

AUROVILLE TODAY

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The City of Dawn: A large village or a Galaxy?

Throughout those difficult years, each person kept, well hidden deep in the heart, the dream of a luminous, spiritual and harmonious city; a flaming torch.

"Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realizations."

(Third paragraph of the Auroville Charter presented to the world on 28th February, 1968.)

Between 1968 and 1972, a whole team worked on the plans of the city of which Mother dreamt. Mother directed the research, ac-

cepting or rejecting the proposals. The work progressed step by step. Then a model was constructed and presented to the world: the Galaxy.

Funds began to arrive. The construction of Promesse, Last School, Sanskrit School and Auromodel was begun.

In 1973, Mother left her body, leaving Auroville an orphan. Disagreements started between Aurovilians and the SAS. The latter cut off the funds and Auroville was forced back upon itself to survive. A village rather than a city came naturally into existence.

The years went by. In 1985, ARC (the Auroville Resource Center)

took up coordinating the development of the town.

Sporadically during the past two or three years, the construction of the town was reconsidered. In any event, necessity made the development of a solid infrastructure more and more indispensable.

In September 1988, the Central Government, in order to assist the development of Auroville requests in the Auroville Foundation Bill a 'Master Plan'.

A team spontaneously forms around Roger Anger, who has returned from his voluntary exile. All of us feel that a town, however perfect, not only consists of ce-

ment, bricks and a functioning electrical system or an exemplary form of water distribution; above all it is made up of human beings with their hopes, their dreams and their aspirations.

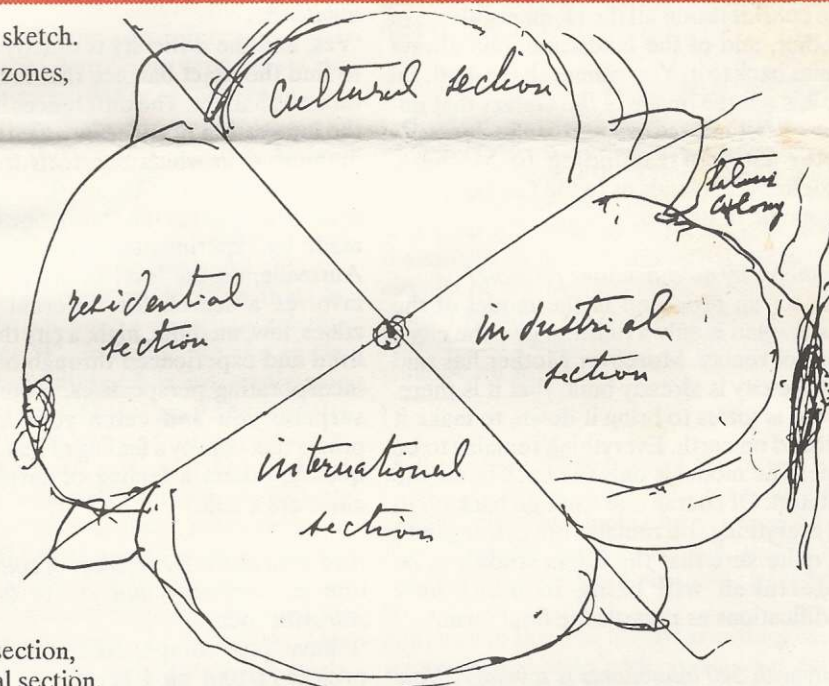
But actually, what is the Galaxy? Are we ready to make it a reality? Do we prefer to grow organically according to our immediate needs, following a process of progressive transformation? *Auroville Today* does not try to provide the answer, but offers an overview of the different approaches and actual difficulties.

The Editors.

Roger Anger

One name keeps coming back over the years, in connection with the Galaxy: Roger Anger, the well-known French architect. Soon after leaving the Beaux Arts, he constructed some buildings which were architecturally remarkable and which immediately associated him with the avant-garde. In August 1965, Mother, to whom he had been close for a number of years, called upon him, because of his knowledge and his experience, to construct Auroville. Auroville Today wanted to get to know him better and clarify some important points.

Mother's sketch.
The four zones,



Cultural section,
residential section,
international section, industrial section, labour colony (anti-clockwise).

PUSHING THE FUTURE FORWARD – An interview with Roger Anger

October 12th, 1988

Auroville Today: Roger, in 1974, on the 28th of August to be precise, you wrote a letter to the Sri Aurobindo Society announcing your resignation. I quote a brief extract from that letter:

"Given the present situation in Auroville I am led to explain the decision I have taken to withdraw from the organisation that administers the Town I am more and more convinced, for reasons I have explained repeatedly and over a long period of time of the incapacity of the present system to carry through successfully the material development of Auroville, and to infuse in its actions the message of unity and harmony which is indispensable for the building of the 'city of the future'."

It is now 1988 and you are back again. Has something changed?

Roger A.: The situation has changed and so have I. What made me leave the committee of organisation of Auroville in 1974 is that it had become clear to me, even back then, that there were two contradictory forces at work. One a conservative one, and the other attempting desperately to move forward and call the future. It had become obvious that the conditions that the organisation was conforming to were an expression of an extreme traditional conservatism, while on the other hand you had a

large part of the Aurovilians identifying themselves with an idea of revolution which in fact was nothing but the after-effects of May '68. No authority was recognized; we were stuck between internecine power struggles that made all action impossible. During Mother's time I attempted to push towards the imaginary, the future, but following Her departure it was no longer possible. The seeds, of what after the struggle was to turn into an ideology of incomprehension and intolerance, were already present. It seemed to me that I did not have the capacity to stand this. I had come to Auroville to dream, empower the imagination, not to have to bear the factions destined to collide in a disharmonious system, and in contradiction with the ideals of Auroville'

The Foundation Bill has just been passed in Parliament and you have returned. Is there a connection?

'No, it is not because Auroville has been recognized by the Indian Government that I have come back. Over the last 12 years I have come back a number of times, going around on my own in Auroville, and I was always open to what was going on. Frankly, the seven years I spent in close contact with Mother means my heart is in Auroville. However, the rupture became definitive when actual fighting took place for ideological reasons. People were attacking each other in the name of Mother. That was unbearable for me; for me it was not my time.'

Is it now the time?

'I am convinced that things have changed as far as I'm concerned towards Auroville. With the passing of time I have become aware that things will take a while to fall into place and that a certain struggle and resistance are inherent to the progress of Auroville. Undoubtedly there will always exist contradictory force fields which will make the experience difficult. My role, I believe, is to push the future forward.'

Auroville will turn 21 this year. It is, I believe, useless to look backwards. The pioneering phase is over. What now?

'What I find encouraging are the men (and women!!?) who have formed the crucible of Auroville. There are impressive human resources to draw on here. What has struck me the most in Auroville are the men here and nature. There is more fraternity and more authenticity than before. What is fantastic here are the human instruments, (whether they are aware of it or not) that have been brought together here to participate in the realisation of this formidable experiment, and what has most moved me in rediscovering Auroville, which when I left was literally a desert, is the will of nature to

collaborate with all her force. Does that mean that all the right conditions are there? This I do not know. One has to also recognize that the power plays are still there, the parochial divisions, the fanatic ideologies that go against the ideal and which are terribly limiting, and today I am convinced that the only thing to do is to come together towards the unity that is the basis of Auroville. A mutual understanding that I feel is already taking place.'

You are aware of the contents of the new bill that has made Auroville a foundation. What do you think of this?

'I am convinced that it is a means for Auroville to break out of its torpor. It is a new chance that is given to Auroville. There was a first chance given by Mother in '68, a fantastic chance, an 'explosion' of hope.

"What has most moved me in rediscovering Auroville is the will of nature to collaborate with all her force"

Anything was possible, everything was ready to help Auroville, but slowly that chance dried up. For the time being I do not believe that there exists a better solution; I do not say that it is the only one and the best one, nor that it is without danger, but I believe it is the only acceptable one for the time being. It is up to Auroville to impose its vision of the City, its life, its future on the Government. I believe it represents a new opportunity that is given to us which may be a rapid and enlightened awakening of awareness; if not, Auroville risks to fall asleep again for years and years.'

After 23 years, are the designs of the 'galaxy' still future-oriented?

'I strongly wish that we would stop referring to the galaxy plan as Roger A.'s plan. I would like to clarify this once and for all. It is not my vision, but the logical result of the researches of a whole team over many months, but particularly of the presence of Mother, Her inspiration and influence, that gave birth to the concept of the galaxy. This concept contains in its entirety the message of Mother and the dream She had for us. Let me quickly recapitulate it: First of all there is the concept of the four zones which springs from a sketch of Mother, and which no one contests, I believe. Mother gave sufficient explanations concerning the basis of Her concept of spiritual urbanism. Following this we brought Mother a plan. That was radiocentric but we quickly realised that what we had come up with was no better than the military cities, so we reworked it with Mother and attempted to make this city more moving and living with perspectives. We came up with a succession of projects until we finally arrived at the Galaxy. One can try to break away from it, but if one takes into consideration all the elements, those of Mother, and of the landscape, one always comes back to it. You cannot shake it off. I'd say it is not the image of the Galaxy that imposes itself on Auroville; it is the necessity of the city corresponding to Mother's guidelines that leads us to the Galaxy. It has a dynamic of its own.'

