

Auroville Today

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COVID-19 and the Auroville economy



Abundance (*Cucurbita maxima*)
All at once Nature gives much to us and we have the joy of abundance.



The Divine Grace (*Hibiscus mutabilis*)
Thy goodness is infinite, we bow before Thee in gratitude.



Integral Trust in the Divine (*Asystasia gangetica*). The trust that gives the true support to life.



Integral Wealth of Mahalakshmi (*Nymphaea*). Wealth in all domains and all activities, Intellectual, psychological, and material



Greed for Money (*Ochna kirkii*)
The surest way to diminish one's consciousness and narrow one's nature.



Prosperity (*Couroupita guianensis*)
Remains only with him who offers it to the Divine.



Service (*Copperpod*)
To be at the service of the Divine is the surest way to attain realisation.



Work (*Acacia auriculiformis*)
Let us offer our work to the Divine, this is the sure way of progressing.

How has the pandemic impacted our economy? How to make it more equitable and resilient in the future? These are just two of the questions explored in a recent discussion between people from different sectors of the community. Otto is the manager of the Financial Service; Isha is the coordinator of Servicelink; Stephan is manager of the commercial unit Gecko! and member of the Auroville Board of Commerce Research Group; Inge is a member of the Budget Coordination Committee; and Carel is on the Working Committee.

Auroville Today: What is the situation of our community finances?

Otto: We have 6 ½ crore rupees (approx. US\$ 868,490) at the moment which normally would cover the City Services budget for four months. We've had the usual guest season from December to March, which is the source of our main income, so at the moment everybody is carrying forward the reserves from these four months. However, if the present situation persists until October, November, we will definitely be impacted. While it's not a cash flow problem today, if there is not enough income in the future, expenditure will have to come down.

Stephan: The commercial units continued to contribute after April because they assumed the crisis would only last for a few months. Now they see it is lasting much longer, the units will have to reduce or even stop their contributions to maintain minimum reserves. So this will affect the community income which, in turn, will affect the community services.

The COVID crisis is obviously a big threat to our community finances, but there also seem to be others. For example, uncertainty about the disbursement of Government of India grants as well as, potentially, a huge income tax bill...

Otto: True, there are a number of Damocles' swords hovering over us. The income tax is a big thing. Because of a mistake by a chartered accountant, we have been asked to pay 14 ½ crores (approx. US\$ 1,937,885). We have appealed against that assessment citing our tax exemption and the filing error. In any case we don't have that kind of money: it would kill our economy.

But the real impact at the moment is on the people we employ, because many of our workers are on part-time wages or less, and as they live from their daily income they are immediately affected.

Are there no Aurovilians in financial distress? If so, what is being done about them?

Otto: There are only a few cases like this, and for those Aurovilians in financial difficulty who have loans, we have deferred the repayment of their loans. Generally, however, it is not too bad because the present level of maintenances have been retained for Aurovilians covered by City Services. However, it's a different story for those Aurovilians working in commercial units which have had to shut as they have to rely on an emergency allowance only.

What has been the impact of the pandemic on our productive units?

Stephan: For almost all the commercial units, the first quarter of this financial year (April-June) was a total loss because everything was closed. My prediction for the rest of this financial year is that it will be a challenge for most units to just break even: not actually losing money will be an achievement.

At the beginning of the lockdown, the government advised everybody to pay full wages. At first we believed the lockdown would only last two or three months, most units had reserves, so they kept paying full wages. However, if the economy does not pick up soon, units will have to retrench workers.

We made the unit, *Gecko!*, dormant on 15 April and paid full compensation to all workers. We calculated then that if we had continued running the unit until August, all the cash reserves would have gone and we would not have been able to pay compensation.

So far fewer commercial units have folded than I expected. Our Auroville economy is more resilient than I thought, perhaps because Aurovilians have a knack for finding resources and alternative ways of getting something done.

While this is good news, it could also mean that some are dragging out the inevitable and becoming insolvent in the process.

Are our larger units more financially resilient than the smaller ones?

The big ones with reserves can probably sit it out. On the other hand, we have seen fewer applications for loans from the smaller ones than I would have expected. They seem to have an advantage because their overheads are less and perhaps they receive help from relatives or other sources.

It was predicted from the beginning of the pandemic that consumer behaviour would change. I did a small study of what was happening with *auroville.com*'s online sales and discovered that people have reduced buying anything to do with clothing and outdoor items. Instead, they are buying more food, health products, homeware and kitchenware.

The prediction is that consumers will continue to spend more money on health care, on durable goods and quality items they hope will last longer.

So we asked our commercial units to assess their products in the light of this and consider changing or remarketing them, because these may not be short-term changes. Even if the lockdown is lifted in October or November, the impact upon our economy will last much longer.

What has been the impact of the lockdown on our service sector?

Otto: The service sector is less impacted because it is catering only to us in Auroville.

Isha: One thing we notice is a huge wave of appreciation for the services because people suddenly realized how dependent we are on them for so many things. Quite a large number

The economy of Auroville is far more than just the monetary aspect. We choose to illustrate this article by using the spiritual significances of some flowers, as given by The Mother.

of Auroville activities are financed partly through private funds or savings, or a diversity of holdings, and these will have some leeway, while the ones more fully dependent on a regular turnover or a community budget will be the most vulnerable in uncertain times. Some services totally reliant upon one source of income – such as payments from users – are struggling (like taxis). Some others, both budgeted and user paid, provide for immediate community needs (water, food, health). These are managing to adapt in real time to the challenges.

To the big question about paying employees who were suspended or laid off, most service managers absolutely supported providing for their workers, saying we have to keep paying them full wages. I was trying to give the soft suggestion that everyone needs to consider what may happen in the future, when incomes might be much reduced. But generally people did not want to think about this.

Inge: In the Budget Coordination Committee (BCC), of which I am a member but not a spokesman – I am expressing my own views in this discussion – we never stopped paying the wages of the services we support, but we have asked them to reflect on their needs and try to reduce their other expenses. Some, like the Town Hall management and the Auroville Library, cooperated very well, but others could not. When we saw expenses were still quite high, we asked the service managers to talk to their employees about possible wage cuts by reducing working hours, because in the long run we would not be able to continue to be so generous with the wages budget. However, very few of them had the clarity and courage to talk to their employees about this. They would rather tell them, "Don't worry, it will all work out".

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Stephan: The ABC Research Group did something similar. We advised the commercial unit managers to make projections and discuss with their employees if they would rather be fully paid with the risk of the reserves running out sooner, or if they would accept a lower percentage of their salaries which then could secure their jobs for a longer period. Quite a number of unit managers did this and it worked.

Is this an opportunity for both services and productive units to look at ways of managing their finances more efficiently?

Isha: We in the Services have been sharing ideas with the Auroville Board of Commerce Research Group, including discussing assessment tools to improve the understanding of financial risks. However, I think the general feeling at the moment has been to wait and see what happens rather than engaging an accountant to do financial assessments of activities.

Inge: But in the BCC we have seen some extraordinary examples of how people came together in response to the crisis. For example, the schools normally need a budget of 15 lakhs every year for summer repairs. This year we had to tell them that we had only around three lakhs to give them, to be shared between Auroville and Outreach schools. We thought there would be a huge outcry from the teachers because this sounds like peanuts, but instead we got appreciation for releasing even this much. And then the School Board told us that they needed even less than we had allocated because the teachers would take up additional responsibilities, like doing the painting and repairs themselves. I thought "wow!" With an attitude like this Auroville has a chance.

Do you think the present crisis provides us with an opportunity to look at our economy afresh, and to consider changes that would make it more productive, resilient, equitable?

Isha: There are two parts to this. One part is, "How do we make money?" The other is, "How can we support people to live and work for Auroville?" I think the first part is only relevant when it's in full alignment with the aims of the second. Now we have a wonderful opportunity to look at these things afresh.

One of the things we need to look at is how people can feel motivated to work for something more than just receiving maintenance. People want to diversify and to do lots of different things and the community could be supporting that through types of basic income.

Stephan: The Silver Fund is an idea that those Aurovilians who are over 70 will get a universal basic income: it is not a retirement fund because they can go on working. This is just one way in which the residents of Auroville can be supported. There is also housing and a lot of other things we will need to look at.

As to how this is paid for, we have around 400 commercial units, but only about 30 units contribute a substantial amount each month to the community's finances. The rest are small artisan and craft activities. So what Auroville needs are three or four large companies that can generate the kind of income that we need. This would also lift the pressure off the small units.

We should also be more proactive and identify small units with the potential to grow big. Those with potential should receive help to grow.

Are funds available to provide this kind of support?

Stephan: A number of commercial unit managers have told me that if there is a business project that would really benefit Auroville and needs money, they would be interested to help, provided there is transparency about how safe the venture is.

Otto: I have been proposing for 25 years that we should pool the bank deposits of the commercial units and then decide what we want to support. That's why we created the Unity Fund, to pool these reserves. At first there was a response, which is why we have about 3 1/2 crores in that fund which, incidentally, is not being utilized at present for this purpose. But most of the units' reserves are sitting in accounts in Indian banks: 17 Auroville units have got accounts with just the ICICI bank. As these are in principle Auroville funds they should actually be deposited with the Financial Service. This will be a win win situation as it will benefit the units as well as the whole of Auroville.

What has been the response?

Otto: What they heard was, "Otto wants to take our money!" so I didn't get through to them. But it's vital if this pandemic goes on longer and we want to survive that we pool our resources, otherwise some activities may not survive.

Stephan: Clearly the problem is a lack of trust.

Otto: Yes. When I asked the executive of a major unit why he doesn't put his reserves in the Unity Fund, he answered, "But what happens when you are no longer there?" But the administration of this fund should not depend upon an individual. We have to see how to administer this fund fairly and transparently.

Carel: I think we can identify a group of 20 to 50 people who, over the years, we have seen we can trust. These are the people who should be called upon to administer such a fund. But, even so, do you think there is sufficient trust in the commercial units at present to make this move?

Stephan: I really don't know. We are highly individualistic in Auroville, and this is reflected in our relationship to 'our' units. We are also too separated; we are separated into tax receivers and taxpayers. We should build trust through communication and transparency. That's why it is important that the administration and the commercial units and services' activities make stronger connections. Then you get closer to the 'we' of community.

