it an end, they should make it the means. With what they have at their disposal they could...oh, transform the earth so quickly! Transform it, put it into contact, truly into contact, with the supramental forces that would make life bountiful and, indeed, constantly renewed—instead of becoming withered, stagnant, shrivelled up: a future moon. A dead moon. We are told that in a few millions or billions of years, the earth will become some kind of moon. The movement should be the opposite: the earth should become more and more a resplendent sun, but a sun of life. Not a sun that burns, but a sun that illumines—a radiant glory.

The Mother (4 October 1958)





## Some economic activities

**The Central Fund:** The Central Fund was started in 1989 as a system to collectively support Auroville's service units and other collective responsibilities. Its income is generated from commercial units, which contribute varying percentages of their profits; from contributions from guests; from donations by individual Aurovilians; from the Rs 750 scheme, under which each unit pays Rs 750 a month for each Aurovillian working for that unit; and from interest on deposits. The Central Fund distributes this income of approx. Rs 14 lakhs/- per month (approx. US \$ 40,000) to about 70 services.

**The Financial Service:** The Financial Service started in the seventies as an attempt to do away with cash transactions in Auroville by keeping computerised accounts of the cash holdings of Aurovilians. In July '95, it was successful in mobilising savings of individual Aurovilians which were standing in low interest-generating bank accounts. Individual Aurovilians agreed to forgo these interests, and to pool their savings together in the Financial Service, resulting at present in a total capital of over 1 crore (approx. US \$ 285,000). The interest on this capital is now mainly used to finance the monthly budgets of the Central Fund. Since September '96, the Financial Service has also acquired the right to deal in foreign exchange.

**The Common Account:** An experiment started by a group of about 80 people in January 1994 to put all their maintenances into a common pot from which individuals can take goods and cash as per their needs. Cash withdrawals are restricted to payment of miscellaneous bills plus some pocket money. Aurovilians who do not depend entirely on an Auroville maintenance donate an extra 10% of their personal money.

**Seed:** Seed is an experiment that has been continuing since 1993. It has, at present, 25 full-time working Aurovilians who pool in their maintenances together and take what they need in cash and kind.

**LETS:** LETS is a system that uses services rendered by people and not cash as the basis of exchange. It has been successfully used in communities in Australia, New Zealand and UK. A few Aurovilians have just begun to experiment with a variation of the LETS system.

**Nandini:** At present, Nandini, is an experiment in collective sharing that provides necessary items like clothing and bed-linen. Nandini purchases its goods in bulk and then participants of Nandini can take what they need without paying for it directly. The cost of replacing and expanding the stock is borne each month by all participants equally. To join Nandini, one must commit oneself for a minimum of 3 months. A part of children's maintenances, borne by The Central Fund, is now given to Nandini to enable parents to provide their children with clothing.

**The Freestore:** The Freestore was born unofficially and spontaneously in 1972 as an exchange point for clothes. Aurovilians take whatever clothes they need and donate whatever they do not need. Some garment factories of Auroville also donate new items of clothing.

**Mahasarawati:** Mahasarawati, started in 1995, is the "freestore" for household appliances. Things like, irons, toasters, blenders etc. but also building products can be given or taken away at Mahasarawati.

**The Caring Service/Prosperity:** Started in 1991, the Caring Service also known as Prosperity attempts to link needs and resources amongst Aurovilians. Individuals communicate to the Caring Service their need for a specific good and the Caring Service then tries to fulfil that need by either approaching other Aurovilians personally or by putting a note in the AV News.

*From April 25 till May 8, Dr. Henk Thomas visited Auroville to do some research on Auroville's economy. Henk is known in Auroville as Chairman of the Dutch foundation, Stichting De Zaaier, that has been financing many projects in Auroville over the past eleven years. What is not so well-known is that Henk is professionally interested in alternative systems of economy. In 1973 he did his Ph.D. at Cornell University on the Economics of Self-Management in Yugoslavia; later, he spent a few years in research and wrote an economic analysis of the Mondragon group, a network of co-operatives, consisting of a bank, factories and educational institutions in the Basque region of Spain. He has also studied other alternative economic systems, such as the Israeli kibbutz. At present he is a senior professor of employment and labour studies at the Institute of Social Studies at the Hague, The Netherlands. Henk was asked by some members of the Funds and Assets Management Committee to study Auroville's economy with reference to Mother's vision of Auroville, to give his views on the socio-economic model which emerged from the study, and to advise on the steps to be taken to progress from the present reality towards Mother's vision. Here are excerpts from the speech that Henk gave after his study of Auroville's economy:*

This is not the first time I have come to Auroville; but it is the first occasion where I have had a lot of time for myself, not having to attend long meetings on the numerous projects that Stichting de Zaaier has sponsored in Auroville. I have spent this time studying all that the Mother has said on Auroville and in particular on Auroville's economic system. I must admit that I have been pleasantly surprised. I discovered that The Mother was extremely broad-minded and pragmatic, that she gave practical answers as the situation required. If one goes through the whole range of The Mother's words on Auroville, one finds it to be non-dogmatic and non-ideological, with a wisdom, a coherence and consistency behind it. Now I assume that there is a whole other body of knowledge on social-economic aspects which was written by Mother or noted down from Mother's words which is not included in "Auroville in Mother's words." After all, Mother was 90

when she started Auroville, and I think it will be very unlikely that Her statements on Auroville have not been anticipated before Auroville got started. On that I have done no work at all. I am sure it would be profitable to look at the earlier works of the Mother to study Her words on the economy of the Ashram, and even India and the world. There is a lot in Her sayings which allows one to be pragmatic, to gradually adopt certain principles and guidelines. This implies that there is a heavy responsibility on every new generation to translate those principles into the reality of their days.

I feel that often a fierce discussion takes place in Auroville on what I would call "holy principles." These are words of Mother

which are taken in such an absolute sense that they have become stereotypes. To check this out, I meticulously went through all the hundred issues of **Auroville Today** to find out what kind of interpretations of Mother's words over the years has taken place. A few issues came out rather strongly.

### A Monetary or Non-Monetary Economy?

One of these is the debate of whether to have a monetary or a non-monetary economy. It seems to me that this debate has been very heavily overplayed compared to the weight it has in Mother's sayings, and certainly compared to the role that this issue now plays in the community. It took me a while to realise that The Mother's vision of having a non-monetary economy in Auroville is a principle of first order for many Aurovilians. But it seems to me that, apart from a sincere attempt to understand Mother's vision, one should not exclude the possibility that the intellectual heritage of the first and second generations of Aurovilians—those who came in the end of the sixties and in the early seventies—plays a very important role in determining the way they look at money. I mean here that those Aurovilians grew up in a time where the socialist and Marxist thought had a tremendous influence, particularly on the accumulation and dominance of money and the powers that go with it. This led to a relatively easy conclusion that money is the root of all evil, and the equally easy solution to do away with money and find alternatives. But now, in 1997, it still has not been possible to realise a truly non-monetary economy. There has been a ideological crash of major proportions with the collapse of Eastern Europe, demonstrating that the communist mar-

ket system has nothing to offer. It shows that one has to very careful not to adopt models of non-monetary economy which have proven to be failures. It shows, to me at least, also that the principle of a non-monetary economic system is a secondary one, not a primary one. In other words, it is a system which

might be realisable when other parameters have been fulfilled.

This issue has also received undue emphasis in relation to the role that it now plays within the community. The present system, be it cash, credit card or an account system with the financial service, is essentially monetary. Moreover, the services survey which was held last year (see AVT #90) and in which over 95% of the entire adult population of Auroville participated, asked the question what type of economy—cash or kind—Aurovilians wanted. As much as 68% of the population said that they did not mind having a mixed (cash and kind) economy. Only 4% of the community said that they wanted a economy which is fully in kind.