Are there any modifications possible?

'The set-up proposed in the model of the master-plan is only a finish to give the city a sense of reality. Moreover Mother has said that the city is already built, that it is there. Now it is for us to bring it down, to make it descend on earth. Everything remains to be done. The model is only the back bone, the skeleton. Of course one can't go back on it, but everything still remains open, free, and I am quite sure that the urban studies to be undertaken will bring in many new modifications as regards the final form.'

A city with 500 inhabitants is a village. How to bring in the 50.000 inhabitants Mother spoke of?

'I think one has to convince the Indian Government that Auroville represents a stupendous chance for the country — for its image as well as for its future — but I think that they have already understood this. It must be India that helps propel Auroville into an international dimension. And in this way the whole world helps Auroville as India already has, but this is already happening. For instance the fields of electronics and afforestation are examples of the type of help Auroville can provide India. A city that would have the fantastic function of being a yeast. For instance, let us create the University of Human Unity. This could become a centre of thought as regards the bringing together of nations to fight against segregation and all the problems of racism and division. It could bring a universal understanding with regard to the safe keeping of Peace and Nature. This all lies within our capacities. It is a dimension Mother always wanted from Auroville. If we could understand the necessity of this dimension it would create a second wind for Auroville. The more we are demanding of ourselves and the higher we set our sights the more chance we will have to be understood by governments and to receive international assistance.'

Exactly. If Auroville develops, how to integrate the surrounding villages?

'We have studied the possibilities of building one, or several model villages. But it needs to be discussed. A model village that would respect the traditions and habits of the villagers would be an important step forward as regards the integration of Auroville in India. The work already done by *Co-Evolution* and *New Creation* is impressive but one must take it farther and dream more ambitiously. One has to connect the villages to the economic development of Auroville, and raise the standard of living of the farmers and workers. I remember that the question of the integration of the local population and Auroville, although problematic, was an important priority for Mother. The presence of an experiment like Auroville necessarily brings up the problem of regional development. It is impossible to visualize Auroville's development without taking into consideration the standard of life in the surrounding villages. Model villages would be experimental whose inhabitants would consist of volunteers; it would be a process of adaptation.'

"One has to learn to live together as one will not always have enough land to build a house kilometres away from one's nearest neighbour - and certainly not in Auroville"

A city is defined, first and foremost, by its inhabitants...

'Yes, and the difficulty is exactly this: how to find the exact balance that includes nature and habitat. The differences in density, the integration of space in which one communicates, in which one feels freed from the heaviness of buildings. This has never been attempted in the world; one has never made an experimental city of this nature. Auroville, on the level of urban research, involves a search for different types of zones, low, medium, high; a city that can be lived and experienced through one's eyes, incorporating perspectives, moments that surprise you and catch your attention, others that convey a feeling of rest and tranquillity, others a feeling of surprise. Flat cities are a hell.'

And what about the problem of communication so necessary and yet so lacking in Auroville today?

'I have just completed the model of a project (1/100) on 1 hectare of land — 3 buildings with piazzas (squares), cafes to meet, places for many-sided cultural activities. For example, in each building there could be a children's section where they could, if they so wanted, play and live together. Apartments where everyone can, if they want, be alone with themselves but also meet others... Buildings with patios and courtyards. One has to learn to live together as one will not always have enough land to build a house kilometers away from one's nearest neighbour, and certainly not in Auroville. This is the story of Auroville, the true story of Auroville, and it is the business of Aurovilians to have the right attitude that is part of the work that we all have to do. It is of course a simple example. Situated in a residential zone; 120 to 150 per building. One can relocate all of Auroville onto one hectare. It is for Auroville to know what it wants. One has to take an inventive step, an urbanistic one, this is part of Auroville's message. One should include contemporary life, human relationships, technology and the respect of nature, within a very creative context to show to the world that it is possible. Of course, for the time being we are simply continuing to perpetuate a hollow, comfortable and uncreative system that has nothing to do with the future, nor with the Mother's dream. It is a revolution from

within that one must envisage. All new ideas are welcome. All new ideas can combine in a balanced and intelligent use of space, where life, human relationships, cultural activity, commerce, and our relationship with nature are all renewed. We have to once again begin to dream in Auroville. If we stop dreaming we will never build Auroville. We dreamt for years with Mother and She had the power to pass Her dream on, and now if we don't wake up we are risking to forget Her dream after all these years of material difficulty and struggle. To begin with we must learn to become voluntary servitors to be able to take Her dream as far as possible to its fulfillment.'

What will be Matrimandir's relationship to the city?

'I believe and continue to respect what Mother said: A spiritual Centre in the middle of the city — a garden zone to protect it — and then immediately after that the city. Matrimandir has to be present in the city — the heart of the city visible from all sides, present everywhere, if one comes up with the right proportions for the gardens — which still remain to be defined. The Matrimandir will be a means of communication; a latent yet anchored presence. I still go against a certain idea that it should be in some way isolated. It has to be a zone of respect, of serenity, of meditation, almost a place of initiation. If it is isolated from the city, then we are dealing with two opposing approaches. Mother also spoke of Matrimandir as a focal point. And the sequence of buildings near Matrimandir is like a setting. It involves research, almost a quest, that has to be undertaken, but I am

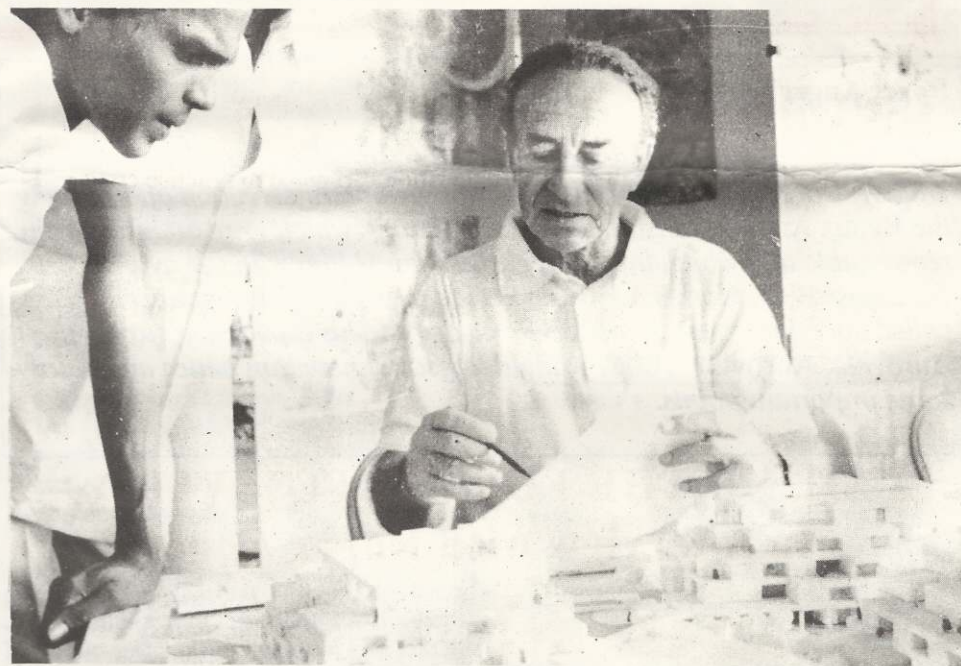
'As far as I can help to bring a dynamic impetus I am ready. But I do not want to redo what I have already done 20 years ago. I do not want to have to go back to the drawing board. Twenty years ago I started a school of architecture in Auroville and formed people capable of building Auroville. Now I no longer have the force, nor the desire to do so. What interests me is that Auroville becomes the bearer of its own message — there, of course, I feel fully involved. Today I can tell the Aurovilians how to start a school of architecture.'

When Auroville will be completed, what will Auroville be?

Auroville will undertake a perpetual search for the future with beings of high quality who will have, for a great deal, over-

"Auroville will finally become united to an inner law and then it will be like a lighthouse — an unbelievable fire"

come their limitations, achieved a true communication, a true fraternity, based on openness, and an understanding of the other in a beautiful and harmonious environment within the context of an exceptional city, where each man's dream will be part of life, and where experience will always renew itself, integrated in an unend-



Roger Anger

not here to impose anything — it is up to Auroville to find it, to define itself.'

You say all the Aurovilians must participate. Is it feasible that everybody takes up everything?

'For a long time Aurovilians tried to deny my existence. But I think now they recognize the capacities and abilities of everyone. Urbanism is always very complicated because it touches psychoanalytic fields — the dream of everyone to build his own house, and Auroville is the only place in the world where one has the possibility to do so. I think now we have reached the point where we are coming to the end of our wild experiences. One has to accept the necessity of a structure, which does not necessarily exclude marginal experiences. More and more we will be led and forced to respect the Charter and the ideals of Auroville.'