Inge: I agree that we make a lot of artificial separations. For example, if an Auroville child has a mother or father working in City Services who is receiving a City Service maintenance, the child gets a child maintenance. But if their parent works in a unit, they are not eligible to get it, even if the unit is not giving it. In my opinion, all children should receive this City Service child maintenance, irrespective of what their mother or father is doing. In fact, we have to accept that everybody is equal, that everybody has an equal right to be in Auroville and have free access to what they need to be maintained with the basics. This caring



From left: Otto, Stephan, Isha, Inge and Carel

aspect shouldn't depend on where they work or on how many hours they work.

Isha: I think motivation is as important as trust. If people in the commercial units see how important it is to strengthen this feeling of caring for the people who are living in Auroville, then there is a chance that we can work together.

One of the frequent comments in a recent community survey is that Auroville is too dependent upon tourism for its income. Is this the case? If so, can we think of new areas Auroville can develop as sources of income?

Otto: On the basis of Aurolcards [debit cards that can be used in Auroville's restaurants, sales outlets, etc. eds.] tourism brings in about 1 1/2 crores a month in the tourist season. Of course, tourists outside the Aurolcard system also spend a lot more than this in Auroville so, clearly, tourism is a significant factor in our economy.

Isha: It's important to diversify, not to depend too much on one source of income like tourism.

Stephan: We may not like our dependency on tourism and hospitality but this is not the right moment to abandon it. However, we should be aware that tourism is expected to suffer losses for an extended period.

Otto: Education is one sector where we can do a lot more. Things like the technical training school of Lavkamad have a lot of potential and there is government support for such projects.

Carel: Another area would be spiritual education. Elsewhere, people pay substantial amounts of money for courses on how to become a better human being, etc. This is something we've never really developed.

Isha: I think we need to remember that the 'economy' is not just the monetary aspect: it is the sum of all available energy.

Inge: I agree, and I think we can also energise Auroville in other ways than just the monetary. The layout of the Matrimandir, petals and gardens, could be the blueprint for a very different kind of society, for something unique. For example, it is not accidental that our Administrative Zone is in the Mahakali area because we need that kind of energy to remove the obstacles to a new form of governance. So we need to explore what it could mean to make the Matrimandir into a living symbol of a new kind of spiritual society. And

this will bring in new energy: we will be flooded with people who want to be part of this.

Isha: This is very poignant. We need to stop thinking all the time about how we can get money from outside because I don't see that it takes us closer to where we want to be. I believe we need to be focused more on our inner work and also on what we can do ourselves, on strengthening self-reliance, like all the goodwill we are seeing in people volunteering.

This is already happening, for example in the creation of community food gardens.

Where do you think we will be in one year? Will we be in a very different situation economically? Or will we have reverted to 'business as usual'?

Otto: I don't think it will be the same anymore... at least I hope not!

Stephan: I think it will be more or less business as usual for our commercial units. I think they will adapt but I don't see any huge changes in that area.

Carel: Many of these movements for change have died over the years, yet there is progress: we are not having the same discussions as we were having some years ago. In 1988, one of the very first issues of *Auroville Today* dealt with the economy. At that time, there was deep mistrust between people in the commercial units and those in the services. I don't feel that is there now, and I don't think business is a dirty word any more. So for me there is hope, although there are still many uncertain factors.

Isha: I'm sure it will change; I don't see that we can avoid it because the world will keep changing for the worse. If we are not to support that trend we have to do things differently here. I have faith that this pandemic crisis is taking us a little bit forward, hopefully more than just a little bit. Meanwhile the best thing we can do is to encourage the sense of collaboration.

Inge: I think the changes have happened already and are irreversible. We will need time to understand the consequences of these changes and extend them even further. Some people will leave Auroville, some people will come, but Auroville will grow as we come closer to our aim, and in a hundred years it'll be something very special.

From an interview by Alan

About Money

If one has to find one driving force that seems to dominate and cause so much human action and the possession of, and hunger for which causes so much human conflict, it is money, or perhaps more accurately, the money force. Money, like all forces, is, however, an aspect, a form and force of the Divine.

The process of our human evolution created in us a sense of separate self-hood, or ego. The ego has the illusion that it is self-propelled, but doing an inner yoga we come to witness it is motivated and moved to action by forces over which we often have neither knowledge nor control, unless we are fully conscious beings. And yet the rules of the game are that we have to make choices which may either further our progress or even end up damaging or destroying us.

Money exists for the realisation of the Divine's Will for the earth and all its life forms. In our life in the Ignorance (of the Divine's nature and action) we seize money for ourselves and for the satisfaction of our desires. We try to possess it. We undertake all sorts of appalling actions in order to get it, to keep it, and prevent others from taking it from us. We create a whole world of falsehood in order to achieve this. We are mean as hell when it comes to using it for the general good, or the good of others who may be in genuine need. As someone said, "Meanness is the cancer of the soul". But we cannot take it with us when we die. We know the possession of it doesn't actually make us any happier. Why do we do it?

If we only used money to fulfill our own basic needs and to ensure that it was distributed according to the true needs of all, we

would be a lot happier. But our self-interest and our current global values compel us to accept an attitude that it belongs to us. We invent political philosophies that justify our meanness. We elect our political parties to create a society that justifies courses of actions dominated by satisfaction of our petty little egos that result in consequences that are self-destructive to all of us and to the planet. Why?

It appears to be universally true that, as the journalist George Monbiot has written, *immense wealth translates automatically into immense environmental impacts, regardless of the intentions of those who possess it*. He quotes a worker at a British private airport telling that every day jets built to take 174 passengers, would take off carrying a single passenger, having filled up with 25,000 litres of fuel.

What some of the seriously wealthy have done is to put 'their' money to causes that will help to make the world a better place. Of course, many charitable people seek to donate their excess wealth to charities and causes that alleviate the suffering of the poor and problems of society. But whilst this may mend things broken in our society, it generally does not address the causes of the poverty or suffering. Andrew Carnegie (1835 – 1919), the Scottish-American industrialist and philanthropist and one of the richest Americans in history who, in pursuit of his aim to use money to create a better and more just society, founded schools and built libraries, tellingly said, *The man who dies rich dies disgraced*. He believed that it was wrong for the rich to leave their wealth only to their family.

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, believes that one should seek out the causes of the world's problems and address those, using one's

own wealth, skills and experience in the process. As for the poor, Sri Aurobindo says that *to come to their help is good, provided that it is not a vain ostentation of charity, but it is far nobler to seek a remedy for poverty so that there may be no poor left on earth*. Sri Aurobindo saw behind appearances to the dubious inner reality of much charitable action: *The existence of poverty is proof of an unjust and ill-organised society and our public charities but the first tardy awakenings in the conscience of a robber*.

The aim of Auroville, its function as an experimental city, is to find and support the means of changing human nature to manifest a higher consciousness liberated from the ego's illusions and division. Ultimately Auroville's purpose is to be the cradle for a new type of being that may be the next step in evolution. To aid the realization of this aspiration by donating to its work is a valid cause for all those emerging from the delusion that money belongs to them. But money is still mainly in the control of individuals and a system entrenched in a falsehood and inequality that fiercely resists its conversion to the service of the Divine. Auroville itself, notwithstanding its true purpose, is not immune from the struggle.

Despite all appearances to the contrary, the evolution on earth is a progression to an ever wider and truer consciousness. As humanity becomes more conscious, its relationship to the money force will change from the sense of ownership to awakening to the reality that we can only ever be the stewards, the custodians of money, and that its function is to serve the Divine's work on earth.

Vikas (Alan Vickers)

Nothing can stop coffee

Marc's Coffee responds to the challenges of a pandemic

While most people are willing to curb their consumption practices during a pandemic, the one pleasure that many like to hold onto is a daily cup of well-brewed coffee. "Nothing can stop coffee," says Marc from Marc's Coffee, "not even Covid 19." This enduring popularity of coffee consumption means that Marc's Coffee – one of Auroville's fastest growing units in recent years – has had to significantly reconfigure its operations in order to meet the demand under such changed circumstances.

Marc describes the lockdown as a "very interesting and inspiring time" for him, while acknowledging it's been difficult for many people. "It's like a pinch of salt has been applied," he says of life under the pandemic, "but it gets a little too salty sometimes." While the ongoing uncertainty has been challenging, it has prompted him to explore new revenues for income.

When the pandemic arrived in March, the unit had three cafés. Marc's first step was to close the café on Pondicherry's beachfront, which relied almost completely on tourism, something which vanished under the lockdown. The turnover at Dreamer's Café in the Visitors' Centre dropped by 95 percent, but Marc felt it was important to keep it open as a service to the community. The third café, in nearby Kulaipalayam, was in the process of shifting to a new "fully fledged" space 50 metres up the road when the lockdown struck, so Marc viewed this as a useful time to move equipment and set up the new space without the presence of customers. It is now experiencing healthy trade, which Marc links to the notion that a café visit takes on a "special" quality in times when people are still cautious about venturing out in public. "Aurovilians want to see something new, see people and have a good time after four months of lockdown," says Marc.

The two cafés have implemented certain measures, such as spacing tables further apart, providing a hand sanitiser and a reminder to wear masks, and cashless transactions. While most of this has gone smoothly, Marc says the most difficult aspect has been those few customers who "don't want to follow the simple rule" of wearing a mask to order at the counter. "There's the random rabbit who says 'It's a conspiracy theory and it removes my freedom as an individual'. And I say 'I'm not here to argue, these are the rules to come inside. If you don't want to wear a mask, order through the terrace.' I think this is very selfish behaviour. They see us all wearing a mask for eight hours a day, and they can't even wear a mask for one minute to place an order." Marc says the "bold move" of stopping cash transactions in the café has made his staff "very happy" as it reduced their anxiety about handling cash that had already passed through many hands. "If we accept money, we need to dedicate one person to it, who uses gloves and sanitiser – it's a headache." Customers have now adapted to this method, appreciating its ease and the reduced risk of viral transmission.

The most significant difference for Marc's unit is the increased interest throughout India from people who want to brew good coffee at home, and who go online and find Marc's website. This has led to a 100 percent increase in online sales of his own coffee brand (his 'roastery'), and the unit dispatches many parcels via a courier at the end of each workday.

The website is able to determine postcodes that are under lockdown, in which case customers are then informed that they'll receive their order as soon as postal restrictions are lifted in their area.