# AUROVILLE:

### The Need for Equality

One of those other parameters which, according to me, have a larger importance than the monetary vs. non-monetary discussion, is the principle of equality. In the world at large, inequality is the norm, particularly with the current globalisation and the liberal capitalism. Ratios of inequality of the dimension of 50 to 1, or even 100 to 1, are normal, and in a few countries, such as the USA, excesses which can lead to inequalities of 1000 to 1 or more are prevalent and even encouraged. This is an excess of a sickening economy. I believe that Auroville can be compared to the communal type of organisations that are prevalent in the world. By doing so, I have come to the conclusion that the inequalities in Auroville are rather large. And if one thinks of principles of collectivity and solidarity, the problem of inequality needs to be addressed, not only within Auroville, but also in the larger context of Auroville and its bio-region. There is a great amount of inequality in Auroville—inequality in earnings, inequality in assets, cash-and-kind inequality and so on. The Mother, I found, acknowledged quite a bit of inequality for She speaks of a ratio of 5 to 1 in terms of coupons, which, in terms of money, is equal to 7 to 1 or even 10 to 1. She obviously never had in mind a thing like pure equality or major equality of say 3 to 1.

There needs to develop in Auroville a collective awareness of and concern for the inequality that exists within the community and also in the economy of the surrounding villages. Here, I think more work is needed in clarifying certain basic concepts: What are acceptable levels of maintenance?; What are acceptable differences between the maintenances of individual Aurovilians doing different types of work?; And what are the acceptable levels of difference between the maintenances of the Aurovilians and those who come here to work from the villages?

I know that at the present moment, it is not feasible for Auroville to include the villagers who work here, in the internal economy of Auroville. The system would collapse if it also tried to cater to the needs of the villagers. But, personally I cannot see Auroville attaining its spiritual goals if it does not take into account the surrounding villages. Auroville is part of a wider community by virtue of belonging to a particular bio-region. Aurovilians should learn to accept the surrounding villages as part of Auroville. I must say I am very happy to note that since my first visit, more and more Aurovilians have come to think along these lines.

### Respect for one-another's work

In fighting inequality, central imposition does not work—that has been proven in Auroville. But I learned from the Mondragon experience that people can voluntarily come to the decision that it is fair to restrain one's earnings to enable other people to lead a more decent life. The essence is a community-wide solidarity and a respect for one another's work. This too has to develop in Auroville.

In Auroville's past there has been a strong separation and even a rather antagonistic attitude between those working in commercial and those working in service units. This may have been a valid distinction in the early

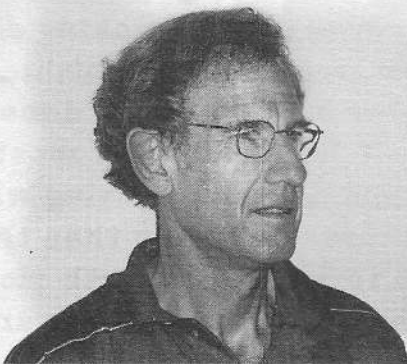


PHOTO: CAREL

**"Just as the community has a responsibility towards the individual, the individual has a responsibility towards the community."**



# An Economy in Stagnation?

years, but today, in 1997, Auroville should no longer focus on this distinction. I believe that the stereotyping as it has happened in the past has done a lot of damage to the community—the community has got stagnated in a stalemate regarding work. It is necessary to respect and re-value work and production that is undertaken not only in commercial units, in agriculture, in services, but also in households or community maintenance. As another parameter, a fresh look needs to be taken at the whole work situation.

## The Need for Industrialisation

Auroville's economy is close to stagnation. Its expansion is very low. For example, the performance of the agricultural sector has not noticeably improved; the expansion of the economic activities is slow; industries are not developing at all. The level of maintenance remains low, and the tightness of the Central Fund budgets is well known. It is possible of course that on a spiritual level there is a tremendous growth, but on the social and economic spheres, it is definitely not a dynamic situation.

In order to become the city of the future that Auroville aspires to be, there needs to come about enormous developments—investments of capital, agricultural developments, and industrial development. Industry has been on the agenda of Auroville from the very beginning. One of the four zones of the city described by the Mother is the industrial zone. And this is only fitting for in the world today, industrialisation is considered to be an integral part of any developing unit. But this challenge of industrialisation with all its complexity, with all the problems in the production and distribution of material wealth that it brings, is one that has not been sufficiently taken up in Auroville.

One should look at the potential and possibilities for industrialisation in Auroville, especially in relation to the current economic developments in India. The economic liberalisation in India has resulted in an unprecedented industrial development that has taken place in a short span of time. There has been a nation-wide development of short and medium investments, a booming of the capital system with all its advantages and disadvantages. However, nothing of that boom is seen in Auroville. The few small and labour intensive units that exist here are to be commended, but by and large there has been no real industrial expansion. It may be that the disastrous experience with Aurelec has been a cause for this where, it appears, certain developments at the personal level and at the economic and commercial level could no longer be handled. This is a great pity because Aurelec had the potential to continue to expand and link Auroville to the nation and to the world. It appears that both parties have lost in this case.

For industrialisation to happen a number of conditions will have to be met. First, is the element of entrepreneurship. This is vital, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises. There is an enormous amount of human resources in Auroville that can be developed as entrepreneurial talent if the atmosphere is right. This implies that a welcoming and stimulating attitude towards commerce and industry in Auroville has to be

developed. Secondly, the availability of money and credit system is an essential element. Now there is definitely the possibility of mobilising money in Auroville—there are sums of money lying in several banks, so money is not a key bottleneck. Then what is blocking industrialisation? This calls for careful reflection. It needs to be determined what kind of industry one would like to have in Auroville. Your Governing Board considered in its February meeting that Auroville's industrial sector should be a research, development and training centre for green industries and should become a springboard for the technological empowerment of women and men in the neighbouring villages, but it seems that within Auroville not much reflection on this topic has taken place. Auroville should consider what kind of industrial model it wishes to promote and consider patterns of distribution of earnings, management, participatory processes of decision-making, etc. Auroville has always set high standards for itself, and in the area of industrialisation it should certainly not blindly adopt just any model.

## Banking

I consider it unlikely that Auroville will develop an attractive socio-economic model unless there is a considerable awareness that money needs to be controlled in a sophisticated manner through a banking mechanism. It would be a shortcoming of the city of future if it does not seriously experiment with a banking system.

Auroville has over 1200 members. There are some 600 households; there are over 50 commercial units; there are over 70 service units; there is a central fund; there are important flows of funds for projects from within India and abroad...so it looks to me that there are a sufficient number of ingredients to begin the experiment of a small co-operative bank.

Here, I have to say something about the concept of co-operatives. They were considered a viable alternative to the capitalistic and communistic systems, especially in Yugoslavia—basically the only country where it has been tried in the economic sphere. (At the national level the system did not have much success.) At the individual level, all over the world, there have been a thousand sympathetic initiatives, some of which have been very successful, but many have broken down. It appears that only the more complex co-operatives, such as the Kibbutz system in Israel or Mondragon in Spain, manage to continue successfully. That same complexity marks Auroville - the presence of units that produce, distribute and consume, the presence of agriculture, services, industry and commerce. That gives

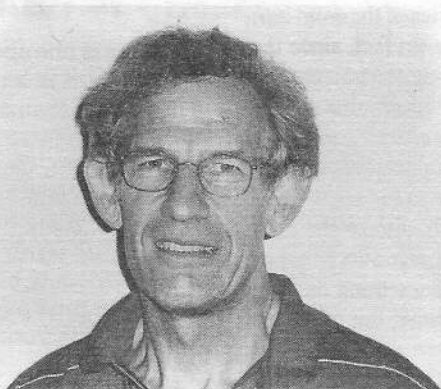


PHOTO: GAREL

**"Surveys help to de-politicise issues, face issues honestly and voice the concern of the minorities."**

the certainty that an Auroville bank is feasible. The presence of a bank will greatly stimulate the development of commerce and industry as it will be easier to obtain credit. [Auroville cannot give the usual collateral that is required by banks to advance loans.] Also, an Auroville bank

will be more sympathetic to problems of individuals and units in Auroville.