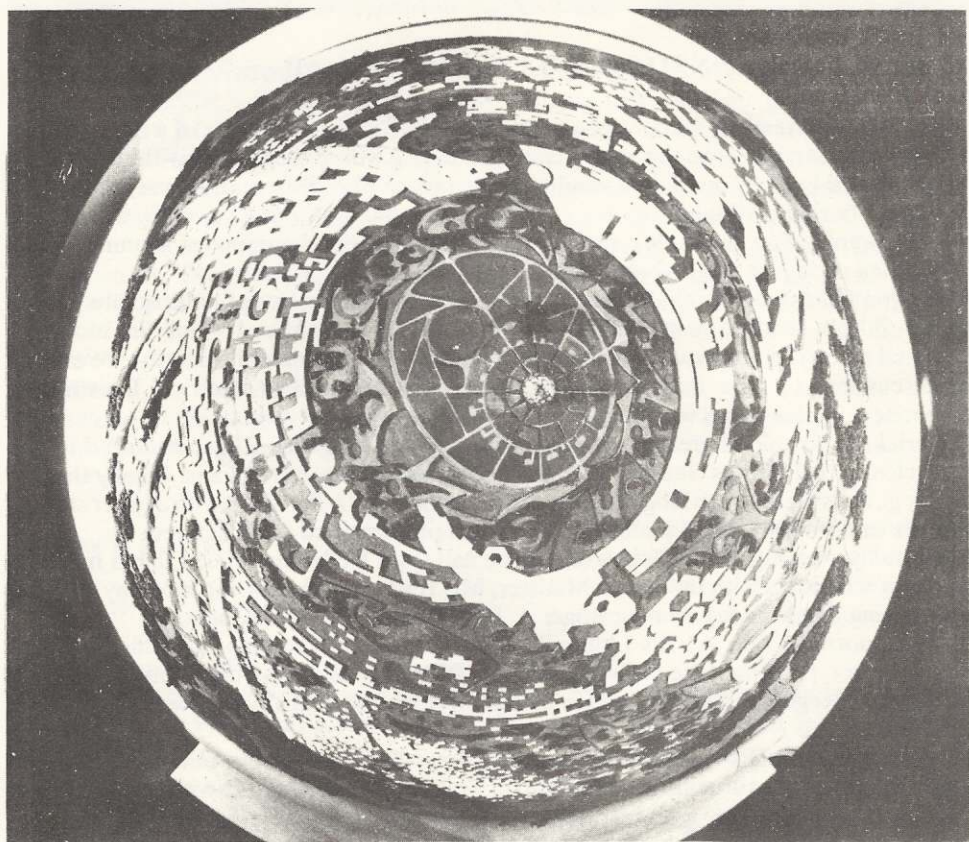
As concerns your presence in Auroville — or should we say your repeated bouts of absence — what should one make of it?

'As far as I feel myself capable of bringing something to Auroville I will be present. When I am not there, it means I have no desire to waste my energy on internecine struggles that strike me as childish. I was thrown out of Auroville once, I could not bear it another time — I would die.'

ing consciousness of spiritual values incarnated in matter, as well as a harmonious balance with nature. I believe Auroville will be a place where man's fear of not being able to live at the levels of his expectations of himself will be overcome. A certain form of human ego will have been left behind. Conflict and blows will be stimulating instead of destructive. Auroville will be a beautiful city, whose children will be beautiful. I believe in 'The sun-eyed children' ('of a marvellous dawn?') And I also believe there will be many more Aurovilles in the world, each one different, bearing relation to the particular problems of each country. I believe Auroville will finally become reunited to an inner law and then it will be like a lighthouse — an unbelievable fire. But one will always have to remain vigilant and not allow oneself to become a sect. I think we have skirted this danger and for the time being, at least, it is not about to resurface. I hope so in any case. I also believe the notion of the elect and the servitors are two different things. We are not the elect. That is madness — we are voluntary servitors, or perhaps chosen servitors.'

Interview by Carel, Roger and Yanne

(Due to lack of space we could publish only extracts of the interview - Eds.)



A model of the Galaxy

GREENBELT DIARY

- 6.00 a.m. Lizard (Lizardus Aurovilus) drops into mouth. I wake up.
 6.30 I pump bucket of water for shower. Rub self vigorously with broken brick to improve circulation.
 7.00 Nourishing breakfast of crushed date leaves, dessicated caterpillar larvae and fermented keet¹.
 7.30 Kiss bullock good morning.
 7.45 Dress leg wound with home made preparation of manure and crushed True biscuit². Excellent natural remedy. After 17 months I see definite signs of improvement.
 8.00 Workers arrive. I allocate tasks. Peeraswamy to continue digging holes in nearby road to paralyse traffic circulation. Erumalai to practice crow-bar technique in preparation for visit of the video team. Ananda sent out to locate neighbours. I give him a week's supply of ragi³ malt in case he gets lost. I begin to pump buckets of water.
 9.00 Watering.
 10.00 Still watering.
 10.30 Break. I hang quietly upside down from neem tree (azadirachta indica) for fifteen minutes. This traditional village remedy improves circulation to the brain and allows arms to relocate themselves in sockets.
 12.00 Lunch. Pot pourri of bull's blood, casserole cycle tyre and rat's foot curry.
 1.00 p.m. Siesta, interrupted occasionally by pitched battles with invading red ants (irritatus aurovilus).
 3.00 Engage in customary afternoon exercise of goat chasing. Final score today: two goats captured, eleven trees devoured, one foot full of mulus⁴.
 4.00 Peeraswamy returns. Reports finding unidentified Aurovilian and Rajdoot⁵ at bottom of one of his pits. Thinks they may have been there some time as Rajdoot very rusty. Aurovilian somewhat incoherent. Peeraswamy advised him to take up cycling. Erumalai finished video filming. Told him to wash powdered gold out of hair and to take off MGR⁶ hat and sunglasses. Ananda not back. Perhaps the neighbours have moved.
 6.00 Light yak fat candle. I practice picking up and holding pen in preparation for annual letter home.
 7.00 Share light supper of rice bran and peanut cake with bullock. I feel we are on the verge of a communication breakthrough.
 8.30 Kiss bullock good night. I climb nearby Work tree (Acacia auriculiformis) and settle down for the night. I recite a few pages of *One Straw Revolution* before falling asleep.

GLOSSARY (For Urbanites & Other Strangers)

- 1.Keet: Coconut leaves used for thatching. Excellent nesting material for rats, squirrels, lizards, boa constrictors etc.
 2."True" biscuit: Non-relatable-to-Auroville biscuit.
 3.Ragi: Local grain with legendary properties. One cup of it will allow one to cross deserts or survive a general meeting.
 4.Mulu: Tamil word for thorn. They are particularly fond of cycle tyres and bare feet.
 5.Raj-doot: Noisy, thirsty motorcycle, beloved by police inspectors and top Auroville executives.
 6.MGR: M.G.Ramachandran. Late Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and ex-film star. He was immediately recognizable by his hat and sunglasses.

Alan

AND YOU KNOW WHAT HE DID?

HE WENT TO AN ASTROLOGER TO FIND OUT WHAT WAS WRONG IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIM AND ME!!

The speaker is Pierre Elouard, who tells the story of a plumber who for two consecutive days was doing just about everything wrong. When Pierre told him in no mistaken terms what he thought about his work, he went to see an astrologer.

We talk about building in matter, concretising architects' fancies, realising Aurovilians' dreams and desires, participating in Her Work.

What does it mean to build in Auroville?

When you ask this question to Aurovilians who are, or were, involved in construction, you will inevitably notice their tired smile before they start to tell you about all the difficulties involved with construction in Auroville. Pierre is no exception. With a work force of 250 people, he is Auroville's largest contractor, responsible for nearly all the major buildings. The average Aurovilian catches only passing glimpses of him when he speeds by on his motorcycle.

"I start at 6 a.m., informing everyone what is expected of him. I make really a pucca¹ planning. The rest of the day is spent with meetings, site-inspections and, most important of all, with correcting all that went wrong that day. I tell you, it is not easy!!"

When Pierre elaborates on the nature of these problems, one is forced to think about what Sri Aurobindo wrote about the lack of consciousness in relation to matter in India:

"It is this revolt of Spirit against Matter that for two thousand years, since Buddhism disturbed the balance of the old Aryan world, has dominated increasingly the Indian mind..."²

Pierre: "The basic problem is that the workers do not have a conscious relation with matter. Their minds are not in the work. For example, it is extremely rare when a worker realises that if he continues in such and such a way, a problem will come up later. And if he realises it, he will never try to find a solution for the problem himself. Which means that I have either to demolish the work when I come for site inspection, or that I meet a worker who informs me about the difficulties but who has not done anything in the meantime. This means that heavy site-supervision is absolutely necessary, and it is very difficult to find people for that. On the other hand, the quality of the work of a good mason can certainly stand the test, and is often even better than that of any mason in the West.