To meet the increased interest for knowledge about brewing good coffee at home, Marc conducts regular online classes for groups of ten people. These are promoted on Instagram and provide an extra source of income.

Branding through 'experiences'

Marc sees his brand as selling "the experience of coffee" rather than just coffee itself, and he talks about the importance of promoting sustainable values. "People are curious to know: What is the impact of this cup of coffee that we drink every morning?" he says. "It's important for people to know that our brand stands for something, has a vision and clear commitment. If you know where the coffee's been grown, know the farmer and you know the story, that experience becomes multiplied many times. It's no longer just a simple sensorial experience of 'Oh, it tastes good and is waking me up'."

For people who want to become coffee professionals or to participate further in the making of the brand, Marc offers a nine-month internship that allows them to come and learn all aspects of the trade. The 900 hours internship includes visits to the coffee plantations in south India from where Marc sources his coffee, so that students can meet the farmers and learn about organic growing techniques and environmental issues. "We are very close to the farmers, we stay there and have conversations as we're all passionate about producing better coffee." Students also learn processing, roasting (using an 'advanced' Bluetooth roasting tool) and blending techniques. And, of course, the interns learn how to work a coffee machine and create a conducive café atmosphere. Marc views these internships as a part of Auroville's focus on integral learning, and encourages interns to explore other aspects of Auroville. He plans to eventually open a coffee school to address the shortage of such schools in India and globally, by offering a space where students can "learn everything about coffee".

In the coming months, Marc aims to strengthen the unit's online business, and is currently redesigning the website so that ordering can be faster and "more intuitive". The revamped site will ask the customer a couple of questions about their coffee preferences and then suggest a coffee type, reducing the customer's ordering process down to two clicks. The website will also offer brewing equipment and master classes.

Re-thinking Auroville's economy for the future

While Marc emphasises that Auroville's resilience and capacity to self-organise in times of disaster has supported the community well through the pandemic, he argues that it's important the community reflect on its "addiction to tourism".

"At the moment we open the doors every day to whoever wants to come, and we have no means of influencing who comes, which is a big mistake. It's becoming like Disneyworld – a huge amount of people coming just to take a selfie with Matrimandir and go. The rivers of people coming spend an average of Rs100 each. We don't charge entry, yet we spend so much on pathways and watchmen and it's very hard to maintain the crowds as they start roaming around and get lost, and drop plastic garbage and waste water. It's not smart for us to provide all these resources just for people to take selfies. And the five percent of visitors who are genuinely interested in Auroville go away disappointed because they haven't understood and no one has answered their questions, so the experience can create the opposite effect intended."

He says that this superficial engagement with Auroville also applies to guests who come for a quick weekend visit, which is contrary to the "original" idea that people genuinely interested in Auroville should come and stay for a couple of weeks and enroll in a programme that is a "learning experience". He argues that such short-term guests generally don't have the kind of motivation that Auroville should entertain. "They're only interested to be in a nice guesthouse where they see foreigners around, or to go to the beach or to Pondy and get drunk because alcohol is cheap there. I'm sorry, if



Coffee Marc

this is the base of our economy – I'd rather be broke than rich."

Marc suggests that Auroville should aim to attract "more genuinely interested" people, who stay longer to learn about the community. He proposes limiting the number of day visitors, by making it mandatory for them to make an advance online booking for particular time slots. The Visitors' Centre ideally would not accept cash payments, but cash could be exchanged for coupons upon entry for those people without cards. "It should be a completely cashless experience, so that guests understand that we have a local circular economy: what they spend will go back into the Auroville economy and everyone benefits."

The main focus of Auroville's tourism, Marc argues, should shift to guests who book in advance for a curated "experience" of Auroville, which could last for one or two weeks – with one week being the minimum duration permitted. The experiences could be curated according to different themes – such as farming, architecture, design, music, afforestation, new technologies, cooking. "I don't even call it tourism," says Marc, "I call it learning." Marc emphasises that this approach not only makes good economic sense, with such guests spending more than the average day visitor; it is also "more faithful" to Auroville's aims.

"So, we should take fewer people, have better programmes, generate more money for the right channels of Auroville's economy, and give employment to Aurovilians and local people. The outcome would be that guests will have a very good experience of Auroville, and will recommend it to other people as a place to change gear and change perspectives."

Auroville's dependency on outside funding is problematic for Marc, and he advocates finding other ways to generate prosperity in the community. In particular, he proposes the establishment of a corpus or investment fund in Auroville. Community members with reserves could invest in the fund, which will be disbursed to help certain units or community projects to grow. He hopes this will appeal to Aurovilians who currently have money in fixed deposits in outside banks, who could instead "invest in Auroville" through the fund, and get their investment back with interest. Marc emphasises that the fund should be professionally run so that participants will have confidence that their investment will be safe. "We need to be more economically self-sufficient," he says. "With a fund like this, we can see money as energy that flows, rather than energy that stays stagnant in fixed deposits. The Mother's idea was that money should be an energy or a tool, and not an end, so we need to reflect internally about this."

Lesley

Prime Minister Narendra Modi remembers Auroville

On the occasion India's Independence Day and Sri Aurobindo's birthday on August 15th, Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Sri Aurobindo. "Tributes to Sri Aurobindo on his Jayanti. He was synonymous with brilliance and courage. His thoughts and ideals, views on spirituality continue to motivate us. Here are my remarks at the Golden Jubilee celebrations at Auroville," Shri Modi tweeted, sharing his 2018 speech in Auroville.

COVID 19 quarantine space

The Collector of Villupuram District has granted special permission to use Sharanam guesthouse in the Bharat Nivas compound as a primary site, and the Tibetan Pavilion as a secondary site if needed, for quarantining residents of Auroville (including registered guests and volunteers) who have tested Covid-19 positive. This implies that those residents who are asymptomatic or with very mild symptoms can be in full isolation with medical supervision, as an alternative to sending our community members to government run Covid Care Centers. Patients with severe symptoms will have to go to a hospital as recommended by doctors.

Community transmission?

The Working Committee's call for random COVID-19 testing to see if any "community transmission" is happening in Auroville has been answered by 66 residents, who were tested on August 18th at Santé by a team organised by the Block Medical Officer. The tests were the ICMR prescribed RT-PCR test. All persons tested negative.

First centenarian



On July 1st, S. Mahalingam, an Indian Independence fighter, spiritual seeker, teacher, translator, Ashramite, and Aurovillian, celebrated his 100th birthday. A radio interview with Mahalingam can be found at <https://land.auroville.org/mahalingam-turns-100/>.

Acres for Auroville celebrates its seventh birthday

The fundraising campaign A4A (Acres for Auroville) was inaugurated seven years ago on 15th of August. The A4A team has taken this auspicious day as a moment for renewing its efforts and pledge to secure and consolidate the City of Dawn's designated but still-missing lands. With funds raised, a total of 63 plots (58 acres) have been purchased since Acres for Auroville started.

EVER SLOW GREEN nominated

The Auroville film EVER SLOW GREEN has been officially selected by six international film festivals and is nominated for two awards. The Green Screen Wildlife Film Festival, Eckernförde, Germany, the largest wildlife film festival in Europe, has nominated it for Best Newcomer Film. The Wildlife Film Festival Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, has nominated the film for the Green Impact Award. The film will also be shown at the Matsalu Nature Film Festival, Lihula, Estonia; the Eugene Environmental Film Festival, Eugene, OR, USA; the GNG Green Earth Film Festival, Los Angeles, CA, USA; and the Science Film Festival which will screen the film in Argentina, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Iran, Kenya, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. The screening will be done by the Goethe-Institut in each country in close cooperation with local partners.



The staff of Marc's Coffee

A Glimpse of the future?

Lampshades were one of the first items produced by Auroville's small handicraft units, which started up in the 1970s to provide an income for individuals and for the community. Over the years, as designs were refined, they became popular in the Indian market. Guy's Radiance was one of the most successful of these units.

Txuma joined his workshop in the 2000s and was immediately inspired to come up with new designs. "I couldn't believe that every day I was designing new items because I have no training in this. I am a musician."

His original thread globe lampshades became very popular, and he wanted to expand Guy's production with them. However, Guy had worked with lampshades for a long time and was ready to move on to new things. "So my partner, Elodie, and I bought his whole stock. It was a huge investment for us. It was also a big risk as this was 2008, the year of the big financial crisis. People thought we were crazy..."

They named their new unit Glimpse. The thread globes became so popular that they were widely copied. This became a drawback as the copied items were of bad quality and this impacted the image of Glimpse, as it was sometimes thought that these were actually made by their workshop. However the positive outcome was that it encouraged them to create new and original products.

They tied up with Fabindia, which wanted them to supply lamp-



The Sand Sun



The crush pink gradient



The white Coconut Shoji on Wood



shades in bulk. "But big companies like this look for profit and big production. This tends to kill the imagination and creativity, giving the supplier all the responsibility and stress with little profit in exchange."

So after some years they let the big production line fizzle down and started working more with personalized designs for private as well as public spaces. They downsized from twenty to six workers, "as we preferred to concentrate on products which are more in tune with Auroville's ideals, being more beautiful and creative than big production in exchange for profit".

But then came the COVID lockdown.

At first they kept paying full salaries to the workers because they thought that everything would open again soon. But as the lockdown continued with no income, and their expenses mounted, they could only pay for half a month's work. Eventually, they decided they had to let their workers go and paid them off. "It cost a lot because we paid their gratuities in full, but we had always put that money aside."

Will they re-employ them when the lockdown ends? "I don't know. That would be projecting into the future and my mind tells me all kinds of stuff that may not happen."

Meanwhile, Txuma's life has changed. "Before the pandemic happened, I was running here and there, but then I realised I didn't have to do that anymore. I had been preparing light sculptures for an exhibition for over a year and a half and never had time to really work on them, but now I have time. The COVID lockdown has been a blessing in disguise."

Besides, what is really important in life? It's having a life worth living, not chasing money to pay bills and buying stuff. Each of us has to find out what it is they are chasing."

At the same time, Txuma sees the present crisis as an opportunity for Auroville to change in certain ways. For example, while tourism is one of Auroville's major sources of revenue, Txuma is concerned about the possible impact. He has seen how places of natural beauty elsewhere have been spoiled by being commercialized. Tourism also encourages the production of cheap, shoddy products to sell to tourists, and Txuma sees the same things happening here.

