

# Auroville Today

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## Evolving the Matrimandir gardens

Personal Copy Krishna Sreen

Mother once wrote that the Matrimandir gardens are as important as the Matrimandir itself. What is happening today?

Two years ago, after a long period of relative neglect, there was a new impetus to manifest the gardens. Today, according to Alain Grandcolas, coordinator of the Matrimandir gardens, "the designs and the main technical difficulties for the whole garden area have been solved, two-thirds of the contouring is done, and the pathways will be completed by the end of 2006. Meanwhile, we've embarked on the next stage: making prototypes of the garden of Unity and the twelve inner gardens."

Some years ago, Roger invited Paulo to design the twelve inner gardens on the basis of some specified parameters. However, the collaboration ended when Roger stated that Paulo had not respected certain conditions. Subsequently, Roger came up with his own design. As this did not meet with universal acclaim and Roger himself was unsatisfied, he decided to invite Aurovilians to come forward with designs for individual gardens. An interim group was created – the Matrimandir Gardens Reflection Group – to draw up guidelines for the gardens and to develop a process for selecting the designs to be materialised. The present parameters include that the size, internal division and contouring of the gardens are fixed, as are the orientation and material of the main pathways; the outer slope of each garden should be covered in grass; each garden design should include the flower Mother specified for it (although the designers are free to include additional flowers and shrubs); designers must be open to the permanent evolution of garden designs; and there should be no trees in the twelve gardens except on the outside edge near the oval pathway, and here the trees should not obscure the view of the Matrimandir.

A number of Aurovilians have reacted to the guideline restricting trees. Kireet, an Aurovillian with considerable experience of gardening both in Holland and in India, wrote an open letter to the community in which he asked, "Why are trees unwanted in the Matrimandir gardens? Seeing how hot and sunny it is at this time of the year it doesn't make sense to me, as a gardener, to create gardens without trees...Beautiful trees, pruned in a proper way, will give the area a majestic grandeur. Trees will not degrade the beauty of Matrimandir, they will enhance it and beautify the gardens as well." He concluded, "The Matrimandir gardens without trees will be no gardens at all."

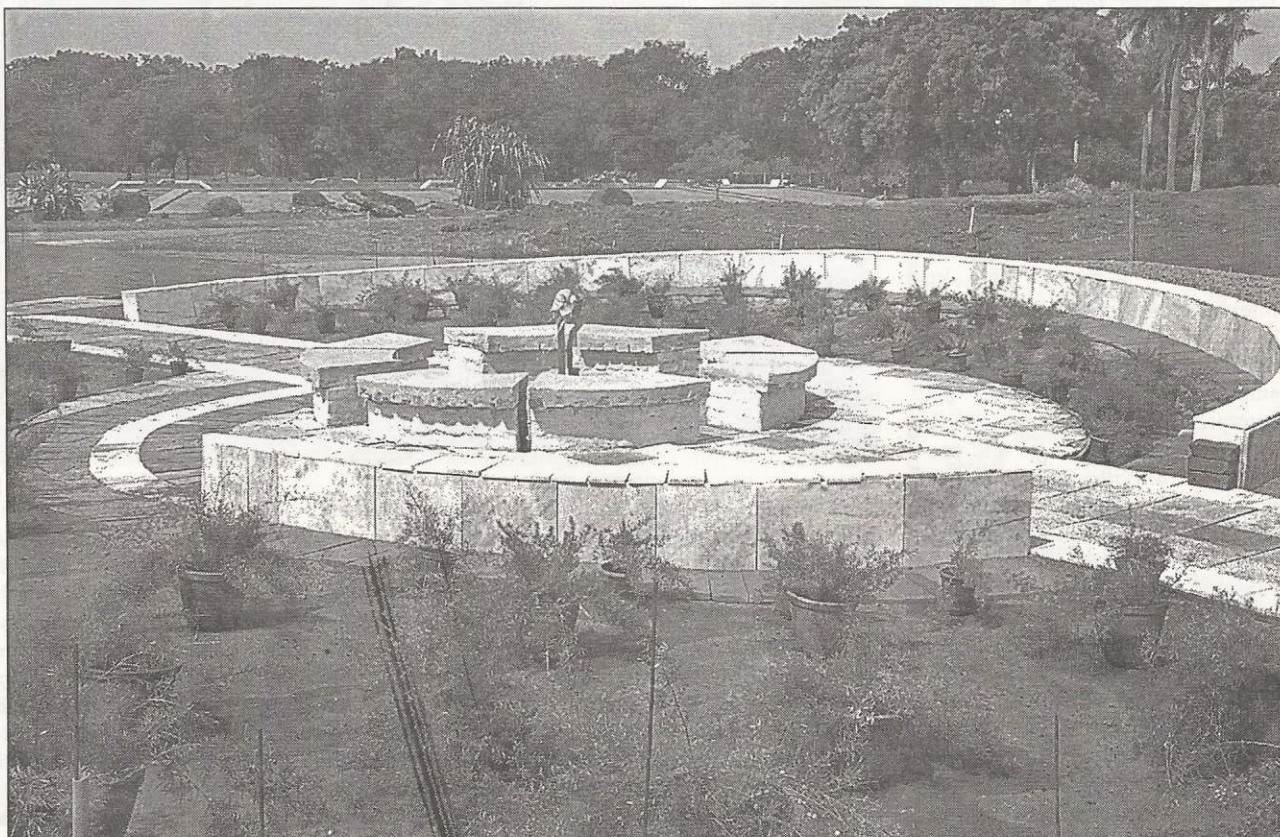
Alain replies that, "The visibility of Matrimandir is an essential part of the design and lay-out. This is why the gardens should not hide the forceful presence of Matrimandir, nor the calm and vast presence of the surrounding