"Another problem, even worse than the first, is the frequent and unnotified absences of workers. This finds its basis in the religious and social lives in the villages around Auroville where most of the workers come from. Every marriage, each burial has to be attended to by all villagers, including your workers. When there is a fight in the village, you can be certain that you won't see your workers next day. And as most workers have court cases going on - I dare say at least one out of every three - they have to attend court regularly, again resulting in unnotified absences. It seems to be impossible for them to inform me one day in advance.

And then there is the social status of the woman. It is, for example, impossible for her to go alone to a hospital. Her husband has to accompany her.

Last but not least, there is the problem caused by fellow-Aurovilians, who 'steal' the workers by paying them some extra rupees. This bars your attempts to create good working teams, and it goes without saying that it spoils the atmosphere

amongst the workers. And of course it has its consequences for the Auroville economy.

"All this results in obstruction of the work. You come to the site early morning, to see that for whatever reason only half of the masons have come. That very moment your planning vanishes in thin air. You know that your 'client' expects you to be ready with the building at a certain time, and you feel utterly frustrated."

We talk about ways to change all this. In Pierre's view, it is absolutely necessary that a kind of primary technical school be started in Auroville, where we can train masons, carpenters, bar-benders, electricians and so on. This will be very necessary for the building of the future city. The school will also be a means of teaching them another approach to matter.

Pierre is ready to cooperate in this. And the 'stealing' of workers by Aurovilians? Pierre believes it is a question of growth of consciousness, in particular of collective consciousness.

Pierre: "Another aspect which makes building in Auroville complicated is the attitude of the 'clients'. Most of them come from Europe, and have an aspiration for perfection to an extent which is not realisable here. Compared to Tamil Nadu or Pondicherry, Auroville clearly aims at very high standards - a challenge, another impossibility to transform into possibility, no doubt, but we need time for that.

It implies the readiness to accept mistakes, the readiness to experiment, and the readiness to pay more for all that."

Roger Anger, in a recent interview, said that Aurovilians had lost the capacity to dream. Does Pierre agree to this?

"Absolutely. And I think that this is mainly due to two reasons: the difficulties that strangled Auroville in its recent past, and the introduction of money into the internal circuits of Auroville. The first reason has passed by now. There remains the second reason, and I hope that we will soon find a solution for it."

Asked about his dreams of the future, he says: "I dream and aspire for a not too distant future in which Aurovilians will be freed from the money-problem, that is to say, that money will not play a role internally.

And next to that I aspire to expand my consciousness, so as to understand what goes on in the minds of my workers, so that I can understand their motives. After all, we live in their country. We have to adapt.

"Recently I visited the office where Roger Anger and other architects were working. Really, what a peace!! I just came back from a site with the usual problems plus a few more added, and it was really a transition..." Ascent from hell to heaven? "Well, that is too strongly expressed; there is also a joy in the service of construction, but sometimes I have the feeling that it is too well hidden by Mother."

And the future of construction in Auroville? "I believe we can do it by ourselves. No doubt we will have to call for outside contractors at some time, as a 'tool' to realize the city, but it will be Aurovilians who will have to do the supervision of the work.

And if tomorrow they ask me to build a 2 crore³ project, I am sure we can do it. We'll have to change our working structures, but we will do it."

Carel

¹ pucca: Hindi expression meaning excellent.

² Sri Aurobindo: Life Divine, Cen. Ed. 18 p. 23.

³ one crore is 10 million rupees, equals approx 700,000 US dollars.

Theatre

AUROVILLE: A CULTURAL DESERT?

The play

La Musica Deuxième, a play for two actors by Marguerite Duras, was performed this summer by *Theatre d'Expression d'Auroville*, on three consecutive evenings in Auroville. Later on it was also performed at the Sri Ram Theatre in Delhi, where it received good reviews. The play is about a bourgeois couple (admirably acted by Croquette and Yanne) who meet one last time, just after their divorce has been finalized, in a hotel room at night; a hotel that they used to frequent. They meet to talk, and to try to come to an understanding of their relationship. They have loved each other, but have yet to realize the full nature of the passion which has finally torn them apart — although the woman intuitively understands what's going on, and as a result is perhaps more in control than the man. The play is in two acts and the tone of the first part is one of confrontation and even, at times, comedy; in the second part there is a growing recognition of the hopelessness, the impossibility of their love.

Dialogue is the central element of the play; there is little physical contact between the characters throughout the performance. However, even more than through the dialogue, it is in the many moments of silence — sometimes interspersed with music — (in the way the woman enters the room, in the way she holds her partner's gaze for two long minutes, in the way she half turns her back on him) that the tensions, uncertainties and intensity of their attraction for each other are most successfully evoked and brought out.

The play was performed in the marble-floored living room of a house in Sharnaga, and the intimacy of the setting and surroundings, combined with the close proximity of the actors to the invited audience, created a special form of interaction that was very tangible and even at times unsettling. It was almost as if the audience was part of the play in a silent way, as if each one of us was sitting helplessly in the living room of two friends whose relationship was in the final act of breaking up.

Yanne spoke to me about the play just a few days after the performance. She also talked about the history of *Theatre d'Expression d'Auroville* and the difficulties encountered by any form of creative expression in Auroville, as well as the barriers of fear and lack of communication that frequently divide us.

For five years *Theatre d'Expression*, a close-knit troupe of fifteen people, met and worked together three times a week. They performed some fifteen different plays, including a number by Molière and Racine, comedy and *café-theatre*, and improvisations as well as poetry. Yanne described it as popular theatre that could be enjoyed even by those who didn't speak French. There were tours in India — to Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Goa — as well as to Singapore, which she felt for those involved were a genuine collective Auroville experience through theatre: of living, being and travelling together.

A few years ago she and Croquette felt the need to step back. Later they moved to Dana, to be joined by other members of the old troupe.

She wrote a novel (*Pour l'Amour de Kali*), about a French woman who discovers India, and with a number of other Aurovilians helped to produce two films, one of which was a documentary for French television in Pondicherry, which won two of the highest awards for television documentaries in France.

Of the old troupe only Sylvain continued to work with theatre, producing a number of plays with the students of the Alliance Française in Madras.

She described the choice of a play by Marguerite Duras as a move away from popular simplistic plays with the message, to one in which the audience can identify with what's going on, ordinary as it might be. "We are after all ordinary people here, even if we aspire for something else."

Along with Duras' fine writing she feels there is a spirit of search in her plays, in the way she studies the psychological relations between people. For Yanne, the play is simply about two people who still love each other but can no longer live together — because passion destroys love.

She was struck by the intensity of attention from the audience, and remarked that Duras envisaged the audience as being part of the play in a voyeuristic way. Speaking of the many moments of silence in the play (which takes forty minutes to read out loud but lasts an hour longer when performed): "In silence one continues to speak and think, and one's thoughts are communicated to the audience. The character's presence has to be maintained through a density of concentration."

The wider context

We then shifted to a more general discussion about Auroville which, she feels, is somewhat like a cultural desert. She feels there is no creative atmosphere on the artistic level in Auroville, a fact that has something to do with the difficulties of daily life here. She mentioned that she and

"We have come here for the work, the yoga, and even though we are far from realizing it, we should still be able to meet and talk about simple things."

Croquette could only find time to rehearse in the evenings, as their days were taken up with their normal work (she works at the Press, he teaches), and their children. But she feels there is the absence of a need, there is no collective call for artistic expression, and this she feels has something to do with Auroville's fragmentation, its individualization (everyone doing their own thing individually). Then there is the increase of such tendencies as the politicizing of Auroville into groups, constituting one of the after-effects of the long, traumatizing struggle with the Society, with the loss of simple human relationships characterized by friendship, trust and camaraderie. One of the results of this is that there is fear in Auroville. Fear of being alone, fear of what others might think of you, with a resultant self-censorship. There is also a lack of places, forums, and theatres where people can meet and talk, and drop their masks.

Yanne believes it is serious because all of us came here for the same thing and yet we are not able to recognize it, or even speak to each other any more. "We have come here for the work, the yoga, and even though we are far from realizing it, we should still be able to meet and talk about simple things."

In an evolving society, people should be allowed to make mistakes — to fail. She believes that there is a horrifying intransigence in this regard in Auroville, and all in the name of the ideal. We need to go beyond the petty clichés, projections and formations we continually lay on each other. In her view it is on the level of daily life and not in our heads or in formal meetings that we can change, that we can meet each other again in another way.

Roger

MONSOON-SPECIAL '88: "The Album"

On Sunday 6 November, 1988, a good number of us (taking advantage of a dry spell between downpours) went to the town planning meeting where the Album with the Master Plan required by the Foundation would be presented. This presentation was, it must be said, quite boring and did not evoke enthusiasm, in spite of the praiseworthy work done by the townplanning group. We were almost falling asleep, dreaming of a sunny future town, when suddenly controversy raised its head.