"Many years ago, Auroville products were of high quality. The Auroville name really meant something, but now we are selling so much c***p. So this could be an opportunity to start making something of much higher quality and originality which vibrates with the spirit of Auroville... and this would bring in just as much income."

However, Txuma feels they are still many units and initiatives that bring pride to Auroville's name, such as the Botanical Gardens, Colours of Nature and Maroma, in addition to certain individuals through the work they do.

He also feels concerned by the way Auroville's commercial units are treated. "When you start a unit, you put all your money and energy into it, you take all the responsibility, often no with no personal income for a long time, yet nobody asks you if you



Txuma and Elodie

need help. But once there is a profit, Auroville wants a part of it. This is fine as we are supposed to help the community in any way we can. But the moment there is no more profit, you are back on your own, so it is not very encouraging to start anything new. This means units have to be financially careful and keep money aside for dire times like the ones we are facing now. We did that with Glimpse, so today we are in the same position as when we started, meaning on our own.

"How can we do things differently here in Auroville? That is our everyday challenge. Different doesn't necessarily mean better, but there has been a trend towards mediocrity in the way we build, eat and communicate, and even in the items we produce. So if we want to keep being relevant to the world we must aspire for the extraordinary... and Mother will do the rest."

Alan

A New Note

Auroville Today spoke with Aurelio, founder of Svaram, the unit that makes musical instruments and conducts research into acoustics and sound healing.

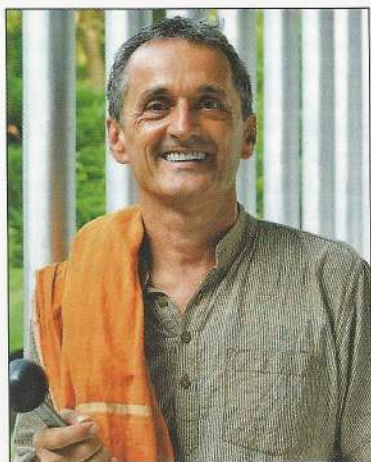
AV Today: What has been the impact upon your unit of the pandemic?

Aurelio: We had some international orders from supporters and now are facing the end of these commissions, and have no orders. Our sales were mainly in boutiques and airport shops, which have all stopped. It was a sudden yet welcome halt, because it was the end of a very busy season and gave us an enforced rest. In the coming months we might have to work half-time. Some Auroville units have closed down or sent people home. I realised, because of our worker's dependency, if I do that, they will come and ask for assistance and food. I feel committed that we should go through this pandemic together. It's already apparent that this crisis is making us stronger, more coherent and caring in Svaram.

What changes have you made to the functioning of your unit and its products?

We worked on three levels. Firstly, we focussed on survival. Secondly, we examined how can we realign, reinvent and renew ourselves. Thirdly, we considered how we can reform our operations. They all go together.

One approach we emphasised was online work, meetings and classes. We are connected to an international community of students, and we delivered live classes for them. We stand for a heartfelt sharing space and are learning to bring our atmosphere



Aurelio

and interactive work online. In any case, we see our work in a global context, and how we can contribute to the healing of this health crisis through music. We feel our amazing tools for harmonisation are a gift for a world in need. Our musical instruments help to find ways to become present in sound; they are tools of healing, awareness and harmony.

We had a complete buzz in innovation: this is what Auroville should be, a hub for research and innovation; we shouldn't just produce. Every week our whole team participated in reflections, visioning and learning meetings. We organised internal seminars to find different ways of marketing, and we completely re-invented our PR outlook with new brochures. Another outcome will be a new website, including several innovations like the "Orbits", the planetary frequencies of the qualities of the eight visible planets and how you get to play with them with sound.

Regarding the larger Auroville economy, has the pandemic revealed weaknesses in our present financial system? If so, what are they?

Our almost full scale dependency on tourism and on outer supply chains in regard to food and basic necessities is a concern. The pandemic brought home that we ought to produce more for Auroville's needs, rather than catering for outside consumerist luxury goods. In any crisis we don't want to depend on the outside.

If the Auroville economy is to be put upon a more sustainable basis, what changes need to take place? Practically, how could these changes happen?

We have to get our act together regarding the economy and self governance. The first thing is to look at Auroville's needs. Which of our essential needs can we provide and produce? Our first need in Auroville is food security. How can this be set up self-sustainably? We have so much farmland here, so support to our farms is crucial. Then, how can we create a beautiful production system where we provide for our own needs? This would create a new approach in our economy and improved work ethics.

The second thing is we need to be looking for partnerships and suppliers in the bio-region. We could perhaps call it 'Auroville Friends Cooperative', a bioregional co-operative partnering with local farmers, and the ethically-oriented business community sympathetic to Auroville, to supply us with the necessities for living and building the city. The third layer is

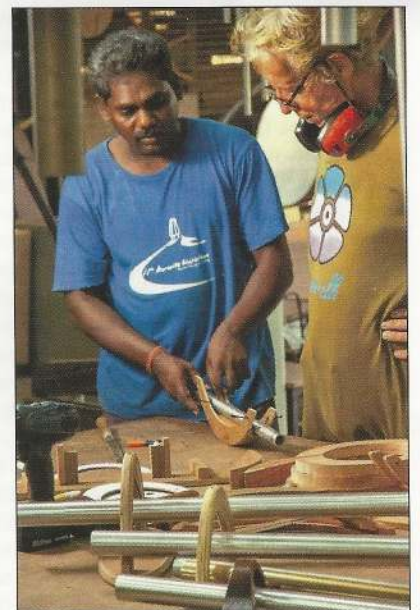
what we produce for income generation. This should be based on innovation and research. Unique goods and services that we produce for outside should come out of the Integral Yoga context and provide things of value that are good for the Earth and humanity.

Auroville is an amazing learning campus. How can we share that virtually? It's a chance for Auroville with all our achievements to become global through our online presence.

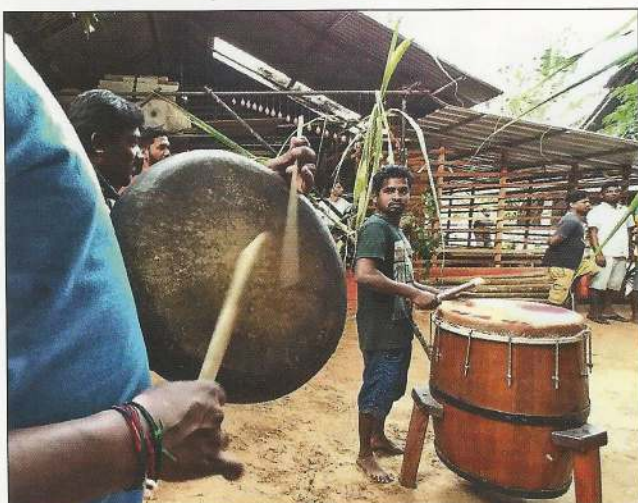
I suggest we set up an Auroville media centre studio where we could broadcast holistic life productions – where, for instance, farmers, technical experts, therapists and nutritionists could share their research and offer classes.

I feel crisis invites and challenges 'out of the box' thinking, intuition, creativity and strategy. We need to be grounded, creative, innovative, to plan and realistically strategise and at the same time be open to the mystery in it. What is She telling us? What is the most crucial and important thing? In this crisis we are surely challenged to listen deeper.

From an interview by Peter



Making wind chimes



Gong and drum made by Svaram



Making Russian bells

Growing up in Auroville

Many people come to Auroville as adults, but some of us were born here or came as kids. What is it like, being a child of Auroville? How is it different to grow up in an intentional community? Jangchup, Snehankita and Neha, three youth of Auroville currently studying in Future School, were invited to write about this as a project and shared their story with us.

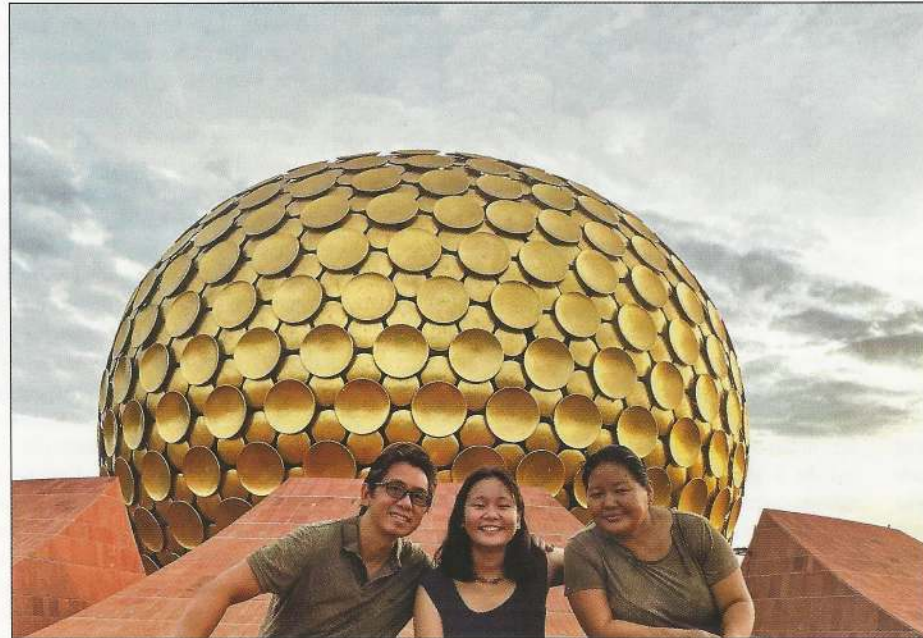
Jangchup's experience

If someone were to ask me "What is it like to live in an Intentional Community, especially in a place like Auroville?" Well, to be specific, I do not know much about the bureaucratic side of Auroville, but because of this, it hit me one day that I am at the age that I definitely should be knowing this, and that the future of Auroville lays in our hands. The more I looked into these management groups, I realized that these explorations answered many of the questions I had a few months back.