## Linking spiritual objectives and socio-economic goals

A basic problem that I believe touches on a core of the conflict and on which I have no creative thought to offer, is the matter of the ultimate objective of Auroville's actions. For instance, from a capitalistic point of view, the aim of a commercial unit's action is profit maximisation. Co-operatives have a very different set of objectives, social objectives like education, creation of jobs, etc. But here I find (and there seems to be a consensus on this) that one works for spiritual objectives. Now if there is no link between spiritual objectives and socio-economic goals, then I think one gets stuck...completely. There is this sense of complete freedom, which translates itself as "I define what I do and that is for my spiritual fulfilment, and I am not ready to be tested by anybody or by any social or economic criteria." Such an attitude poses a very fundamental problem. I believe that, just as the community has a responsibility towards the individual, that individual has a responsibility towards the community. This implies that the individual should be ready to answer questions. If the community cannot reach a consensus on this, I predict a rather high degree of stagnation.

## Principles of Management

Auroville needs to improve and stabilise its internal government for no economic system can operate without a stable governing system. The more complex Auroville becomes, the less will it be possible to find solutions in round-table discussions. Yet one needs to search for democratic patterns of decision-making—that means a combination of a certain hierarchy of decision-making power and the accumulation of knowledge of a large number of people accountability. This implies that mechanisms have to be developed that result in a consensus in a reasonable amount of time. Dialogue is of course necessary, but if one has no means to reach solutions, then one's ideals may break down. For I believe that consensus belongs to the ABC of my interpretation of spiritual values. Consensus does not mean that a voting majority wins over the minority, but that there is a mechanism which ensures that the minority has been listened to, that the majority has taken elements of the minority's views into account.

(continued on page 7)

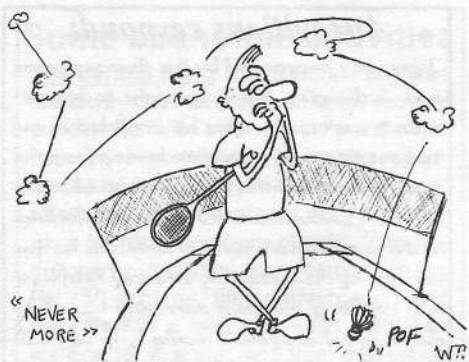
## Aurovilians respond:

I am very impressed by the thoroughness and dedication Henk brought to his research especially after he confided in me that our economy was quite boring from the experimental point of view. The conclusions he has reached are far from comforting, and are even more disheartening as he has very firmly dismissed my strongly held view that creating our own currency based on our own value system would help us realise our "dream" economy where "money is no longer the Sovereign Lord". I have always believed that if we dare to be original and revolutionary we would find solutions to the problems (of inequality, self-sufficiency, maintenance vs. development) that Henk so succinctly identifies and analyses. The only point where daily experience, the evidence of my own eyes, forces me to disagree with him is when he concludes, "Auroville's economy is close to stagnation." One would have to consult the balance sheets to evaluate exactly the dimensions of the quantum leap Auroville has made in the last couple of years, in terms of new projects and new buildings, but stagnating, Auroville is not. I am willing to concede many deficiencies in our economy, including that it is boring, but I think this is probably because it reflects, in reality, the spirit of pragmatism that Henk has rightly admired in Mother's approach. **Judith**

I found Henk's talk particularly refreshing because he reminded us that Mother's approach is not dogmatic. It does not cling to vision, system, thought or interest—all of which are in a sense, personal and collective indulgences. All economic systems of all times have been a consequence of individual and collective interest, at times based on the vision of a leader, but more typically based on elemental need, production, distribution, power, control, interest. Every other community in the world exists for its own sake. Not Auroville. The current manifestation of Auroville as a multiplicity of different economic forms then is not negative: it is a translation of what each person is presently capable of into a concrete contribution. Like Henk's observation of Mother's words on Auroville, Auroville itself cannot cling to vision, system, thought or interest. The world does not need just another city. **Stuart**

I feel Henk is right when he speaks of the stagnation of the Auroville Economy. But it is true for Auroville in general. As we see things changing to some extent as well as new people coming in all the time, we may have an impression of growth. But, after all, it will be 30 years that Auroville has been founded and we are only a little above 1000 Aurovilians. And things do stagnate here mostly, I believe, due to a lot of mistrust. To come back to the economy, yes, I think it is high time to have a proper bank. For the industrialisation, which is effectively hardly happening, a small group of Aurovilians who have some knowledge, experience and contacts in India in this domain should work together to see what can be done to accelerate things. There are quite a number of devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who might be interested to do some industrial development in or around Auroville. Of course, as we do not want to have a repeat of such experiences we have had with Aurofood, Auroshika and Aurelec (by far, the bitterest!), there will have to be a very clear legal framework under which different options might be opened. **Alain Bernard**





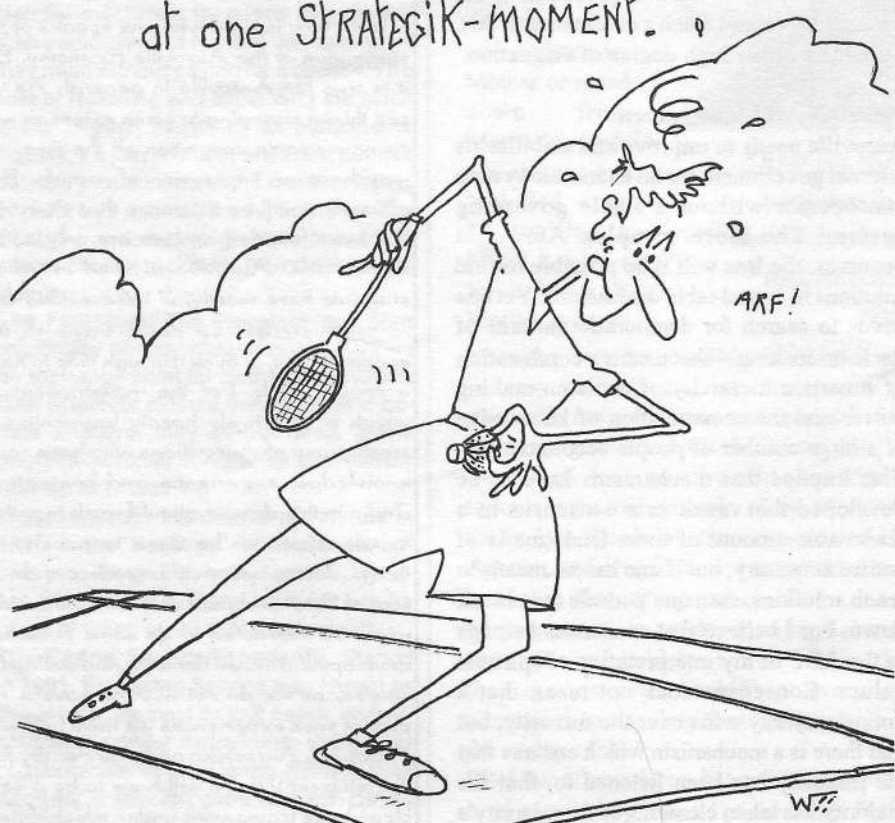
## War by other means: badminton Auroville-style

There are two theories about the origins of badminton. One is that it originated in the grounds of a stately English country house during the 18th century. The other is that it first saw the light of day when two bored cavemen with clubs were whacking around a prehistoric bird to give themselves an appetite for dinner (sabre-tooth tiger a la terrine). Whatever the truth of these two theories, it's clear that the game which is played twice a week in the Auroville community of Samridhhi bears a much closer resemblance to cavemen with clubs than to a languid afternoon pastime for effete Englishmen and Englishwomen ("Jolly good shot, sir"). Just look at the line-up to begin with: Theo the terrible, Steve the shuttle-cleaver, Jérôme (fresh from the terraces of Ajax) the expletive, Bill the...er, clown, Anil the unanswerable, Alan the drop... Then consider the conditions. Badminton players who belong to the smarter clubs are used to seeing the line markings, used to playing with shuttles that have a full complement of feathers, used to a net which has holes smaller than the shuttle, used to playing with rackets where the head of the racket has a fixed relationship to the shaft, used to certain social niceties and sportsmanship ("Sorry I whacked you over the head, old chap. Shall I call an ambulance?"). They are used to a certain standard of sartorial elegance (white shirt, white socks, white shoes broken only by the advertising logo of their sponsor). In Samridhhi none of these things can be taken for granted. The venue is a clearing in the forest, many of the