Thank you Gilles, Suhassini, Ajit and some others, for waking us up: unfortunately their speech did not seem to respond to a real need of the assembly, of which the most enlightened voice, Toine, requested simply but with a touching tone of sincerity: "We want the discussions to stop, that the groups agree. We want roads, electrical lines and a telephone complex which works".

Frederick, in his role of great reconciler, invited Roger to speak. Roger managed to express clearly that he was "fed up" with the hesitations of the Aurovilians. Finally the assembly gave its blessings to Roger to present the Album in Delhi, along with a letter stating that this was only an outline plan and that the details remained to be defined.

On Monday morning, Alain B. in a telephone call from Delhi announced that a meeting had been scheduled with the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, for the next day early in the morning. On Monday evening Roger A. flew to Delhi with the Album.

Tuesday morning: Our AVIPs (Auroville Very Important Persons) in Delhi gathered around Roger, presented themselves before the Prime Minister with the Album. The contact between Roger and the P.M. was immediately deep and amicable, the witnesses would report later.

Afterwards our AVIPs — Alain B., Prem M., Aster P. as well as our new chevalier discussed the future of Auroville around a cup of well-deserved tea and... with their feet dry.

A personal report by
♥ ♥ ♥ Yanne

* Gilles' views are expressed in a separate article in this issue.



Newsreal team: Patricia, Yanne, Francis. (left to right)

AUROVILLE NEWSREAL

Auroville has recently been hit heavily by the Communication Wave. The less sensitive may not have felt it so clearly, but the Really Advanced Aurovilians immediately recognised the special nature of this new vibe, and reacted to it, albeit in different ways.

There were those who got involved in the organisation of seminars with communication as the main topic, such as the Soviet-American-Indian youth exchange programme mentioned elsewhere in this issue. There were those who decided to join efforts to publish...guess... right!, this monthly *Auroville Today*. And there were others who picked up the new vibe in another way and came up with a weekly newsreel on Auroville, *Auroville Newsreal*, presented on video by Yanne (in French) and Francis (in American English). The Auroville Video Team, consisting of Patricia and Alain, is responsible for the technical work. At 7.30 every evening Aurovilians can see *Auroville NewsReal* in the viewing room of Bharat Nivas. The reactions to this home video are positive (up to now) though many have difficulty following either the French or the English.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

News arrived from France: The next Auroville International meeting, a meeting of the Auroville International Centres and Aurovilians, will be held on the 23rd, 24th and 25th of June 1989 at Annecy (on the bank of a beautiful lake), in France.

Auroville Today wishes to congratulate all those who work on the publication of *Mother's Agenda* with the publication of the 5th volume in English, and the 2nd volume in Hindi. Good work!

FAIR, FUN, FOOD & THEATRE!!

At Last School, on 24th December, there will be a fair (in which artists, craftsmen etc. are invited to participate) and a musical drama called "Sleeping Dogs Don't Lie". For further information contact Johnny or Udo (who will also welcome donations).

TEAMWORK '88

In mid-December, youth teams from the USA, the USSR and India will arrive in Auroville to participate in a unique experiment - "TEAMWORK '88". For two weeks they will work together intensively, learning the skills of conflict resolution and taking part in an environmental regeneration programme. The gathering is sponsored by Auroville and by Earthstewards Network, an American organization specializing in citizen exchange programmes between countries. Savitra is the Auroville coordinator of the event. I interviewed him recently to find out more about this intriguing experiment.

How it started

Alan: Where did the idea for this exchange come from?

Savitra: After the International Youth Year in 1985, I went back to the States and met Danaan Parry and his wife Diana. I

much to our own Charter. Basically, they have followed two lines. One is conflict resolution, concentrating upon bringing together peoples who have traditionally been in conflict. For example, the Soviet Union and the US, the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. The second emphasis is upon the global environment that we all share. In this project in Auroville they are trying, for the first time, to combine both themes simultaneously.

Citizens' exchange programmes seem to be based upon the assumption that the traditional political level of resolving conflicts is inadequate and that a new dynamic is necessary.

S.: Yes. The core of Danaan Parry's action is that the individual is the secret to the

"The evolution that Auroville draws its meaning from is not confined to one place on the earth"

found out they were involved with citizen exchange programmes between the Soviet Union and America, and having just come fresh from the IYY experience, I thought it would be interesting to see if we could bring young American and Soviet people to Auroville.

Why Auroville?

S.: Auroville's purpose is to bring about an actual human unity. In this sense, the IYY was a reminder of what Auroville was meant to be. After that success, it was natural to want to bring together these two countries which had a tradition of conflict. Mother spoke of the importance of these two nations (US and USSR) coming together if there was to be a true world peace. As things developed we proposed to also include Indian youth, to allow India to play an active rather than a passive role in the process.

You have been planning this exchange programme for more than three years now. Why has it taken so long to come together?

S.: First of all, when there is no precedent for something, there is always lots of resistance. The next time it's done, it's easier. And we were dealing with entities that didn't operate at a fast pace. It took a long time to get the Soviet government to accept the possibility of the event and then they required the sanction of the Indian government before they would begin to act. India, in turn, required Auroville to give a formal commitment that they would host the event. This went very slowly. During the past few years I've spent much time lobbying my own community to get us to take the risk of committing ourselves to this project. It took some time for Auroville to feel secure enough to trust an outside organization, for we have reservations about giving carte blanche to outside organizations whom we know little about. There was also the communication problem. If there were fifty communications sent in the last three years between India and America, probably only ten have reached their destination. Finally, this time, unlike the IYY situation, the government of India is not the initiator in the organization of the event. It's us, and it's us dealing with formidable entities - the Soviet government, the Indian government and a third party, the Earthstewards.

Tell us more about the Earthstewards.

S.: The organization is less than ten years old. Danaan Parry helped to establish it. As the name suggests, it's a way of viewing our relationship to the planet, a relationship that stresses our role as stewards rather than possessors. This corresponds very

changing of society. That everything, somehow, everywhere is one's responsibility. But what can one do? This is why Danaan created a network throughout the world of people who were prepared to act despite, or in parallel to, the activities of their governments. This phenomenon is called "Track Two Diplomacy" (Track One Diplomacy is the traditional political relationship between governments). Organizations like the Earthstewards realized that unless individuals are willing to begin risking themselves in direct action in issues of global concern, not just waiting for their Governments to act, the steps that need to be taken to avoid catastrophe will not be taken in the time that is available.

What has it been like working with Danaan and Diana in the States on a project for Auroville?

S.: They've been remarkable and inspiring to work with. Often, I felt out on a limb, trying to co-create something with them in the US while the community was still going through its insecurities and uncertainties. It was a strange juggling act to keep the project alive and moving without the formal commitment from Auroville. Now the response has come for it from a team in Auroville, and the project is gathering momentum, even joy. But in those previous days I asked myself what I was doing. And I am amazed that Earthstewards stuck with us. But I remember a moment when I said to myself: "Even if my own community resists the idea, I'll hold through to the end, and if it falls through, it won't collapse because I didn't hold on." That's an extremely personal moment when one remembers who one is working for: Her.

The future

Do you feel that Auroville is entering a new phase now when its connectedness to the outside world will be much stronger?

S.: Yes. But this means relating to the world as friends rather than adversaries. Until now, we have been very suspicious and hesitant in our relationship to the outside, sometimes for good reasons. But at this point we must see that things have changed; what seems to be asked of us in Auroville is to switch our attitude. That instead of trying to protect and defend Auroville, we should move to the spirit in which Mother gave the invitation to Auroville. "Are welcome to Auroville all men of goodwill." That's a pretty embracing statement. We should now accept that we don't have to continual-

ly be defenders of Auroville but recognize that Auroville is a phenomenon in the world, not outside it, and that the world is perhaps waiting now to enter and collaborate in the creation of Auroville. But this can only happen when we say, "Yes". "Yes" to ourselves and "yes" to the world. It seems impossible now that with the 600 people who are here we can build Auroville alone into the next stage. We are a component in that process, but we are going to need lots of partners. Earthstewards can be a partner. I think the government of India is a partner.

Auroville for me is a particular location. But the evolution that Auroville draws its meaning from is not confined to one place on the earth. We have to be wide enough and humble enough to acknowledge that it's happening, even despite us, all over the planet. You can say that the first twenty years was a phase of Auroville's development when it tried to bring out what was hidden within itself. I feel the next stage is relating now what it has learned to the larger whole, the larger dynamic that the earth is waiting for. Growing through interaction rather than isolation.

What do you think might grow out of this Auroville exchange programme?

S.: First of all, I'm happy that we are able to open ourselves to the opportunity of developing an ongoing relationship with the Soviet Union and the United States in Auroville. We have had almost no contact with the Soviet bloc. I feel this exchange holds the possibility of laying a foundation stone for these two cultures to actually begin establishing a first presence here. This may lead to the construction of the

pavilions of Soviet and American culture. I also find the inclusion of Indian youth in this project very significant, because I see India as truly the peace maker, the missing piece; like a missing link between these two cultures.

I also believe that Danaan and people like him will be great allies for Auroville and I'm looking forward to him and his wife receiving the touch that Auroville gives each person and seeing them carry it out into the world in their own way.