I think that to be born and to grow up in Auroville is a huge blessing in itself. To grow not just physically and mentally, but also psychologically from a very young age really shaped me into who I am today; that is nothing other than to feel grateful for and lucky. The biggest gift of growing up in a small town, where people from about 59 countries live together, is that it really developed me to be open-minded and welcoming towards people despite their race, skin colour, and their gender identity. It appears that for 52 years (and running), children, young adults, parents, and the elder citizens have gone through the thick and thin moments of Auroville's legacy. They have volunteered to take the commitment and the responsibility in order to fulfill The Mother's Dream and wish. And today, as a child of Auroville, I feel incredibly honoured and indebted to my birthplace; when the elders say with a moon crescent smile and a calming chuckle that we are Auroville's future generations – there is a reassuring feeling inside of me that ignites a spark of warmth. The cycle will always go on – and just like that, one day. Hopefully all my classmates, my friends, my seniors and juniors, will be adults with different scopes and experiences and will take over and supply the community with impressive and disciplined work ethics.

The most distinct feature I've noticed and experienced of living in Auroville is the education system that stands out from the rest of the schools that I have visited and participated in exchange programmes from (like the Tibetan schools in Dharmasala and in neighbouring areas as well). It makes sense that most people who plan to settle in Auroville may wonder what the education system in an international community would be like. I would say that schools in Auroville, from Kindergarten (2.5-7 years) until Middle School (7-14 years), are mostly focused on the foundation part first, building and developing each individual's physical being, as well as exposing each child to cultural diversity, the importance behind teamwork, and the feature of achieving knowledge.

Ever since I was a little girl, I always wanted to travel the world and to understand the unique and diverse cultures of many places, and I think that aspiration was remarkably forceful, so the curiosity in me grew deeper. 17 years of my life have passed now, and I have many things on my mind – just like any other teenager would. However, there are times where I wonder to myself who I



Father Tenzin, Jangchup and mother Kalsang

want to be in the future – not just career-wise, but as a person. There were people in my life, who have commented in the past on my qualities and abilities to generate my full potential, but to be honest, deep down, I was and still am terrified. It sounds silly, but I guess that is enough to show that my self-esteem and confidence is undeniably limited.

From the beginning, as long as I can remember, I was always shy and uptight – it's strange, because even though I grew up in a place with so much freedom and comfort, my personality seemed to differ from the rest of the Auroville children. I think that is why, whenever I was with my friends, I used to be the one that contrasted the most; like the black sheep in a herd of other ordinary white ones. Even though people say that everyone is different from one another, I couldn't help feeling inferior to the others.

There were also times as a young child, when I proudly boasted to my friends about how fine and rich the culture of my motherland was, but this was before I knew in detail the political situation of Tibet. Later, when I eventually understood the meaning behind the expressions of my friends, I found out why my mother and the millions of Tibetans across the world that are taking refuge in other countries could not return back to Tibet, and I have to be honest, it destroyed me, and although for a long time I was confused, I had to accept the reality.

I have to say, my mature-like thoughts for a 17-year-old girl are a result of my parents doing their best to provide for my early years of childhood with unwavering moments of happiness, despite the situations. Also to be born in a Tibetan family, where my mother Kalsang Dolma, and father Tenzin Namgyal, taught that doing good deeds is just an act of kindness, and that there should not be expectations from the other side when doing them,

otherwise the purpose and the light of it will disappear. There aren't many Tibetans living in Auroville, so as an Auroville child I grew a bit distant to my Tibetan roots. However, my parents did their best to keep the mother tongue alive, and taught me the Tibetan language while growing up.

Honestly, to really understand how I feel about living in one place my whole life seems a bit overwhelming, and it could take some time for me to really ask myself how I feel about living in this place that I call home. There are mixed feelings that I cannot seem to comprehend, but it does feel reassuring that there are people who I can relate to. I successfully learned and got to practice my creativity skills, and I also got to express my intellectual self to many people, through many failures and mistakes, I learned how to not put myself down and rather feel passionate about fixing problems. After listening to older Aurovilians' stories

about life back in the old days, I was bewildered and impressed by the incredible hard work that they put in to build and shape Auroville together under the mindset of The Mother's dream – Human Unity. In Auroville, well at least in the past, I was told that words such as 'togetherness', 'friendship', 'goodness', 'compassion', and 'humanity' had a much more profound and resonating meaning than today.

Of equal importance, I do not intend to speak on behalf of the youth of Auroville about how they feel because this is based on my personal opinions and feelings – for me, it was a fraction that was mixed with how I felt that I am who I am today. As important as my parents have been for my presence today, there is also some part of me that belongs to my lineage's way of life – integral development, and to treat people with kindness and compassion are the most basic values we follow. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama is one of the people that I respect, honour and learn from the most – if you listen to any of his teachings just once, I can guarantee that His Holiness' words will leave you immersed as he beautifully narrates his childhood stories that are related to the teaching's topic. I do not know how to describe further since the feelings felt are something more complex than words could ever describe.

The connection between the Tibetan society in India (especially Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh) and Auroville has blossomed into a truly beautiful connection. One other part of myself is because of Auroville, everything about it: the reason I am full of different ideas, views, and approaches may be defined as a manifestation of each country's dignity. I think that goes the same for most Auroville children – or it should be.

Tenzin Jangchup,

Sneha's reflections

First impressions aren't always exact, they say, and I agree with this statement because if I had held onto my first impression of Auroville, things would have been pretty different in life.

Eight year old me had this image in her head that her life was going to change into something amazing after my parents told me we were leaving to Auroville. In reality, it was the complete opposite. I arrived at the outskirts of Auroville pretty late at night, and the sky that I imagined to be perfectly blue was dark with storm clouds.

The car stopped right in front of a purple gate which led to my house. There was thunder and flashes of lightning in the sky with pouring rain. I was small and confused, and the water was rising around where I stood outside. Not able to see in the dark, I made my way to the porch of the house. Tired, damp and drenched, I dried myself and slept, not knowing what tomorrow would bring.

The next morning, I woke up around noon and went scavenging for food, but instead I was faced with the horrifying aftermath of thunderstorms in Auroville. Twigs and branches from trees lay all over the place. Also, as this place hadn't been cleaned in quite some time, a layer of moss covered the brick walls and most of the ground. Coming from a town, I was really grossed out by the creatures living in moist and forest-like places, a typical feeling people get when they first visit the greenbelts of Auroville.

Hungry, I made my way to a dining area at the school I was going to be living in with my parents, and that is when I first came across Tamil. I was lost even more, and the fact that I would not be able to communicate with most people made me want me to go away from Auroville. The food wasn't great either. I didn't want to face these situations every day, or live somewhere so foreign that even my own house wouldn't make me feel comfortable. Frustrated, I insisted on going back to where we came, North India, but that was the last thing my parents would have done then.

A couple of days, a month, passed by, but I still hated



Sneha

Auroville. My parents tried to make things fun for me, introducing me to other children my age, taking me to the beach, but nothing helped. I missed my childhood and all the friends I had, and every night I would stay up and wonder if we would ever go back.

Soon, I was attending school. I caught the hang of English pretty quickly, which helped me talk to most people. Slowly, I made a lot of friends and Tamil itself didn't seem that hard. A couple of years later I was fluent in it. In the meantime, I learned a lot about Auroville. How it once used to be a barren land with only a couple of palmyra trees scattered around a landscape which now was a lush green forest, and that they were all planted by people.

As time went by, I soon grew to know why my parents had brought me here and what really the purpose of Auroville was. A French woman named Mira Alfassa – mostly known as The Mother – visioned an international community where people from all over the world would come together to live in harmony and unity, where each individual would progress to discover who they

are and be a part of the experiment. My parents wanted me to live a lifestyle different from the normal. They wanted me to explore and experiment and grow into a person that I really wanted to be and that was why they brought me here.

Years passed by and I crossed my childhood stages. At the age of 13 I first reflected on the past and on all what had happened since that dark stormy night, and that is when I got to the conclusion that my opinions on Auroville had completely changed. I never realised that I actually really enjoyed living here and loved doing the things that I did. Every little fact about Auroville was wonderful, and it has become such an important part of my life, without which I would have been a different person right now.

Auroville gave me freedom to do what I was most interested in doing, and enjoy the little things. It made me feel secure and safe, and made me bold enough to be independent. My ideas and perspectives are respected, and living in an international community makes me feel like I'm a part of the whole world and not just India. There is diversity, there are traditions, cultures and people with so much ethnicity that one starts questioning why it doesn't exist elsewhere. There are no boundaries to experimenting, and I think what really matters is that we all are happy doing what we are doing.

Auroville is beautiful too, from the architecture to the natural features, and most importantly, the Matrimandir, which is the result of the hard work and sweat of hundreds of people: a true golden beauty.

Being in high school now, there will be a stage in my life in which I would have to live elsewhere. Even though I was not born here, I feel most connected to this place. It is where I truly feel like myself, it's just the environment and people around me who make me feel like home. At the beginning, it was a little hard to find the ground, but once I was steady, the wonders of Auroville were limitless.

To me, what matters most are the impressions I get throughout the journey and the last one... and as it hasn't ended yet. I wait for Auroville to play its next trick.

Sneha

Neha's story

When asked about Auroville, I'm sure all Aurovilians find great difficulty in portraying the exact idea of this place. It is almost impossible to find the right details or deliver the right impression to the person who'd like to know. There are more than a thousand differences between the ordinary lifestyle (the one outside of Auroville) of a certain people and the people who live in experimental cities like we do; then again, there are countless similarities as well.

Growing up here gives you a whole new perspective of life right from the start. It's like living in the world all at once. You sink in the idea of a harmonic coexistence with other people, especially in Auroville where one is situated in a life based on basic needs and sharing. This causes people to grow qualities, such as self-sufficiency and interpersonal growth. There's time and space for development in all areas within oneself, which helps to balance the strengths and weaknesses in people in this society. You start to notice everyone around you and how they are related to your life. However, when everything is so simplified and entangled, living on trust, it makes it extremely hard to not take everything for granted. In Auroville where factors like money, no religion, culture, and government are not as generalised as in the world outside Auroville, it makes it difficult to differentiate. It often brings me to the question: is that reality or is it this?

On the other hand, it is not like we live in a fairyland of our own. Every city, every land, is a part of our society so we all grow up knowing the limits we live in. We, especially the children, are ingrained in the Auroville norm that for us this becomes the main idea, the structure of home that we base other structures on.

This is different for volunteers, visitors, and newcomers who come from outside and decide to stay here as they are taking a risk, stepping into this abnormality before questioning the normality.

Intentional communities are formed by dreams, aspirations and hopes, mostly projected towards a more hopeful future. There may be some people who grow more than others in a certain direction, but in the end the destination is the same.