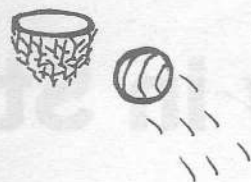
lines marking the boundaries of the court have not been visible for years (in fact, since that big rain in 1987), predicting the trajectory of the battered shuttles would require an Einstein, the net is a large hole artfully surrounded by a few, wispy threads of cotton, some of the rackets look like rejects for snow-shoes in the Klondike gold rush. As for the dress code—well, we have managed to persuade the greenbelters to wear something on court even if it's only a head-band, but otherwise anything goes—half of the regular players can't even afford a pair of shoes. And as for sponsorship—who would sponsor this shambling battlefield of 40-somethings bent on recapturing those elusive days of youth? Who would fly in the BBC or CNN for these encounter sessions in the laterite dust which make even mud wrestling seem like the height of sophistication? And yet, badminton in Samridhhi has its charms. Partly it's to do with thrusting one's hand into a thicket of thorns in search of the shuttle only to pull out a snake, partly it's to do with receiving a shuttle up the left nostril as the evening fades into night, partly it's to do with contacting other spheres of experience as heat-exhaustion sets in, partly it's to do with savouring between games Steve's unique pick-me-up drink—brewed, it is rumoured, out of ancient candle ends and reconstituted door-mats—partly it's the sheer joy of knowing, at the need of the day, that one won't have to play again for at least three days... And yet, the regulars keep returning. Wherever they are, whatever they are doing, come 4.30 on a Monday or Thursday afternoon their eyes glaze over, their arms jerk uncontrollably, they begin to grunt. Seizing whatever mode of transport is to hand, they fly through the forest, they churn through the canyons, until they reach that sacred patch of earth in the heart of Samridhhi. Ah, sweet battleground.

Alan

## Badminton: John Smitt at one STRATEGIK-MOMENT.



# The Games



## BASKETBALL: The Rise of a Team

If there is one sport in which Aurovilians engage, it is basketball. There are at least five teams that participate in local tournaments: Aspiration, Auroville, New Creation, Certitude and Fraternity. Each team can be said to be driven by a certain ambition; but, driven by the impatience of the youth, the After School boys of the Fraternity basketball team are relentless in their pursuit of the championship title in the Pondicherry Basketball Association's most prestigious tournament: Federation Cup Championship. They are eager to grab the top slot in Pondicherry

post player, feels that the reason for this was, "we had given too much importance and played too hard in our previous matches against teams that we normally breeze past. We had drained our energy too early in the tournament on matches that weren't crucial." Two weeks after the Eagles tournament, the Fraternity team were given another chance to try for the No. 1 ranking: The New Creation Basketball club conducted its first annual state-level tournament at New Creation. Unfortunately, the Fraternity team weren't in a position to capitalise on the home court



The Fraternity Team: seated (L to R): Murugan, Palani, Rajendran, Elumalai, Ravi standing (L to R): Sundar, Martanda, Selvam (captain), Kalia, Bala, Velu

State just as the Auroville Club had done it from 1982 to 1991 and the Silver Arrows of Muthialpet had done it from 1992 to 1996. Within the short span of five years, the Fraternity Basketball Club has rapidly advanced in its ranking in Pondicherry State. When it first registered itself in the summer of 1992, the Fraternity team was ranked 15th in the Pondicherry Basketball Association. Today it is ranked 3rd. When questioned about their achievement, Palani, the 19 years old, short, quick-footed, fast-breaking forward of the Fraternity club said, "in our first year itself, we won the Junior Championship title in Pondicherry. We have been training very hard and I think it is time it paid off. We intend to be No. 1 in Pondicherry State." The Fraternity team averaging 19 years of age, are led by their captain, Selvam. In 1996 they stormed into the finals of the annual state level tournament hosted by the Blue Diamond Basketball Club after beating the reigning champion, Silver Arrows. Velu, the 17-year-old guard who joined the Fraternity team in 1995 when he was still at Last School, proudly recalls those rejoicing moments: "We (the substitutes) were all so thrilled to beat the reigning champions. We jumped into the air, screaming with joy. Though we were all shorter than most of the players of the Silver Arrows team, we beat them by 4 points." The Fraternity team however then lost to the Auroville team in the finals. In the spring of 1997, at the state-level tournament organised by the Eagles Basketball club, the overall performance of the Fraternity team was not at all satisfying. They made it to the semi-finals but then again lost the match to the Auroville team. Martanda, the left

advantage because of mounting academic pressure: all the boys in the team were taking their Senior Secondary Examinations in May. "We had to stop our morning practice sessions as we would be too tired to concentrate on our studies in the latter part of the day," said Martanda. The team however managed to retain their No. 3 ranking by beating the Blue Diamond Club. In May 1997, in the annual basketball tournament organised by the Challengers Club at the Rajiv Gandhi indoor stadium in Upalam, Pondicherry, the Fraternity team could not defend its colours as they had to study for their exams. Fifteen teams participated in this tournament: 12 from Pondicherry and 3 from Auroville. The Auroville Club convincingly won the tournament to be No. 1 in Pondicherry. Selvam is not in the least disheartened. He says confidently, "After our exams are over, we will start training and in a year or two, we will beat them all, Auroville, Silver Arrows, Blue Diamond and Jipmer. We are determined to be the No. 1 team in Pondicherry." Of the 12 players: Selvam, Martanda, Ravi, Kalia, Elumalai, Palani, Murugan, Velu, Rajendran, Bala, Sunder and Suresh, the first six have represented Pondicherry State in many of the National Basketball championships. Four of them, Ravi, Martanda, Palani, and Murugan will be playing for the Pondicherry team in the Nationals in New Delhi in this year. In a year or two, the rest of the team will be good enough to be selected to represent Pondicherry State. And this is precisely what Selvam is aiming for: "I want my entire team to play in the Junior National Championship."

Jothi



We



Play



## The Art of Cricket

**T**he great game of cricket is probably the most misunderstood of all mankind's creations. "It's just a bunch of people standing around in a field with someone 'throwing' the ball and someone else trying to hit it with a bit of wood." Such misconceptions couldn't be further from the truth and for the uninitiated, this is an attempt to explain what happens in a typical cricket match in our area and to set the record straight. First of all you usually have to hang around for a couple of hours waiting either for the chief

guests or the "neutral" umpires to arrive. This is a slightly enervating process as you can feel the heat steadily mounting and know that, as usual, you are going to be playing over the 4 hottest hours of the day. Meantime a ground inspection normally reveals unnameable or unrecognisable substances lying around, which seem to be positioned just where the batsman is most likely to hit the ball. If you are unlucky enough to be fielding in these danger zones, you spend a lot of time praying that the ball that passes you doesn't hit any of the mines in the minefield so to speak. Apart from this, it is not uncommon to have to chase a few pigs, buffaloes, people or goats off the pitch. In Villupuram, one of the local bus drivers has decided that the cricket pitch is a convenient place for a U turn and play would be periodically halted as he exhibited his Formula-1 skills in a cloud of dust. Indeed these, dusty, crater-ridden, path-dissected battlegrounds are unconvincing cricket pitches; nor can the inch-long thorns, generously scattering the outfield, substitute for the look or feel of newly cut grass as bare-footed fielders can testify. One of our fielders can

also testify to the ferocity of the local telegraph poles, having been severely savaged by one that mysteriously strayed onto the pitch during a match. The impression therefore that cricketers are simply standing around is obviously false. The above mentioned natural and man-made hazards require incredible powers of concentration and years of carefully cultivated skill to neutralize. Trying to catch a ball that has been skied into the glare of the noon sun at the same time as dodging buffaloes, cyclist, telegraph poles, thorns and averting a head-on collision with the local bus driver, performing a loop around the pitch, requires a sharp and focused mind, to say the least. The wicket is usually a rather good imitation of the Himalayas and batting on it is a formidable prospect. Many are the batsmen who can recount how the ball of yorker length bounced up to whisper, "Get you next time old boy" as it hissed by at 80 kph. The Palmyra Cricket team, being devilishly well prepared, has cleverly taken to nullifying this problem with copious quantities of Amrutanjan and Tiger Balm, with the occa-