I keep getting this image: The foundation ceremony was truly the descent of the promise of a humanity that is one. Then for years, we went through our unravelling. Then came the IYY which brought the seed back into focus, and now I feel this project is an opportunity to develop that vibration in a more concentrated way, since it deals with three cultures representing quite extreme differences in the cultural spectrum of the earth. Perhaps for us it can help spark some magic and allow us to step outside the small holding pattern we've been in and let something much larger just overtake us. Having been out frequently in the past few years, I've been very impressed by what I see happening. Small pockets of people, here and there, are actually doing their best, and even if they have never heard of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo, they represent the phenomenon. And that's all that matters. If we would not focus so much on the label, but see behind to what the person or group is actually doing in all sincerity, we would find that we have many more allies than we allow ourselves to recognize.

(Interview by Alan)

"I believe that ordinary people are the ones who really do or do not create peace on Earth - not professionals, not diplomats, not politicians." (Danaan Parry)

"Each simple human connection between Soviet and American erases a part of the psychological reality that created the nuclear nightmare." (Diana Glasgow)

A withered leaf and a butterfly

*The flocks of birds from the North
Fly away to the tip of the South.*

*The sky in October is hesitating to rain.
At that moment, that particular moment,
I happen to witness a special movement
That is, of course, a part of me
And, perhaps, one and the same US.*

*A brown leaf is falling straight
From a slanting branch of a jack-fruit tree.
A butterfly in multi-coloured attire
Is taking off, flying up and up.*

*At a very special point,
On a single line,
An invisible thread,
They are both one and the same.
Which is the dry leaf?
Which is the butterfly?
One goes up and up into the sky,
The other comes down to rest on Mother Earth.*

*During Meditation
There comes, inwardly,
The dry leaf and the butterfly.*

Meenakshi
(translated from the Tamil)

UP, UP AND AWAY: A radical proposal for transportation in the City

The thing about a communication situation like Auroville's is that since most information sharing is by word of mouth, what little remains to be recorded in print is only what isn't worth the verbal interspersion. It amounts to gripping street-corner and tea shop conversations dying in the dust, and a barely sustainable weekly news rag carrying the corpse to posterity. The true casualty of such disarray are the dreams, the wishes, hopes, ideals and aspirations of those that freely mix in personal encounter, but wouldn't dare intervene in public meeting or on paper.

Take, for instance, the constantly resurging controversy of the RING-ROAD, as good a topic as any to state where you stand. The ring-road has by now been sufficiently bandied about to range in meaning from a precise concrete circle burnt into the otherwise disorderly behaviour of its precedent planning, through elliptical brick-paved tree-lined tunnels, to a meandering round footpath punctuated with small oases of granite benches and water bubblers. Opinions range from the criminal to the magnificent. But so long as it gets down in the end to how little of the land is ours to play with, it remains a game. Traditionally a road, like so many other institutions, was bound by what are now becoming questionable criteria. Beyond being simply trafficable, it was (and still is in all precedent cities) essential to the centralized supply of electricity, gas, water and telephone, and the disposal of sewerage and food and material waste. So that were we as a collective, for instance, to agree that the eventual city wouldn't be dominated by the infernal combustion engine, then we could begin to look at the idea of a ring road from a more adventurous standpoint. Presuming also the extension of present trends towards autonomous energy systems — solar cellular electricity,

individual water supplies, bio-gas (or bottle) supplies, and radio transmitter telephone, with septic and composting waste disposal — then most of the conventional pressures that have created the type of road that grew to ruin the peace of great cities don't, in our case, fortunately, apply. So what do we need by way of a ring-road? The reason for its resurgence is the increasing motor traffic on our disreputable tangle of road and dirt track. So we definitely do need interconnections for at least human traffic and some consideration for material supply routes. But there's no need for these two to mix. In fact, it would seem propitious that they didn't, for reasons of safety, if for no other.

The only really effective modes of mass urban transport in most large cities are either underground or overhead. Underground we've found makes ideal scorpion and serpent refuge. Overhead, on the other hand, could be appropriate to our predicament, because you don't necessarily have to own the land. You would simply buy the rights to put your pylons across fields. There could be an overhead cable carrying independent pedal or solar powered units, something between a ski-lift and a cable car, riding with your feet dangling about 2 metres above the ground, with landing platforms at all significant outlets. From these you would either walk, cycle or take a horse-cart. There could be a motor cycle bank at Abri (for instance) from which you could take a machine to go to Pondy. From a sort of peaceful premise that what has happened in Auroville so far is what has been meant to happen (its history is therefore relevant) and a high priority determination to try to make development decisions with the least divisive or polarising waves, such a highly improbable solution might even be realistic.

Johnny

The 'Galaxy' plan: Another View

Gilles came to Auroville in 1980. He is a civil engineer who specialized in Town Planning. For the last three years he coordinated the work of the Auroville Resource Center (ARC) which was set up to provide a holistic, integrated approach to the future development of Auroville. Below he gives his views on the basic criteria that a master plan for Auroville should fulfill, and he examines the 'Galaxy' plan of Roger and his associates in the light of these desired criteria.

What should be the basic criteria for Auroville's master plan? Firstly, flexibility. A master plan is a spatial organization framework, so it is important to recall what Mother said about organization: "That is the great error of Governments; they make a framework and say 'Here you are, we have set this up and now we must live by it', and so of course they crush life and prevent it from progressing". (30.12.67) And She stressed, "Rules should arise according to the requirements. Plasticity and swiftness are needed in order to keep up with world movements so as not to fall behind the universal progress." (19.8.66)

Auroville is a living experiment. In the context of Auroville this means what is needed in a plan is a simple framework which allows the community to experiment, to take account of what it has learned over the years and to incorporate positive contributions, even if they were not envisaged in the original planning stages.

The second major criterion is appropriateness. Auroville has not been located on some uninhabited paradise in the Pacific; it has been put right in the middle of the mess; so that we become fully conscious of it and suffocate so much that we are compelled to work on it, using inner and outer means. On a global level there are environmental devastation, pollution and radical economic and political inequalities between the developed and the developing nations (the North-South divide). More

specifically, there are the particular problems of India and then, locally, in Auroville, there are the challenges of the regeneration of our environment, the reconstruction of rural life and our own collective process.

Mother wanted Her city — "the City the Earth Needs" — to become the focus of a contagion process, that it would act as a model for the region and for the whole world. But if it is to be a model, it must be relevant to the needs of the larger sphere and come up with solutions which are both appropriate and reproducible. This means, for example, that its development should be sustainable and ecologically appropriate, and that it should take into account local, economic, climatic and environmental factors, and the needs of the surrounding villagers.

In the light of these considerations, let us examine the proposed Auroville master plan, which is based upon Roger's 'Galaxy' design, completed in 1967.

First, the area of agreement. There is no dispute about the salient features of the original concept of the city — the four zones surrounding Matrimandir, the inner ring road (the crown), the need to find ways to express the "lines of force" of the Galaxy, the need for density in construction and the general spirit of unity in diversity. As a skeleton to be adapted to existing conditions, the Galaxy is acceptable. But in its

"The real challenge before us is to retain the dynamic power of the Galaxy while allowing it to become a model of sustainable and appropriate development, both for the region and for the world."

details, the master-plan is in its present state inappropriate. Why?