Neha

If I had to imagine that Auroville could be located anywhere else in the world I would no longer be able to call it the Auroville we know. The location of Auroville is vital and I feel that we often overlook it because anything that changes from government to laws to social or environmental factors in the country creates a two-fold impact on us.

As I grew older and became part of more mature conversations, I realized that it is not just the radius inside Auroville and the happenings between its people that create the radiance of its existence, but also the factors of Indian culture and people that flow in and out of Auroville. I realized that India has done a wonderful job in not regarding Auroville as a blank page but in highlighting it, internationalizing it and helping it adapt to its own values in order to develop and familiarise with its environment.

Auroville is surrounded by villages rich in South Indian heritage and tradition, and despite the wide range of nationalities in its citizens and tourists, it can be said that almost everyone who lives in Auroville is a child of India themselves. There are verbal slangs, certain moralities and an unconscious teaching or understanding of the Indian lifestyle that is embedded in people who live here. It is wonderful to see how foreigners adapt to this country while still being able to feel at home inside Auroville. They soak in the Indian society around them and make it part of their own. I don't know how other intentional cities work beyond Auroville, but I think without this intimate understanding relationship between country and city,

Auroville could never work.

Those who hear about Auroville always demand to know how such an unreal image of paradise exists in the greedy, selfish and money-driven world we live in. To them, it feels like a sandcastle, a marvellous, interesting social experiment but ready to crumble at any given time. And I suppose there is some truth in that, after all it amazes all of us that Auroville exists and has existed for the past fifty years. Nevertheless, we know better than the peaceful image we show. We cannot deny that people do indulge in their own luxuries in Auroville and that there does exist richer and poorer as in every society, but the gap is not so visible and it's not something that is inflexible... With awareness of that we still strive or appear to strive towards global unity in our differences, accepting the same flow of life that courses through everyone while minimizing the waste bits that threaten to pollute its people.

It's difficult to describe Auroville when I don't know exactly what to compare it to. Is it comparable at all? Growing up in Auroville has always appeared like such a lucky and unique experience; however, as an Aurovillian child, it feels like the standard. It is not special for me to have this range of choices and availabilities that may not come to those outside and it isn't strange to be living in a place where everyone knows everyone. There are countless examples of this: your neighbour may also be your yoga instructor, and your best friend's mother is a person who serves you lunch at a restaurant. It's a woven web of interactions and relationships that link people together who would most likely have never met or become so close.

This connection traverses nationalities and religions towards a point where we celebrate Diwali as well as Christmas, and traditions like Valentine's Day are exchanged among people who had never celebrated it before. There are no set values or characteristics that everyone carries; in its interwoven culture, multicultural people are born. From languages and food to ceremonies and perspectives, we are moulded into a person who has hundreds of windows to the world through which we can form firm ideas and beliefs. I believe this education – that happens not just through schools but also through conversations and friendships – are weapons that

can battle things like racism and sexism. There's respect and understanding of identity and opinion at the base of all the ties in our character and there comes a day as you grow up in this environment that you no longer just inhabit it but you live it.

Auroville's geographical identity also has a great impact in the way we shape our lives. Everything here promotes and protects the environment, from solar panels to garbage recycling, some live in the forest, others in apartments. The animals and plants that surround us are taken in awareness and we have grown to accept their presence, be it a lizard sneaking under the kitchen sink or a thorny bush sprouting in the garden. The sweltering heat that sways in the humidity all year long before the fresh monsoon is also a quite unfortunate part of this ecosystem that we have all adapted to.

Everyone lives in communities, shares the same food, walks the same paths, trades material things like clothes and books (shout-out to Free Store); yet in all this oneness, there are three thousand people living completely different lives.

There are difficulties, of course, in experiments like these. No society is perfect, thus we do quarrel and argue and compete with one another, resolving our differences in communal meetings or team workshops. There are unhappy adults who want to earn what they work for and children who don't know who they are. It's a small community that constantly fights the world inside and outside of it. You're taking off the standard package to change to one that you design on your own. It can reward you in so many ways, yet you are forced to distinguish yourself a lot too. You can be Indian and not relate to other Indians, because when you live in Auroville, you sort of leave that all behind: you become Aurovillian.

On the other hand, I believe that as we progress in this world we are all slowly submitting to being global citizens, all cities are becoming intentional cities in themselves. We are changing them, advancing them to an intended level that we believe is better for us, and it is not just the buildings and the roads that are changing, but it is the people themselves. We are becoming aware that the goal we aim to achieve as humanity in all this confusion is closer in a place like Auroville than it is in the divided world.

Neha

REFLECTION

The return of Don Quixote de la Mancha, the impossible dreams that our times so yearn for

After touring Pablo Picasso's museum in Barcelona, we could not resist buying a print of his masterly sketch of Don Quixote and his companion Sancho Panza, the characters from Miquel de Cervantes' novel about the adventures of Don Quixote. The black and white drawing stands out in its simplicity, depicting the two main characters on horse and donkey, against a background of windmills and the sun.

In the novel, Don Quixote unexpectedly starts to fight against turning windmills, which he perceives as his main enemies. Four hundred years later, this particular image still conveys a powerful and fascinating message. Sure, in Auroville we do have our own tribe of windmill storm troopers who, suddenly spotting a moving windmill, identify it as their main enemy, and charge and attack the perceived evil with all their mental force, mostly to receive a beating from the encounter.

Along my journey there have been plenty of encounters with turning windmills, a period when my emotional volcano was emitting smoke, ash and fire; fed and kept active by ignorance. Much later on, when my inner witness programme got installed, the fight against imaginary enemies shifted towards more challenging inner obstacles. Curiously, even today, the volcano is still able to emit plenty of smoke, especially when encountering a relentless growing and self-empowering Auroville bureaucracy. An example of this trend is Auroville's recently proposed Code of Conduct, a document which specifies a detailed set of logical and calibrated steps that Auroville units are expected to practice. This attempt to introduce regulations, in an ultra-logical document of only 40 pages long, repeats the fatal mistake of assuming that an inner change can be achieved by exclusively using the domain of reason.

Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother worked tirelessly to establish an integral Truth through the manifestation of a decisive transition from the present rational phase towards the subjective or inner phase, not only on an individual but also on a collective scale. For Auroville this means that we should try to align our thoughts, activities and develop-

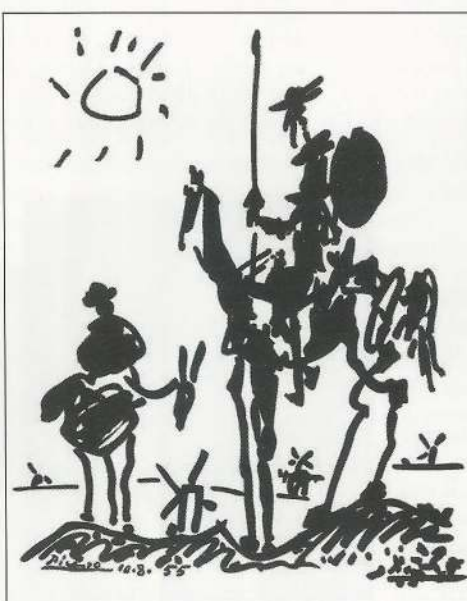
ments from the inside towards the outside, from the inner to the outer. Actions would start from an inner awareness before they translate themselves according to their own truth in the outer environment.

All participants enter Auroville from separate directions with diverse ideas and aspirations. Each one of us is attracted to a different aspect of the Dream. This voluntary coming together delivers an abundant diversity of everyday activities and opinions, preparing a cross-section of humanity to walk towards a wider goal. Less acknowledged, we also enter with luggage in each hand. One bag contains our possibilities, the other our limitations. The invisible accompanying luggage largely defines our life journey. The bag which is opened the fastest and most easily contains our qualities. The other one, with our shortcomings, is opened less often and with far less enthusiasm.

Accepting to participate in Auroville's adventure involves taking up the task of self-exploration and self-development for contributing to the aim of Human Unity. While such an effort starts on an individual level, equally we grow through our relationships. Humans share a common life, a common work, an effort, an aspiration, without which we would not be able to expand to our full height and wideness. Importantly, it also means that our individual needs for freedom must be in harmony with the freedom of our fellow-beings.

Once we have been able to establish our inner aim, we can learn to distinguish between reason (to know) and wisdom (to have seen). *The solution lies not in the reason but in the soul of man, in its spiritual tendencies. It is a spiritual, an inner freedom that can alone create a perfect human order.*

We know that our individual truth bandwidth is extremely limited. However, if we can combine enough individuals putting in a conscious effort to explore the group's dynamic search for reaching harmony, we contribute to the emergence of the group-soul, a feature described and elaborated by Sri Aurobindo. *The nation or society, like the individual, has a body, an organic life. It is the group-soul that must become more and more self-conscious and find itself more and more fully as it develops its corporate action and mentality and its*



DON QUIXOTE. DRAWING BY PABLO PICASSO

organic self-expressive life.

The group-soul emergence and development is more difficult than the individual soul search: *There is only this difference that the group-soul is more complex because it has a greater number of partly self-conscious mental individuals for the constituents of its physical being instead of an association of merely vital sub-conscious cells.*

As individuals or participants in groups, we can support the growth of an emerging group soul, contributing to it in a positive way. Sadly, we easily can destroy it, derail it, using various interventions for prohibiting the effort to reach a common solution and harmony. Resistance and confrontations are mostly centred around the sureness that personal ideas, opinions, are the only correct and valid ones.

Are we attempting to explore our group-souls? On the surface, our interaction patterns seem to be more in tune with a textbook study on the sociology of conflict. Our collective meetings and internal communication platforms are barometers for accurately measuring internal storms, typhoons and tsunamis. We witness a continuous ongoing struggle for establishing harmony between the

different existing social structures; the individual, the family, the community, the tribes, the classes, the languages, the races, the cultures, the states, the countries. All this is happening while we try to make sense of an ongoing experiment of unparalleled complexity, attracting an accumulation of all possible forces that deny. *Oppressed by the thousand forces that deny.* Could such a chaotic space lead us to that tipping point to ignite the potential richness within?

When our search for finding a common ground of unity is extinguished, when it is forgotten that the experiment has to be lived out on an inward level, when this crucial knowledge is overlooked, or deemed not necessary any longer, we enter the conflict zone of confusion, division, verbal fights. Then the collective inner search retreats, and instead of progress, stagnation occurs and reigns.