sional visit to the health centre. The opposite delivery, pitched well inside the bowlers half and intended to graze the outer limits of the atmosphere as it passes the batsman, usually hits the unsuspecting fellow on the ankles (also at 80 kph), as the ball decides for a split second to impersonate a mole. The Amrutanjan/Tiger Balm strategy has been found to be equally useful in these situations. As anyone in their right mind can imagine, in these conditions, the pleasure of driving the ball through the covers off the thick of the willow, or clipping to leg off the toes, or best of all, letting loose with maximum power and cutting square for four, are moments to savour. Cricket is played with incredible intensity, and it is not uncommon to have a mob in the centre of the pitch heatedly discussing the merits or otherwise of the umpires last decision. Was the ball a no-ball, wide or simply dead? And most contentiously, was that really LBW? Most of these things are pretty relative depending on which team the umpire is from, but after half an hour of verbal battery that would put a fish market to shame, the game is usually allowed to resume or in severe cases of disagreement, is repeated. Not long ago, a game that was within about 2 minutes of finishing was repeated all over again due to a wide ball call, a mere matter of some 4 hours or so of extra play. These small concerns should not put off anyone from taking to the game, particularly as the world's only German cricketer (a proud first for The City of Dawn) is steadily creating a tree-fringed oval to be proud of in Auroville. The Palmyra Cricket Association in Aurobrindavan is booming and players from as far afield as Edayanchavadi, Kulayapalayam, Auroville and the bottle factory in the Pondicherry industrial zone flock every day at 5 p.m., like moths to a candle flame, to practice the art of cricket.

Robert Anil Graves

## It's rugby... Kabaddi!

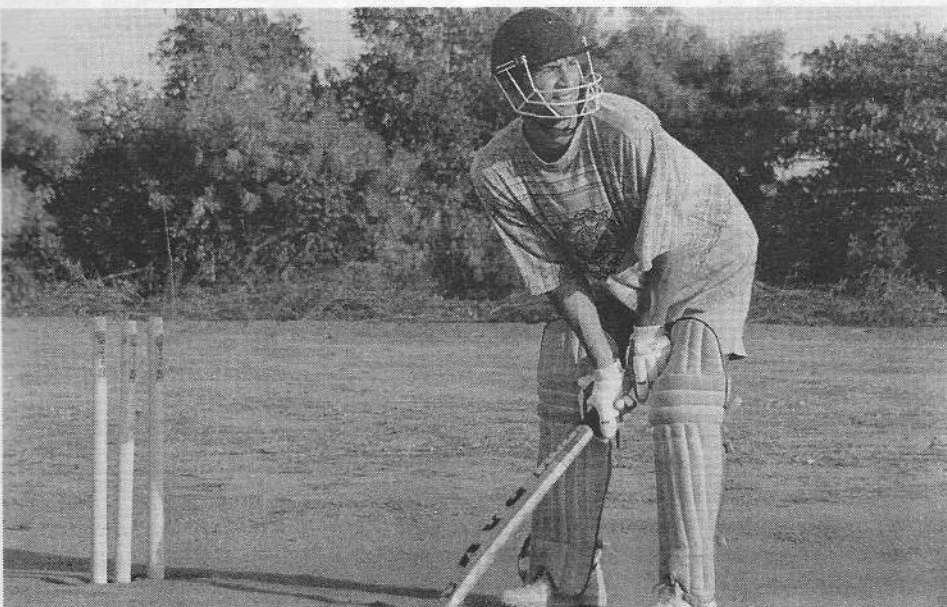
It's rugby. It's tag. It's wrestling. IT IS KABADDI!

**K**abaddi is one of the few indigenous Indian sports that has been promoted to the international level. Though it is seldom heard of in the Western countries, kabaddi is very popular in Southeast Asia. Kabaddi, which combines the qualities of rugby, tag and wrestling, is a game for both men and women, played in a hard court (usually clay) of 12.5m by 6.5m. There are 2 teams of 12 players each out of which 5 are reserves. Out of the 5 reserves, only 2 are active substitutes. The game is declared won when one team secures more points than the other. Points are secured by a team if its "raider", entering the opponent's ground on its "raid" touches one or more players of the opponent's team and returns back to the home ground successfully without being caught within a period of 30 seconds. The raider during his/her raid has to constantly repeat the word "kabaddi" aloud without pausing for breath. Each player touched by the raider is sent out of the court and consequently the raiding team gets one point for each person sent out. Conversely, the defending team scores a point by catching the raider and preventing him/her from returning to the home ground. A point is also secured if the raider loses his/her breath, or is pushed out of the boundary lines of the court by the defending team. Raiding and defending is done alternately by the two teams. Any player who is out can be regained by his/her team by either touching a defensive player while on a raid or, conversely catching a raider. If all the 7 players in a team are out, it is called a "lona", and it results in two additional points being awarded to the other team. The game resumes after a "lona" with all the 7 players coming back to the court. The game is played for 40 minutes with a break of 5 minutes in between. Though not as popular as basketball in Auroville, kabaddi is actively played by a number of Aurovilians. The Kabbadi Club of Auroville (men's) is affiliated to the Pondicherry Kabaddi Association and is ranked as one of the better clubs of this association. The Kabaddi club of Auroville has won the state championship title several times. And many of its players have represented the Pondicherry Kabaddi Association in both National and Zonal Championships in both the junior and senior categories.

Jothi



Some members of the Palmyra Cricket Association



The author at the crease



# HOW "QUIET" QUIETLY CAME TO BE

Many people want to know how the idea for Quiet came about and when and how it evolved. So many people even in Auroville had never heard of it till suddenly it was there, full-blown, hosting a world class homeopathic seminar. It is quite simple. Mother wanted Quiet, and so it came to be.

When did it start? It could be said that this strip of beach was waiting since the beginning of time. We know that Mother had told Gautam, who owned that plot of land, that she wanted it reserved for a therapeutic centre. She herself had gone there for walks in the early days and felt its special energy. Mother gave it the name of Quiet and wrote it in her own hand on the back of a photo of this beach with palm trees and a view of the sea. She never mentioned it to me in all the years that I was seeing her every day, though she did once tell me more than a quarter of a century ago that she had seen, in fact that she was seeing, a wonderful project in Auroville which I would be responsible for realizing. She was seeing it even as she spoke to me and was obviously charmed and delighted by it. Whether Mother knew this was Quiet or not I cannot tell, but I would like to say a little about Mother's great interest in healing about which she spoke to me on many occasions, especially concerning Auroville.

Mother asked me to write the first brochure for Auroville. She often spoke of what Auroville wanted to be, as though it were a being, which of course it is, an entity with its own soul. She would say, "Auroville wants to be the City of Light," or, "Auroville wants to be the city that heals," and this was a function that she felt as very central to Auroville.

It may surprise many that in those very early days she was even thinking of bringing out an Italian scientist who seemed to have found a cure for cancer from goat serum. It is known that goats never contract cancer, just as ducks never catch cold. In spite of the fact that she was always very much against injections she spoke to me of the possibility of letting him continue his research in Auroville because of the difficulties he was encountering in Italy. Paolo Tommasi remembers this since he was asked to contact the man when he returned to Italy. Auroville would have supported him and his research. In the event nothing came of it. Mother also paid for the passage of a French healer that she had Satprem invite to the Ashram, as readers of the Agenda will know. I quote these two instances to show how much Mother felt that it was a function of Auroville to heal. She said that emotional and other suffering was all drama, and she would wave her hand to dismiss it. There was only one suffering and that was physical suffering. Of course this is what she said to me at a certain time and in a certain context, and as we know she said other things at other times.

Well, in those early days I never for a moment thought I would be in any way involved in a healing centre. It is true that I was very interested in Homeopathy, and it is also true that it fell to Nata, an Italian sadhak, and myself to build the first maternity centre at Promesse, where Piero and Gloria's daughter, Graziurore was born. It did pass through my head that that little construction might have been what Mother had seen, but I gave it no further thought. It was long after, in 1983, that in the course of a long illness Nata had a very painful experience, both psychologically and physically, in a hospital in Europe. He had recovered splendidly from double pneumonia with the help of a homeopathic remedy and visited a hospital for a check-up. His lungs were found to be clear, but he was given an intravenous injection which landed him in the intensive care ward. In this particular experience he found the doctors and nurses so cold and uncaring (one nurse even threatened him) that he who had never ever complained about his illness actually wept, not for himself but for the condition of the world. It was probably here that the seed was planted for Quiet.