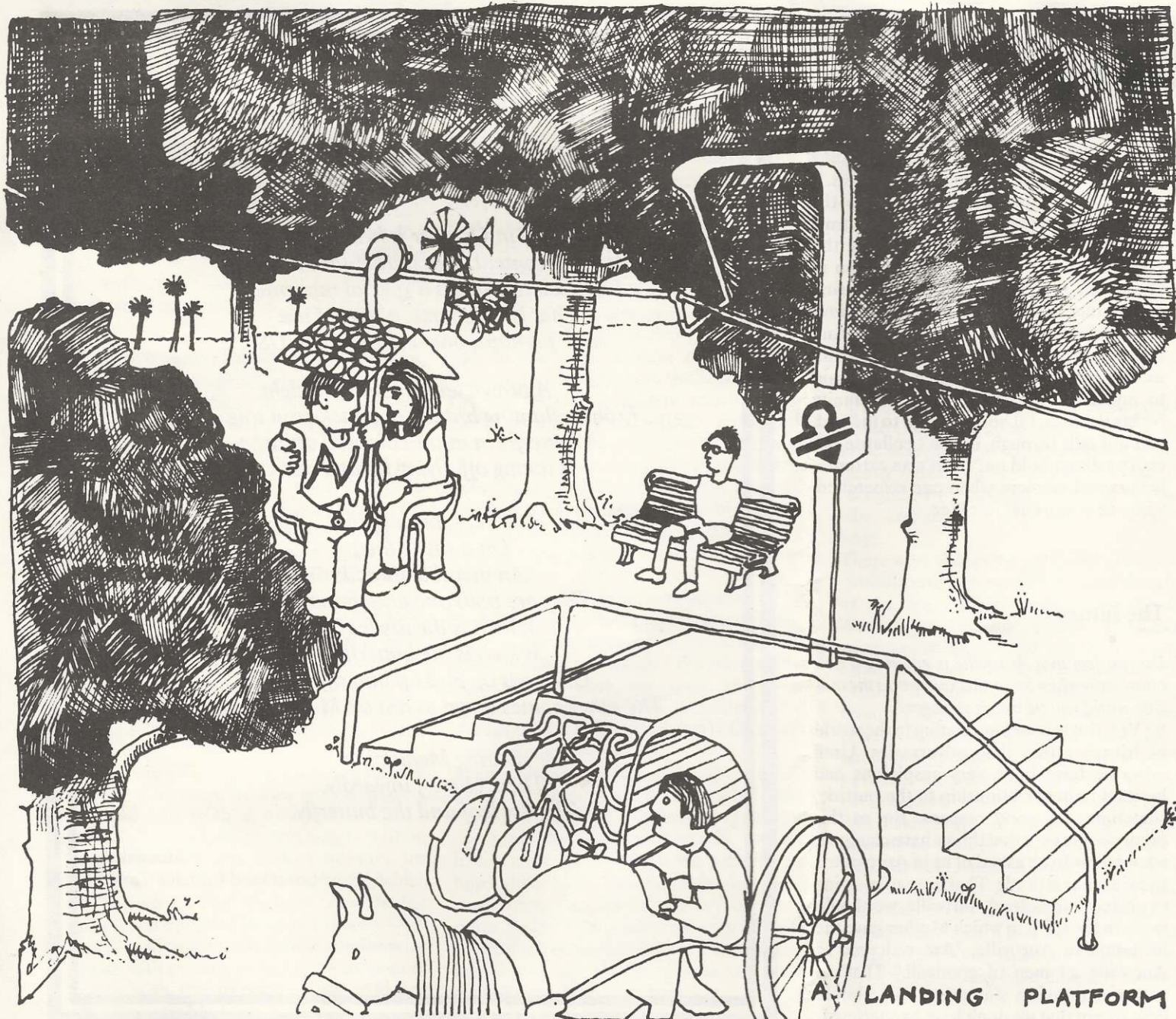
1. It does not take account of local realities. The Galaxy was designed in Paris in 1967 without any reference to the local situation — the environment, the socio-cultural context, etc. It is an imposition on nature, the villages and the Aurovilians, though it intends to create a set-up for their harmonious development. For example, the site will have to be adapted to the design — by bulldozer for example — rather than vice versa. Also, it does not allow for the incorporation of new ideas and solutions that have evolved over the last 20 years.

2. The large structures of the Galaxy need to be implemented in one go. But adequate funding is not available and we have only acquired land piece-meal.

3. The Galaxy as envisaged will consume vast amounts of energy, both in construction and maintenance. For example, enormous amounts of cement will be needed, and the large lakes and canals planned are dependent upon the assumption of a plentiful water supply, which may not exist.

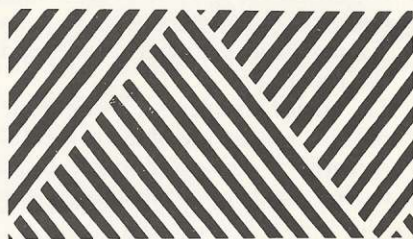
In other words, the detailed development that is proposed in the Galaxy plan is precisely the kind that is ruining the earth. It represents the greediness of the North (the industrialized nations) in exploiting the world's resources. In a sense, it symbolizes the dream of the developers of the sixties, before the energy crisis and before we started to understand that our path of development leads humanity to a catastrophe. The real challenge before us is to retain the dynamic power of the Galaxy while allowing it to become a model of sustainable and appropriate development, both for the region and for the world.

(Gilles, in conversation with Alan)





A new publication entitled *The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil* has recently been released by the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research, Auroville. This book has been written, designed and printed in Auroville. It is the result of the cooperation of teams of Auroville researchers who are involved in the development of educational material for students and teachers of all ages.



BANGLADESH:

"THE BASKET CASE OF THE WORLD"

François Gautier has lived in Auroville since 1969. He works in *Pour Tous*, teaches at school and assists with the childrens' sports programme. But he is also a journalist and photographer, being the South Asia correspondent for the French magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur* and the Swiss newspaper *Le Journal de Genève*. Bangladesh is the first of a series of articles on neighbouring countries, meant to help place Auroville in the context of the larger forces that are operating in the region. (Eds.)

"You're going to Bangladesh?", inquired my neighbour in the plane that was taking us to Dakha. "This country is the basket case of the world. It has nothing and is even forced to import the stones it needs to build roads! And after these floods", he carried on, "Bangladesh is on the verge of bankruptcy. I should know, I am the Vice-President of the World Bank..."

Looking at the Gulf of Bengal from a height, it seems as if the sea had overflowed onto the land: water, water everywhere, miles and miles of endless stretches of water, scintillating in the light of the rising sun. And from time to time a few trees or a cluster of houses seeming to float on this infinite, calm sea. Where is Bangladesh?...

Bangladesh was born in 1971, when, with the help of India, it split from Pakistan. (The creation of Pakistan in 1947 was, apart from its other implications, a geographical absurdity; for Eastern Pakistan — today's Bangladesh — was separated from Western Pakistan by more than 1600 miles of Indian territory). From then on, its history has been, sadly, a series of natural calamities and bloody military coups... All the mighty rivers of China, Nepal and India flow through Bangladesh, before ending in the Gulf of Bengal. Unfortunately, there are no mountains to speak of in this nation of 110 million people, and the average elevation above sea level is eight metres. Which means that every year, during the monsoons, the great rivers, lacking the necessary elevation to flow quickly into the sea, overflow onto the countryside. This, as in the case of the Nile in Egypt, is indispensable to the fertility of the Bangladeshi soil. But for the last 30 years, the massive deforestation that has taken

place in the Himalayas has eroded the soil, and so the Ganges and the Brahmaputra carry onto Bangladesh enormous amounts of silt, which raise the beds of the rivers and provoke the type of massive floods which we witnessed this year...

Since its birth, Bangladesh has never stopped to cry to the world for help. And the world has always answered generously. There are literally hundreds of humanitarian organisations based in Dhaka: the Red Cross, the Blue Cross, the Green Cross, the World Bank, Unicef, Liveaid... Many of these groups do wonderful jobs in Bangladesh, and some of them, such as the Swiss-based *Terre des Hommes*, are saving now thousands of little starving children, who look like walking skeletons (I know, I have seen them!). But the unending stream of international aid has created a phenomenon, which could be called "The Bangladeshi Syndrome". This means that the military Government of President Ershad is propped up by this money (though, in all fairness, it must be stated that it is thanks to the army that millions of stranded people were fed last month). Then there are the grants that never reach the people, or end up in the pockets of the 200 families which own the country. One also gets the impression that the Bangladeshis do not help themselves and are content to let the foreigners do the work. The international organizations should try to get together, forget their political (the Americans) or commercial (the Japanese) interests, and try to involve the Bangladeshis more by giving less aid and more technical training and education (how to dredge their rivers every year for instance.) But are they willing to do that?... For the moment, this wonderful country — which has an extremely fertile soil, if properly protected, and warm-hearted people — must be saved from famine; for the floods have affected millions of Bangladeshis.

And then, what is the future of Bangladesh? For a number of reasons, one of them being flood control, its destiny is inextricably linked with India. In the Mother's words: "India and Pakistan MUST become one again, for this is the truth of their being". (Pakistan included Bangladesh at that time.)

Francois

WATER NOTES

Planning a town for 50.000 inhabitants implies that studies have to be made into the possibilities of water supply. Tency outlines some of the measures that need to be taken now if we are to have adequate and potable water in the future.

At present, there are some 33 deep wells operating in Auroville, but there is no overall water policy. We know that all of these wells are tapping the first aquifer below Auroville, except for one which is, at a depth of more than 250 meters, tapping the second aquifer.

As a preparation for an overall water policy, the first necessity will be to drill some 10 to 12 observation wells. An observation well is a specially drilled well which allows the water level and water quality to be checked regularly. Observation wells will enable us to draw water contour lines of the ground water and sea water levels. With this information, an overall water-drilling policy for Auroville can be designed.

The system of observation wells will also enable us to be warned of salt water intrusion into the water table. This is a real danger at present. Examples of sea water intrusion are already to be found in the close vicinity of Auroville. Not so long ago, the Central Ground Water Board of India ordered a total ban on well drilling within 6 km of the coast line to prevent this.