While considering the overall resistance to change and inner progress, it must be acknowledged that Auroville did not opt for an authoritarian structure to organize its different activities, but instead tries to find alternative solutions, ways not clearly defined and which often do not work. As each of the participants in the adventure of consciousness and joy explores and travel upon their unique road, this results in an assembly of participants fully aware of their individual rights but unable to take the responsibility to establish, encourage and nurture a collective spirit. If by chance an agreement is reached, it is framed in a mental language awfully inadequate to our inner aspirations, simply because we do not yet have that intuitive ability for organizing and guiding ourselves towards a much-needed higher level. With such huge challenges, it is a sheer miracle that Auroville continues and that we, the fortunate journey travellers, are able to keep the invisible flame alive and burning. *It will not be enough, but it will be a commencement, a true gate and not a blind entrance.*

There is a Power within that knows beyond Our knowings; we are greater than our thoughts, And sometimes earth unveils that vision here.

Tency

Hervé Millet

Long-term Aurovilian Hervé Millet left his body on August 19th at Marika Home at the age of 75, due to complications of cancer which he had been battling since several years.

Hervé was one of the French pioneers, a Breton, who joined the caravan that left Paris in 1974 for overland travel to Auroville. From the moment of arrival at the end of that year, he wholeheartedly plunged into a wide range of work activities and services which characterised him throughout his life in Auroville. It started with construction work with Pierre Elouard, building the houses in Auromodèle, during which time he was also active at the then emerging Pour Tous service in Aspiration. During Auroville's survival struggles of those years, Hervé, along with others, was jailed twice, first in Tindivanam and later again in Villupuram.

When things got quieter, Hervé began planting trees in Révelation, looked after SAIER's transport, worked at *Maroma*, and spent several years at *Mira Aditi's* book distribution service in Karnataka, and later on with Satprem in the Nilgiris.

After an intensive time in the mountains, he returned to Auroville in the mid-nineties where he was welcomed by the *Auroville Press* team and, soon after that, he participated in the creation of *Auroville Papers* of which he later became executive. It was here that he found his true element, doing all kinds of experiments for different kinds of new-look and new-feel papers, using a great variety of leaves, flowers and colours, and became skilled in giving paper-making workshops. Hervé was never happier than when showing a child how to make paper or help in the unit. In an interview by *Auroville.com*, Hervé said: "Living in Auroville means everything to me, and the Mother takes care of me, she really takes care of me. I feel like I am walking the wire with no net under to catch me, but Mother will not let me fall. When I arrived here, I had no money, and she gave me everything. Everything that I have has been given to me... I give

my work to the Mother, and I can't be deceived, because she knows what I need."

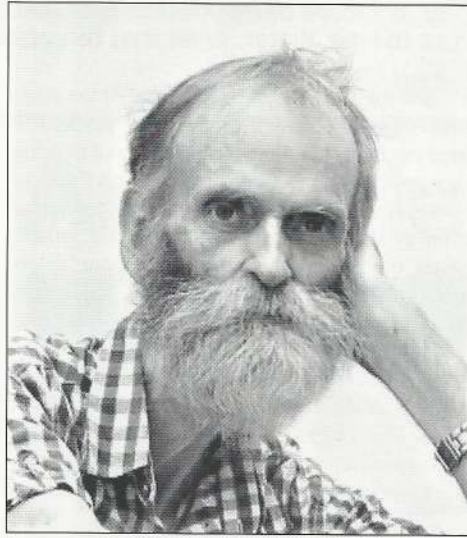
Hervé's remains were cremated at the Auroville cremation and burial grounds in Adventure community on August 20th. As per COVID-19 government instructions, only his closest friends could attend.

Alain Bernard, a long-time colleague, wrote this about him on Auronet:

Hervé... We had some time to prepare ourselves for his departure, yet it feels so strange to think that no longer will we see this elongated being unfolding himself from some stool or boulder on which he would occasionally be perched like a strange bird with folded wings. No longer will we get from him some story or another told with a twinkle as he had a special taste for the unusual or original manifestations of life. He could be very silent as well as talk a lot. Quite a bit gossipy at times but usually with no malice.

Hervé was the archetypal companion, he would often form strong connections mostly around material work. Before coming to Auroville, he had been very much attracted by the community called the Companions, who form around the concept of excellence in material work, such as carpentry or masonry. To become a Companion, you had to follow a special process demonstrating your proficiency in your chosen field of work. Hervé had clearly the mystique of companionship and it reflected in his way of reacting to life situations.

During the special period when we had to defend Auroville's freedom, you could always count on Hervé to come and participate in any type of action called by the circumstances, whether sit-ins, protests, occupations of sites or buildings. He was with me in the first group of prisoners in the Tindivanam jail but he was also in the group that was later arrested and sent to Villupuram. Hervé was surely made of the human material that makes the famed "good" French soldier, patient, resourceful, resilient, rather abstemious, tenacious.



He was indeed Mother's soldier.

I had the privilege of helping him in his last passion in life, hand-made paper. Serge, another great companion in my Auroville life, was looking for ways to support Auroville Press, which was always in precarious survival mode. Serge told me of his idea to revive the activities of hand-made paper which had existed in the beginnings of Auroville but had gone extinct. It immediately inspired me and I promised to help. Some time later, with Hervé, we used mixies in the food processing unit to make our first attempt at hand-made paper. We made two rather thick pancakes-like white paper, happy like kids. Afterwards, it was a long story of slowly recuperating the old Hand Made Paper building, paying off old debts, purchasing small HMP machines to begin. I continued for some time to participate in the adventure but it was mostly Hervé who became passionate about paper, plunging deep into it, reading a lot of old and recent books. I remember making photocopies of pages and pages of very old books in the Madras Central Library (Hervé would devour these pages).

He was always looking for and making new experiments, including once making paper out of elephant poo. Together with Luisa, he built *Auroville Papers* to the level of excellence they have attained.

Hervé's personal life has been solitary but he did not seem to suffer from it, maybe due to his otherwise intense partnerships in activities with different people. In a way, he was like a tall grown-up kid and indeed he loved kids and had easy spontaneous relations with them. He once told me how marvellous he thought it must be to be a kid in Auroville. He was definite that in his next life he would come back as a kid in Auroville. He was surprisingly confident about it and it is again a manifestation of his way of relating to the Mother. I somehow believe that She will not disappoint him on this score, as She never failed to support him all along as he said himself in such a moving and simple way. Therefore I would not be surprised if Hervé, or rather whatever new form his Being will choose, comes back here, sooner or later.

So, indeed there is some melancholy in seeing old companions go away. As Fred said, "It's getting lonely." The circle of first comers is shrinking and it will only accelerate in the coming years. Often I hear that the spirit of the newcomers is not what it was forty or fifty years ago. I am not sure about that. It may be different because the world has changed a lot meanwhile.

But what has not changed is that the same Force is still moving Auroville – not us, surely, or so little, associated by sheer grace – and that Force is calling whoever is meant to be here or must be here as It did from the beginning. (I am not naïve. I know there may be some who are not really meant to be here and surely we did not manage to sustain very well Her protective shield all these years.) Yet She said Auroville will be and it is Her project. In Her project Hervé was a worthy foot soldier. Hervé had no doubt that the true Auroville would come, and that he would continue to move along with it, towards it.

So long, Hervé. We shall meet again and again.

Giorgio Molinari

Giorgio Molinari peacefully left his body on Monday August 10 at the age of 83 in his Arka apartment, succumbing to heart problems that had been plaguing him for years.

Born in Milano, Giorgio was involved in photography from an early age onwards, while also developing interest in oriental philosophy. As a young man during military service he functioned as a ground assistant for aerial photography, after which he entered the world of advertisement agencies, freelancing for record companies, theatre productions, architectural designs, often working with big names in the field. In 1980 he made an architectural photo study of Chandigarh, from where he visited Auroville and the Matrimandir and the first true contact was made.

Then came the 'Auroville 35 years' festivity in UNESCO's Paris centre in 2003, during which he learned more about Auroville and met several Aurovilians. His decision was made. Even though he was stricken with cerebral hemorrhage and right-side paralysis during the preparations to come here, he managed to fly in October 2004 to Auroville where he could convalesce in Arka. In December 2006 he became Aurovilian.

From the very onset Giorgio was generously involved in the upgrading of Arka's infrastructure and lived there as well. From there he did extensive photo studies of Savitri Bhavan, Matrimandir, and we saw him time and again during our meetings, at special events, in schools and at village occasions, cautiously but persistently negotiating the spaces and making photos wherever he could, always freely giving them to Auroville. He would merrily make marriage photos of friends in the village, providing them with CDs of the footage, and the Eluciole Circus would not be the same without him. In his studio, Giorgio trained various students, and endeavoured to make Aurovilians familiar with his Chronotype technique.

Several years ago, Giorgio's beloved sister Graziella, who often came over from Italy and stayed with him in Arka, passed away, and since then Giorgio wasn't the same anymore. His health withered, and so did his humour and zest for life. He recently offered all his material and equipment

to Auroville to constitute 'Studio Giorgio', currently temporarily housed in Citadines. The collection will now move to his Arka studio from where 'Studio Giorgio' can operate under the guidance of his closest collaborator, Piero Cefaloni.

Thank you for having been with us, dear Giorgio, we will remember you through your many exquisite photos and touching images, and for your warm hearted generosity and endearingly grinning smile.

Giorgio's remains were cremated at the Auroville cremation and burial grounds in Adventure community on August 13th. As per COVID-19 government instructions, only his closest friends could attend.



Giorgio's self-portrait using his experimental 'Chronotype' technique.

Dharmesh published this appreciation of Giorgio on Auronet, titled "The Joy of Giving"

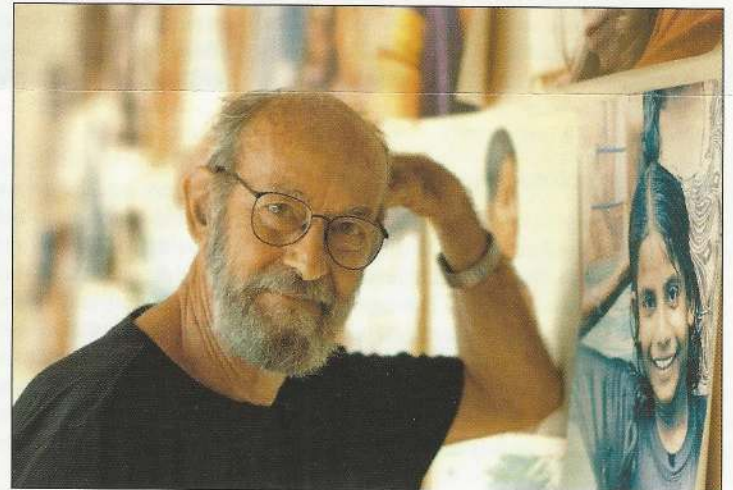
One does not know how life unfolds for each of us; how we build some special connections with one another, through our work, life, occasional interactions or simply by someone's presence at the right place, at the right time! One such connection I made was with Giorgio Molinari.