Here in the Ashram we were able to nurse Nata lovingly and one evening, some weeks before he left his body while I was feeding him he said suddenly, "There should be a hospital of love like this." These words must have been mantric because I was filled with an unexpected knowledge and power and I kept on repeating, "There will be such a place, there will be such a place, we will build it." A certain reasonable part of myself looked on in smiling disbelief. It had no intention of getting involved in this madness, but the words kept on coming out of my mouth: "We will do it, it will be done." Nata too smiled, refusing to take the words seriously. He knew he had only a short time left in his body and patted my hand reminding me of this. But all I could do was to repeat what I had already said, that we would do it. If Nata's words had been mantric, my voice must have carried so much conviction that the next day Nata got up and, taking his oxygen cylinder with him, made a few crude drawings at his desk. He was an engineer, but those very rudimentary sketches were all he was able to manage before crawling back into bed. Those sketches brought Quiet one step nearer realization. The most important part of the story has been told. Nata left his body on the 28th of March 1985. Perhaps there is not so much more to be told.

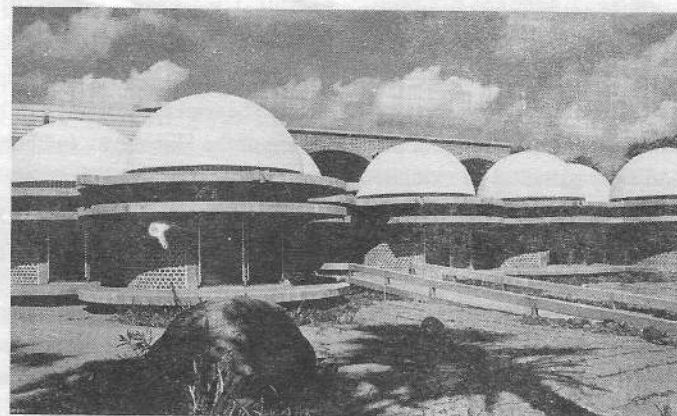
I had intended never, never to leave the Ashram again. A friend had predicted that I was going to have to visit several countries, which made me laugh in disbelief, but before the end of the year two factors joined to make his predictions come true. I had to find funds to finish the Udavi school which Nata had started, inspired by Mother's wish that he do something for the village of Edayanchavadi. I was told that there was a foundation in America that would probably give me the money if I went there to explain what we were doing in Udavi. And that year I received an invi-

tation out of the blue to present a paper at a congress on spirituality very near the headquarters of the foundation. All my expenses were to be paid from the moment I left Pondicherry. So I prepared a paper for the science section on the spiritual implications of homeopathy. This invitation came as a first indication that things would happen to help the Hospital of Love if I could remain open to the possibilities. I already knew that in the States I would research as much as possible into whatever lay on my path, the therapies which supported the intelligence of the organism, and indeed one possibility after another opened up, mainly through people that I met at the congress. The Native Americans have an astonishing knowledge and a cosmic comprehension of the causes and cures of disease. They understand that the disease itself is medicine. Everything is medicine. Friends were ever eager to drive my daughter and myself to centres of healing. It was in Mexico that I remembered Mother's deep desire to find a cure for cancer. There is a centre just over the border from the States where cancer is actually cured through diet, coffee enemas to stimulate the liver plus a vitamin which is extracted from the apricot kernel. I spoke to people in the clinic set amidst lovely grounds. Their tumours had begun to shrink after three weeks. One of the nurses there had originally come with a tumour the size of a grapefruit and had stayed on after her cure. This is the Gerson therapy named after the German physician who prescribed it. His daughter Charlotte explained that it was banned in the States because of the pharmaceutical industries. My interest in homeopathy was growing apace. I had already attended the courses of the Argentinean master Pro-

to the Ashram one day. "Didn't anyone tell you that I've been wanting to see you?" he said. He had heard that I was looking for a piece of land on the sea front for the Hospital of Love so that we could have hydrotherapies. Friends and therapists had donated a modest sum to acquire land. When I understood that he was trying to sell the piece of land on which Mother had wanted a therapeutic centre a deep silence descended on me. Of course.

It was Mother all along. The money available was very little, certainly much too little for such a prize plot right on the beach, but, faithful to Mother's wish, Gautam let it go for whatever was there.

For seven years it was slow uphill work creating an infrastructure, erecting the enclosure, borewells and a windmill, persuading the villagers that Quiet was no longer the place for their toddy shop and that the coconut trees could no longer be tapped. The project had been put in the hands of the Centre for Scientific Research in Auroville and Bill Sullivan did much of this pioneer work. And then suddenly there was enough money to start the buildings. On the day the foundation stone was laid a blessing was placed under it, one of the two blessing packets that Mother had given Nata when he had to, in 28 days, complete the amphitheatre for the inauguration of Auroville in 1968. An enormous amount of earth had to be moved with mumpies, but somehow, working three shifts around the clock, the whole thing including underground toilets was finished in 26 days. There was certainly something in that packet. Designed by Popo, the actual construction handled by Rolf and Jurgen on site, Quiet moved brilliantly towards completion.



fessor Masi in Florence and now, as predicted by my friend, I followed the teachings of George Vithoulkas in several countries. I returned to India with the conviction that the Hospital of Love was unfolding. George Vithoulkas had agreed to come to Auroville and the Ashram and so around his acceptance developed the first alternative healing multi-disciplinary congress in India which was held in Auroville in January 1987. It was organized largely with the help of Dhruva and Mallika and a team that met at Vérité every Sunday and my heart sang because I felt the beginning of what Mother had envisaged and desired. Auroville was becoming the city that wanted to heal.

I better go back a few months. When I returned from my homeopathic course in Greece Gautam caught me on my way

Under the direction of Michael Zelnick, Quiet has continued to develop since its inauguration in February of this year. Ursula has organized an impressive physical therapy/massage section with a splendid and dedicated team of therapists. Michael Spector offers a variety of therapies. Quiet offers the first underwater birthing facility in India and we wait for one of Mother's children who is an obstetrician to come forward. And Dr. Prasad, a gifted young homeopath who has joined the Quiet team, is working to establish closer interaction between Quiet and the Auroville Health Center. We move towards Mother's city that wants to heal.

**Maggi**  
(Maggi Lidchi Grassi, author and a sadhika at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, worked as the Mother's secretary for many years.)



# VIEWPOINT

In May, Nirodbaran spoke to Aurovilians on the dangers of choosing different spiritual paths or gurus other than Sri Aurobindo and the Mother (AVT #101). This has effected an outpouring of letters, most of them in the e-mail forum Auroconf. While some, on the basis of their personal experience, endorse Nirodbaran's views, others disagree with him. Here we present a selection of our readers' views:

It is the first time in many years that I can appreciate an article published by Auroville Today. If Auroville is not well, it is indeed because many of us have lost the contact with the INNER master, the only one that matters, in fact, so we run to many outside so called gurus and in doing so we pollute the spiritual atmosphere of Auroville.

Paul Vincent, Auroville.

Can't say I agree fully with Paul, I don't, but I don't think that his concern (and Nirodbaran's) are totally wrong.

Santo, Auroville.

Every moment, every person, every event can be an intimation or intermediary of the Divine Truth... and if we look for It (S/He) only in one direction, through one person's interpretation or one set of books or quotes, we risk missing Her all around us. This does not mean we lose sight of our Centre, our Path or our Path-finders. It simply means that the more discerning and one-pointed our path becomes, the wider it also becomes. And while I personally am not attracted to other teachers or meditation techniques, who am I to judge the need it may fulfil for another? I am constantly reminded "out here" that some of those most sincerely at the evolutionary service of Truth have never heard of the Mother. Nevertheless, they too are Her Children, in act if not word; and She uses them sometimes more effectively than those who profess their devotion from the rooftops or Inner Chambers.

Savitra, USA.