The second necessity will be to conserve water as much as possible. It is obvious that

better irrigation techniques for fruit orchards and vegetable gardens will help. Systems like low pressure sprinklers and drip irrigation are becoming increasingly cheaper, and with some effort these systems could be produced within Auroville. Rainwater should be allowed to penetrate the soil, not drain off. This implies that the bunding programmes on our lands and on neighbouring village-lands have to be maintained and extended, together with our afforestation programmes, as trees and ground cover play a big role in the absorption of water. Percolation ponds will have to be silted out from time to time so that larger amounts of rainwater can penetrate into the soil. Existing ponds, especially the system of interconnected village ponds, should be taken up in our overall water plan. Advice and financial help are needed to restore and maintain them. Mother spoke highly about this system of water storage tanks which ancient India maintained, and She even advocated it as a solution for the water scarcity. New ponds could be constructed at appropriate places. Ravine reclamation can also have great potentiality for storing water. Finally, there are some new ways of storing and purifying water that are being tested in Auroville. Two ponds are under construction in which all household waste water will be purified by means of water plants. The water is then reusable for gardening and industry.

Tency

Editorial team: Alan, Annemarie, Bill, Carel, Francois, Roger, Tineke, Yanne. Photographs: Susan. Desktop Publishing: Annemarie. Design: Prisma (Franz). Printed at Auroville Press.

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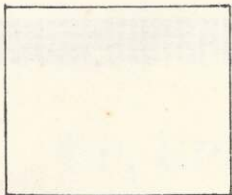
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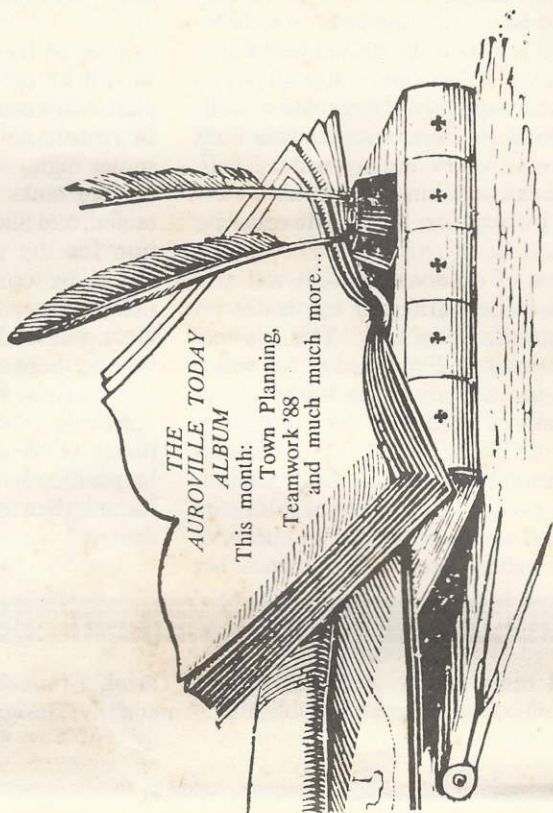
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A model of the Galaxy

AUROVILLE'S ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

- CONVENTIONAL OR SOLAR?

Since about 1975, Auroville can boast of its own electricity department. Started in a corner of Matrimandir's workshop, it grew into the Auroville Electrical Service. Its task now mainly consists of the design, installation and maintenance of electrical installations in Auroville, and of liaison with the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board (TNEB) and the Electrical Inspectorate of Tamil Nadu. We talked to Toine, who has supervised this unit since its beginning, about the problems of Auroville's electricity supply, and his views on the future.

At present a majority of the pumps, houses and other buildings in Auroville are connected to the TNEB grid. The electricity is generated at a lignite power plant in Neyveli. Auroville has about 300 low tension connections, with a total connected load of 900 KW. A small number of houses and communities have gone solar, making them completely independent of the TNEB grid.

The major problems experienced in the present set-up are due to the fact that Auroville is connected to a so-called rural feeder, which has to serve a very large area. There is a limited availability of three-phase current, necessary amongst other things for the operation of water pumps, and Auroville experiences frequent power cuts.

Auroville is an unusual client for the TNEB. Probably no client of theirs operates with such a large number of low tension service connections. This particular situation arises out of the fact that Auroville does not yet have all the lands necessary to develop the town. We are therefore not able to distribute electricity within Auroville ourselves, except within the larger communities, and we depend on the TNEB, who alone can cross third party lands and public roads with their lines. As soon as all the lands within the city area get consolidated, we can make the internal distribution through underground cables and get from the TNEB one or more high tension service connections, probably through a separate high tension feeder.

The first necessity for the planning of this essential service is thus the acquisition of all the lands. The second imperative is the decision regarding the location of the roads of Auroville, as the underground cables should preferably be laid alongside the roads. Afterwards we can approach the TNEB and apply for a separate Auroville feeder. This means a separate high tension overhead line from the closest TNEB substation to Auroville. The total cost of this line, with related equipment and a transformer to step down the voltage from 22 KV to 11 KV is estimated to be in the range of 1.5 to 2 million rupees which would have to be paid by Auroville.

The supply at 11 KV would be fed into the Auroville underground cable network. Most probably the 11 KV cables will follow the ring roads around and inside Auroville. From this cable, at various points, transformers will reduce the voltage to low tension (415/230V). The cost of an appropriate system for a township with a population of 50,000 people would be in the range of 100 to 120 million rupees, which includes high tension and low tension cabling, street lighting and the installation of substations.

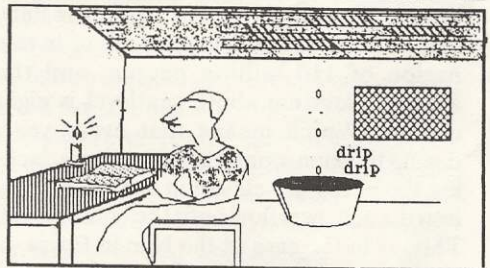
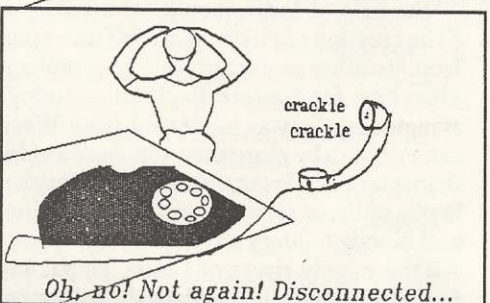
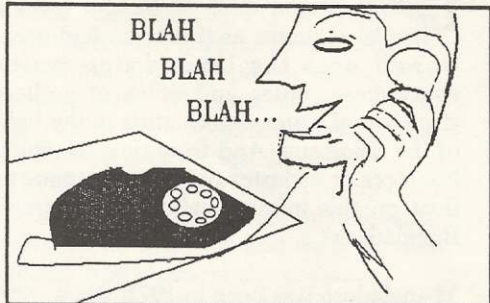
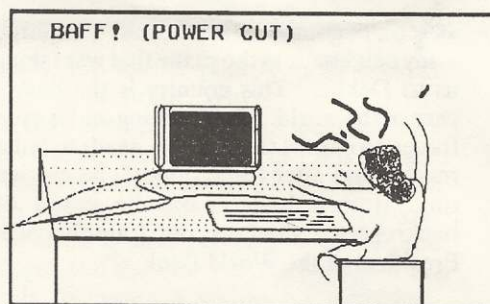
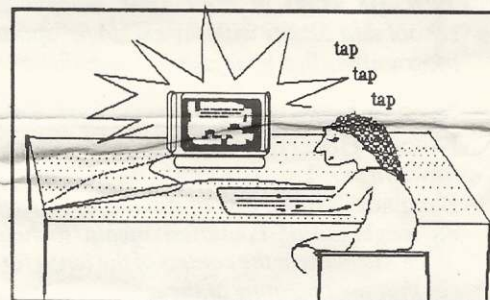
This is the picture of the future electricity supply if we depend upon the TNEB. In view of these high costs one wonders if going solar might not be the solution. Toine feels that solar and other forms of alternative energy will play a very important role in Auroville, although the application of solar energy in the immediate future will be mainly for small-scale, decentralized installations, such as for domestic lighting purposes. Costs of solar panels in India are still very high (about Rs.200/= per watt) and it is quite difficult to find funds for a big central solar plant, as the cost of in-

verters, grid synchronization equipment and cables etc. make it a very costly proposition. The smaller installations will mostly be used for lighting and other small loads. For normal high current consuming household apparatus, such as irons, fridges and pumps, you need many solar panels, batteries and expensive DC to AC inverters. Suitable DC equipment is not (yet) available in India.

In view of Auroville's past experience with alternative energy projects, we might consider applying for recognition as an experimental area for solar energy, and try to obtain national and international support for this. Auroville's set-up is unique. We aspire to be an area for unending education, research and experimentation, and the population of Auroville is in general very aware of the necessity to stimulate alternative technologies. We could have a demonstration project, which combines the use of conventional and alternative energy sources, such as solar, wind and other alternative energy systems, to show that alternative technologies have a place in solving the world's energy problems. One way could be to show how a larger community, for example Certitude, could use solar energy. The individual houses could either be provided with solar panels and inverters, or a solar farm could be set up in the neighbourhood of the community and feed the DC, via an inverter, into the existing grid.

Carel, Toine

AUROVILLE INTO THE 21ST CENTURY...



Let's hope we can at least rely on the rains this year...

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