Giorgio Molinari, our omnipresent photographer, was a real community man, who immor-

talised several important events happening all around Auroville through his lens work; enhanced by his photography and his very special smiling, inspiring Presence. My first interaction with him was somewhere in the early years of our artistic journey at Kala Kendra. He was one of the rare artists who was encouraging, interacting with known, unknown, young, old, visiting and Aurovilian artists. Studying, capturing their work at opening events, photographing people, his favourite subject, especially youngsters who all loved him for his humour and ever welcoming nature.

We had found an in-house photographer and documentation expert, god-gifted, at all our events. He was just a message away. He never missed the opening of any exhibition at Kala Kendra; even when his health was frail, when he was unwell, he would make a special effort to visit the exhibition later, quietly, often encouraging artists by buying some of their work for his collection. His spirit of sharing, giving, was so generous and he shared his work freely with almost all. Auroville will be ever grateful for some amazing images he captured around Auroville of myriad events; happening in each and every corner of the town. He would usually come earlier and set up his frames, plan how he would work, seldom asking for any help or complaining about anything. He was an ever joyous, enthusiastic soul, full of life, living life in presence, at each moment.

Our special connection developed into a friendship slowly, when he got interested in travelling with us to Gujarat to explore further his love for India; especially the craft clusters, villages and towns, to explore various cultures in contemporary India, its changing life, its evolving life around. Finally, a few years ago, he managed to travel with Rakhee, to Khamir, an organisation which works in various crafts in Kutch, Gujarat. Rakhee was



taking a workshop with women and potters of Kutch, exploring the traditional techniques, creating some contemporary products to help a livelihood project by Khamir. Giorgio made this workshop memorable by his presence and his interactions with craftsmen and women; studying crafts, documenting each one, cherishing the cuisine, travel, crafts and the culture of Kutch. His love grew further and he wanted to visit again with me, which was being planned but never could be realised due to his deteriorating health. I will forever regret it.

I will remember you, Giorgio, on every visit to Gujarat and Saurashtra with the many craft clusters we work with there and hope that we meet in the next life to explore our common interests, our love for India and its diverse culture of crafts, communities and cuisine! Thank you for being yourself, sharing your wonderful work with us all! For capturing the beauty that lies within the surface of Auroville, in its beautiful children, landscape, people. Thank you for showing us how life can be lived even amidst challenging circumstances, how a smile can win over any differences or disagreements; how one can merge with the life around if one truly is an artist, if one truly has an eye for beauty! How one can be artistic to the core, while being hooked on to technology. How this "fine blending of opposites" can be achieved in one's life.

You made this experience of Auroville beautiful for me, for each of us whose lives you and your work touched upon. Seldom a soul passes on so peacefully, leaving behind so many memories. Thank you for all those known and unknown portraits you have captured! In Auroville will be ever grateful to you for bringing out that hidden gem of beauty in each one of us! For just being yourself!

Promoting zero waste

Zero waste is the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of all products, packaging, and materials, without burning them, and without discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health.

She is passionate about it. Zero waste, she says, is a life style, which should be followed by all Auroville residents and become a target for Auroville as a whole. Meet Laure Huys, a Belgian national who joined Auroville three years ago and who is focused on promoting zero waste and package-free products.

"I've always been interested in projects relating to the environment," says Laure. "Before joining Auroville, I was living in France where my interest in a zero-waste lifestyle and waste reduction through package-free product supply was kindled. In France, last year, package free purchases have grown by 40%. But when I came to Auroville I was a little disappointed because I thought that the city of the future would be in the forefront of package-free products. I discovered it wasn't and still isn't. I decided to get involved."

One of her first visits was to *Ecoservice*, the Auroville unit which collects dry waste from most Auroville communities, micro-segregates it, bundles and sells recyclables, and sends the rest – the least possible – to a landfill located on Auroville land. "I volunteered there for a week. I found they are doing a great job! They are constantly trying to find new solutions to reduce land filling, find new waste buyers and ways to recycle. They are very careful with what they bury in the landfill – a lot of waste cloth, tissues and paper, but not anything toxic such as batteries and e-waste. But there is a substantial amount of non-recyclable plastics resulting from packaged foods. That should be reduced and even totally avoided."

Auroville's food outlets

Laure's next visits were to Auroville's four food outlets: the Pour Tous Distribution Centre (PTDC) next to the Solar Kitchen; FoodLink next to PTDC; the Pour Tous Purchasing Service (PTPS) in Aspiration community; and HERS in Kottakarai community. "I was looking into how these outlets were dealing with food packaging: was everything pre-packed in plastic or cartons, were there any package-free options?"



Laure Huys

She found PTDC to be far ahead of the other outlets. "Many of their products are stocked in large containers and the customers have to bring their own (preferably cotton) bags and flasks to collect each item. In this way the packaging for many products is avoided." Grains, rice, pulses, pastas, muesli, cookies, soaps, shampoos, detergents and house cleaning liquids are now available in bulk. Oils, milk, yoghurts, juices, nut butters, jams and marmalades are mostly offered in glass jars, which people return after usage. Vegetables and fruits are also offered without packaging. Only cheese, tofu products, a few milk packets, spices, non-Auroville biscuits, dried fruits and nuts come pre-packed in plastic.

Foodlink came out second best, in Laure's assessment. It is smaller than PTDC, but also offers package-free options for vegetables, fruits, milk, pulses and rice, mainly grown locally. "But PTPS and HERS still largely rely on packaged food items. One reason is that many of their items are 'luxury' items, which are not available at PTDC and FoodLink. Another reason is that the management is not as convinced about the need to go for minimum waste as the management of PTDC."

Is it really a matter of management? "It plays a great role," says Laure: "The change in PTDC was not brought about because of pressure of the customers, but thanks to the ideology of the management. I believe if HERS and PTPS truly want it, they would find a way to change the whole concept of their stores. And if they take the lead, consumers will definitely follow. It's like any transition: changes come gradually, but then become habits."

To help HERS evolving towards package free options, Laure and her team recently conducted a survey to ask their customers if they would like HERS to have more package-free products. Of the 404 respondents, 90% were in favour and expressed they are willing to cut down their waste. The results were presented to the HERS executives who are willing to cooperate and are now working on implementing package free options. "I think it would be very inspiring for people everywhere to see Auroville



Bulk containers at Pour Tous Distribution Centre

become a successful model of plastic-free, local, organic living," wrote one participant. "Kudos to HERS for considering going this route!" wrote another, expressing the hope that PTPS will evolve along the same lines. Laure is now following this up.

But as long as HERS and PTPS continue selling packaged foods, and as she cannot shop at PTDC [people who recently joined Auroville cannot shop at PTDC as the space is too small to allow for more customers, eds.] Laure had to look for alternative solutions. She was lucky. "I suddenly discovered a home delivery option. I met Dinesh, founder of Samarpanam farmers market, who is a middleman between local farmers and Auroville/Pondy customers. He does home-deliveries in paper bags or metal containers, which is ideal. So everybody can get their daily needs to help the environment. But it's a shame that I have to buy from outside Auroville whereas I'd like to support the Auroville economy. But all what I need is not available package-free here."

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rot

There is more to zero waste than package-free food. In her book *Zero Waste Home: The Ultimate Guide to Simplifying your Life by Reducing your Waste*, Bea Johnson introduces the 5Rs to achieve Zero Waste at home – Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rot. The method, which she developed through years of practicing waste-free living, reduced her family's annual trash to an amount that would fit in a pint jar. Her system is now widely used by individuals, businesses and municipalities worldwide. How is Auroville doing in this regard?

"Pretty well," admits Laure. "I can't say anything about the 'refuse' principle as this is a matter of the development of each individual's consciousness. But we are doing quite well at reusing and recycling. We have the Free Store next to the Solar Kitchen, where all unused clothing can be dropped; there is the Mahasaraswati Free Store in Aspiration for larger items; and the Auroville Library is a big receiver of books you no longer read. There is the up-cycling studio, which tries to find new uses for waste products. And I believe many households compost their kitchen waste, so nothing goes lost. Also, attempts are ongoing to reuse waste products in construction, as has been done in the International House in the International Zone where junked waste-hoses from petrol pumps were used for railings, and corrugated sheets made from discarded tetra packs were used for roof cover. Many more attempts to creatively re-use waste are constantly being made. At the Visitors Centre, most of the packaging is not in plastic, and there people cannot buy bottled water in plastic containers – which is quite unusual for India. And last but not least, there is Auroville's educational outreach through *WasteLess*."

The villages

While Auroville is doing relatively well in handling its garbage, an increasing amount of litter is polluting the roads and fields of the nearby villages. "The plastic industry is booming. The villages have no waste management system to collect and process the waste," says Laure. "Aurovilians and the residents of Kulilpalayam village are suffering from uncontrolled waste dumping along the roads and the number of garbage heaps is increasing."

The project 'Waste Without Borders', an initiative of Auroville's unit *Palmyra*, plans to deal with the issue for the villages in the bioregion of Auroville. The project aims at creating an easy replicable zero landfill model for rural India. It includes door-to-door waste collection from 50,000 people, the transporting of this waste to a Regional Resource Recovery Center, and the processing of the waste using various technologies. The Recovery Center aims at becoming a demonstration site to showcase "the revolutionary impact of synergies between various technologies for waste processing" and so give birth to the possibility of a truly zero waste system that will end the need for landfills. Funding for the first phase of this project is being sought.

In conversation with Carel

Find Laure on Instagram and Facebook as *EcoLorette* where she documents her journey towards zero waste.

<https://www.instagram.com/tv/CDK2HSAhxFl/?igshid=erhtaxomx3ao>



Waste pollutes Kulilpalayam village

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