There is surely a grain of Truth in the remark that one should stick with his Guru only. Once you have opened to the Force of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, no one else is needed anymore. It is much more our human need for living gurus (in contrast with the invisible, yet tangible, Force) that people need this "physical" contact. I do believe that different forces from different gurus do not mix (well), yet it should be left to the individual to decide whether to see or to contact a living guru is a necessity to break through another self created illusion. To fully open up to other gurus might create more confusion in the end in than would be beneficial to the integral yoga. I believe discernment in all of this is surely required, yet, we also should trust and respect each individual's search of Truth. Things can happen more safely when one keeps the guidance fully with Mother.

August, Thailand.

One of the main points in Sri Aurobindo's teaching for me and one of the reasons I am in Auroville is its universality. I don't mean with it "a soup of all cultures and religions and spiritual paths," but an embracing awareness, where the widest rule or definition becomes a limitation. Of course there are stages to be considered, with precise guidelines, that give the orientation, though it always implies delimitation and consequently limitations. Mother left her body at 95. And that is one relevant aspect: SHE IS NOT PHYSICALLY HERE ANYMORE. People like Nirodbaran were with Her human incarnation so long that he doesn't know what it means for miserable humans like us to have to drag our path without that whip behind the back constantly, to keep that stupid human nature awake, responsive or at least obedient.

Paulo, Auroville.

I wish to illustrate the subject with a personal experience: In 1967, I visited the Ashram for the first time, remained there for three months and twice met the Mother. While going back to France, I stopped for three days at the ashram of a swami (highly appreciated in India, quite well known but not visited by Aurovilians, as far as I know). I was told that the meeting of saints always benefited one. Every day, along with five or six other Westerners, I spent two hours with him and a shorter time alone as well. I was impressed by these meetings. Within few days, it was clear that I was under two well identified influences and that I had to make a choice. Although I felt a sweet love for the Indian swami, I decided mentally that I would choose Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as my masters. Little by little, the influence of the Indian swami receded although I was from time to time indulging in sweet memories.

Three years later and a couple of months after I had joined the Ashram, for some reason, I felt the Mother's help was needed in a specific occasion. I called the Mother with concentration but the Indian swami came forward, which resulted in a painful experience. I wrote the full experience of this to the Mother who knew some details of my meeting with the Indian swami, three years earlier. She answered (here I translate Her words into English): "This is the drawback of placing oneself under the influence of several occult forces. Earlier, it was recommended, not wrongly, to choose a spiritual master and to refrain oneself to see other masters in order to avoid a mixing of influences, which brings serious drawbacks. The so-called modern wisdom, which comes from the ignorance, opens itself to all kind of influences, sometimes contradictory, and the result is a great confusion." There is a difference between paying a visit to holy souls and opening oneself to their influence (which I did in the beginning). Some occult influences are contradictory, some others may be not so. But anyway, we must be quite careful.

Alain G.

## Counting Heads

By Nationality

(as of June 4 1997; includes Newcomers)

American	49
Argentinian	7
Armenian	2
Australian	16
Australian-French	1
Austrian	9
Belgian	19
Brazilian	9
British	37
Canadian	16
Colombian	1
Czech	1
Dutch	49
French	243
French-British	2
French-German	2
French-Irish	1
French-Spanish	3
French-Swiss	2
German	191
Indian	416
Indian-British	1
Indian-German	2
Irish	1
Italian	56
Italian-Spanish	1
Japanese	1
Korean	1
Moroccan	1
New Zealander	2
Russian	25
Slovene	2
Spanish	30
Sri Lankan	3
Swiss	27
Tibetan	5
Swedish	16

No. of adults: 942

No. of children: 322

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## IN BRIEF

### Auroville Exhibition in New Delhi

On the occasion of the 125th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo, an Auroville exhibition will be organised at the India International Centre in New Delhi from August 4 till August 11.

### Beyond Man

The book "Beyond Man: The Life and Work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother" by Aurovillian Georges van Vreckhem will appear with Harper Collins Publishers India Pvt. Ltd in the first week of August.

### To SUBSCRIBE

The contribution for the next 12 issues of AUROVILLE TODAY in India is Rs. 250, for other countries Rs. 1250, Can. \$ 51, French F. 195, DM 56, It. Lira 61000, D.Gl. 63, US \$ 38, U.K. £ 25. This includes the postage by airmail. Please send your contribution (or your supporting contribution of double the amount) either to the Auroville International centre in your country (add 10% for admin. and bank charges) or directly to Auroville Today, CSR Office, Auroville 605101. Cheques should be made payable to Auroville Fund, specifying: 'Contribution for Auroville Today'. You will receive the issues directly from Auroville. Personal cheques are preferred to bank cheques. Please do not send postal money orders. Subscribers will receive a reminder when their subscription is about to expire.

### Addresses of Auroville International centres:

AVI Canada, c/o Antoniette Gagné, 847 Chemin Perry, Aylmer (Quebec), J9H 5C9 Canada.  
 AVI Deutschland, c/o Wolfgang J. Schmidt-Reinecke, Mainstrasse 75, 28199 Bremen, Germany.  
 AVI España, c/o Kibx and Yolanda, Apartado de Correos 36, 31.610 Villava, Navarra, Spain  
 AVI France c/o Satyakam Karim, 6 rue du Calil, 75010, Paris, France.  
 AVI Nederland, c/o M. Berden, Lobelialaan 51, 2555 PC Den Haag, The Netherlands.  
 AVI Sverige, c/o Ulf Carlberg, Borgholm, Broddebö, S-59700 Atvidaberg, Sweden.  
 AVI U.K., c/o M. Littlewood, Canigou, Cot Lane, Chidham, W.Sussex, PO18 8SP, U.K.  
 AVI USA, c/o Megan Thomas, P.O. Box 601, Sausalito CA 94966, USA.

Auroville Today provides information about Auroville, an international township in South India, on a monthly basis and is distributed to Aurovilians and friends of Auroville in India and abroad. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the community as a whole.  
 Editorial team: Tineke, Roger, Jill, Carel, Bindu, Annemarie, Alan. All photos, unless otherwise attributed: John Mandéen. Layout and DTP: VAG-DTP, Proofreading: Barbara. Printed at All India Press.

### Economy (continued from page 3)

If the community creates mechanisms for decision-making, it should go for some type of long-term planning. It seems to me that Auroville creates problems for itself by mixing up different systems. A part of the population wants the planning system (Central Fund) and at the same time complete freedom (which is essentially incompatible); the other part wants an open market system. It would be better to decide on one type of system, try it for a limited number of years, and then evaluate its working.

### The Principle of Self-Sustainability?

One thing that I would like to mention here is that, to me, Auroville's principle of being a self-sustaining community—implying non-reliance on the outside—is not an attractive proposition from the point of view of ethical, philosophical and global concerns. I think it is even a false principle, and certainly not realisable in the next 100 years. Moreover, all the trends, in Auroville as well as in the world, point towards the other direction. I find it very difficult from what I have read to say that one can separate Auroville from society at large, (which even gives the impression that "what we do here is holier than outside"). To work for a non-monetary economy is OK if done for convenient reasons, but not as a matter of principle.

Self-sustainability, as a principle, can only be applied if one speaks about sustaining the assets, the land, houses and capital. These need to be sustained. But I sympathise with the idea expressed by some of you that it is unfair for those who are now here, the 1000 odd people that they should save the flows of the money for the future. That is simply impossible. I have no problems with that flow of money into Auroville. The city of the future cannot be built with the current resources. But there is an obligation to sustain the capital that is there.

I would like to conclude that the questions which have been put to me regarding the implementation of the ideals of Auroville are questions that relate to the functioning of any community, any city, any province, or country, and not necessarily to Auroville alone. The Mother's vision essentially deals with key economic issues for which great economists of the past and present have endeavoured to find solutions. The issues have become central issues that the whole world, especially because of the present globalisation, faces today. Auroville has the unique position to experiment. I believe it to be a worthy challenge.

Edited by Carel

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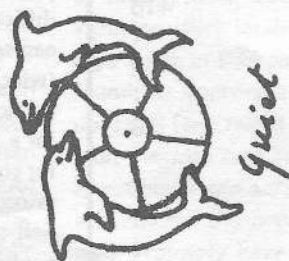
BY AIRMAIL  
BOOKPOST

# AUROVILLE TODAY

CSR Office  
Auroville 605 101  
Tamil Nadu, India

AUROVILLE ARCHIVES  
C/O KRISHNA T.  
BHARAT NIVAS  
AUROVILLE

July 1997  
Number 102



Quiet

ECONOMY  
SPORTS

## Researching the Spirit of Matter

"Auroville wants to be the city that heals," *The Mother* once observed to Maggi Lidchi Grassi, one of her secretaries in the Ashram. Many systems of healing have found a place in Auroville. Homeopathy is one of them. Research of new homeopathic remedies will soon join the spectrum.

"The basis of the homeopathic principle," writes the Ashram scientist Sraddhalu Ranade in a recent **Service Letter**, "can be traced back as far as the Ayurveda which speaks at least of two methods of treating diseases: one, in which medicine is administered to attack the disease itself, and the second in which medicine is administered to strengthen the body's own healing process. This and much of the deeper knowledge of the East was taken to the West by the Greeks who taught it in their esoteric schools....Both systems remained in use in the West for several centuries until the chaos of the second century AD after which only the first system survived. It was only in 1790 that the second system was re-discovered by the German doctor Samuel Hahnemann. The key principle of his system, known as treatment by similars, was to administer medicine that created the same symptoms in a healthy person as the disease created in the patient. In this way, the body's defence mechanism against

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a single atom of the original medicine remained, and yet the potency of the liquid was higher than ever! This irrational aspect of the medicine has led many

allopaths to denounce homeopathy as unscientific and impossible." group described that strong feelings of dependency were experienced. Looking at the evolution of a cat from a wild animal to a domesticated one, the feelings of dependency explain themselves. Consequently, this remedy is used for people who have feelings of being dependent, feeling exploited, need their freedom, don't want to be touched...what we know from cats."

What is still not well understood is the way in which homeopathy works -- a topic which is well researched by Sraddhalu. Notes he: "Since many of the homeopathic medicines were quite toxic in their natural state, Hahnemann experimented by gradually diluting them in a mixture of water and alcohol. The solution was vigorously shaken with sharp shocks before subjecting it to further steps of dilution. Hahnemann observed to his surprise that medicines so processed turned out to be more potent in their results. If the medicines were simply diluted without the sharp shocks, (called succussion) this process of "potentisation" did not occur. By repeatedly diluting and succussing, it was found, the potency could be increased to any degree -- until at certain levels of dilution not

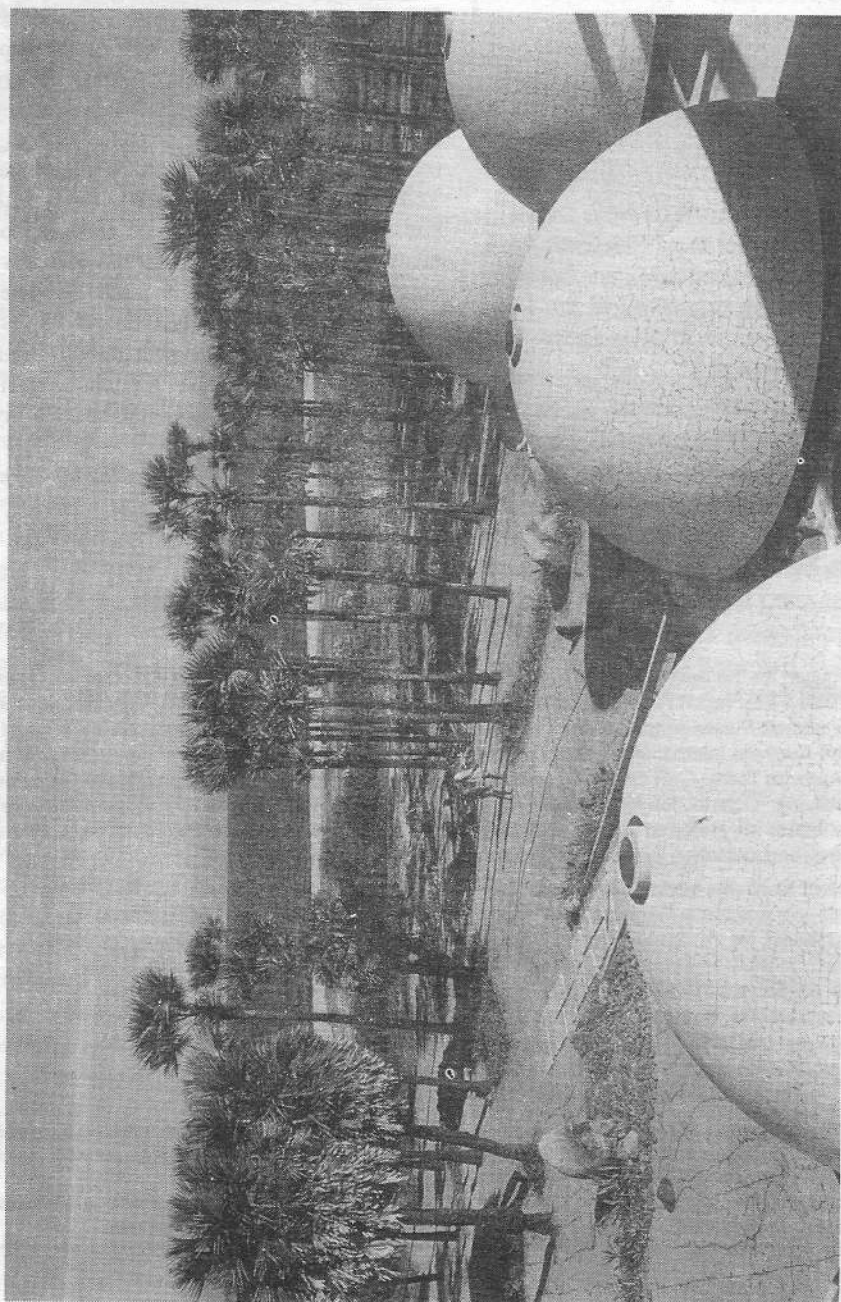
For example, the property of cat's milk is not bound to the substance of cat's milk but can be made independent from that substance and transferred to water. He then offers a scientific explanation to the questions how water can retain the quality of a substance without holding a single atom of that substance; how the dilution and succussion of a remedy can lead to an increase of its potency; and how the administration of a remedy causing the same symptoms as the disease can lead to a cure. Sraddhalu also makes extensive reference to the **Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo**, as recorded by Purani, and to the correspondence between Sri Aurobindo and Nirodbaran, a doctor in allopathy.

Sraddhalu then proceeds to explain the way homeopathy works. Based on an in-depth study of Sri Aurobindo's works -- "**The Life Divine** is for me not just a work of philosophy, it is much more a work of physics -- physics of the cosmos" -- Sraddhalu demonstrates that the property of a substance is essentially independent of that substance and concludes that in principle any substance could be made to express any property. For example, the property of cat's milk is not bound to the substance of cat's milk but can be made independent from that substance and transferred to water. He then offers a scientific explanation to the questions how water can retain the quality of a substance without holding a single atom of that substance; how the dilution and succussion of a remedy can lead to an increase of its potency; and how the administration of a remedy causing the same symptoms as the disease can lead to a cure. Sraddhalu also makes extensive reference to the **Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo**, as recorded by Purani, and to the correspondence between Sri Aurobindo and Nirodbaran, a doctor in allopathy.

"Sri Aurobindo remarked that homeopathy is nearer to yoga" records Purani, and "that allopathy is more mechanical. Homeopathy deals with the physical personality, the symptoms put together making the physical personality, while allopathy goes by diagnosis which does not consider the personality. The action of homeopathy is more subtle and dynamic." Replying to an observation of a disciple that he is puzzled how such infinitesimal doses in dilution can act on the human system Sri Aurobindo says: "That is no puzzle to me. Sometimes the infinitesimal is more powerful than the mass; it approaches more and more the subtle state and from the physical goes into the dynamic or vital state and acts vitally." (Sri Aurobindo, it may be noted here, did not particularly favour one system of healing over the other).

To conclude in the words of Sigrid, "homeopathy works as it were with the spirit of matter. It reminds me of Sri Aurobindo's saying that matter will become conscious. To participate in such a work is fascinating, and really belongs to Auroville."

Carel



The Healing Centre at Quiet Beach