lake. Nevertheless in the thirteenth garden – the Garden of Unity – more than 50% of the pedestrian area will be shaded by trees, and in the Inner Park, which represents one-third of the Matrimandir garden area, there will be many trees."

### Different conceptions

What we are touching upon here are two totally different conceptions of gardens. Kireet, in one of his open letters, refers back to what Mother wrote in the mid 1960s when she said that the 'Mother's Pavilion' would be surrounded by tall trees, creepers, rockeries and small waterfalls. Mother was particularly appreciative of Japanese gardens; in 1965 she noted that the gardens around 'The Mother's Shrine' would be similar to those surrounding the Golden Temple in Kyoto.

However, in January, 1972, Roger presented to the Mother a new concept for the gardens. In this model which Mother, says Alain, "liked very much", there are no trees and the small gardens seem little more than settings for the focal point, the golden Matrimandir. In other words, simplicity has replaced natural (or artfully-constructed) profusion and full visibility has supplanted the partial screening and multitude of different perspectives suggested by Mother's earlier conception.



A new type of landscape? Prototype plot in the Unity Garden

says Alain, "as we consider that the Mother has entrusted him with the responsibility for the designs of the Matrimandir. We also believe that simple gardens are a more effective way of achieving what Mother wanted the inner gardens to evoke. For the gardens will not at all be like conventional gardens where you come to sit and walk and chat: the purpose is to evoke specific states of consciousness in those who pass through them. In this sense, the gardens can be seen primarily as a place of ini-

however, may be different, a place where people can come and sit and enjoy the shade of the larger trees which will definitely be there."

So what has been the response to Roger's invitation? "First of all," says Alain, "it is encouraging to note that Narad, who was invited by the Mother to work for the Matrimandir Nursery, is back in action and works closely with Roger and the gardens' team. As for those Aurovilians who are 'professional' landscapers or who have an interest in garden design, with the exception of one of them, who felt that his concept of gardens was too 'traditional', all have expressed interest. Four have already presented models, others are developing or have developed concepts for the gardens of Existence, Harmony, Wealth and Progress. Soon the work will begin on executing two prototypes for the gardens of 'Life' and 'Power'. Meanwhile Leonard, the son of a long-term guest, has completed a prototype for the garden of Unity, while Nadja is already finishing the prototype of Bliss. We are also about to invite people from outside Auroville to submit designs. Roger and Paulo, by the way, though invited have not submitted new designs."

The process of getting a design agreed is a fairly rigorous one. Apart from respecting the specific parameters and guidelines, garden designers have to submit a detailed plan and a model of their garden to the Garden Reflection Group. If the Group gives the green light, the designer will then be allocated funding to create on site a full-size prototype of the garden using low-cost materials: this must include the flowers, mock-ups of structures and samples of the final materials to be used. "The final decision will be taken by a panel," explains Alain. "At present,

the Garden Reflection Group is discussing how this panel will be selected." Is Roger a member of the Garden Reflection Group? "Yes, but he has said he will not be on the future panel, he will only advise on request."

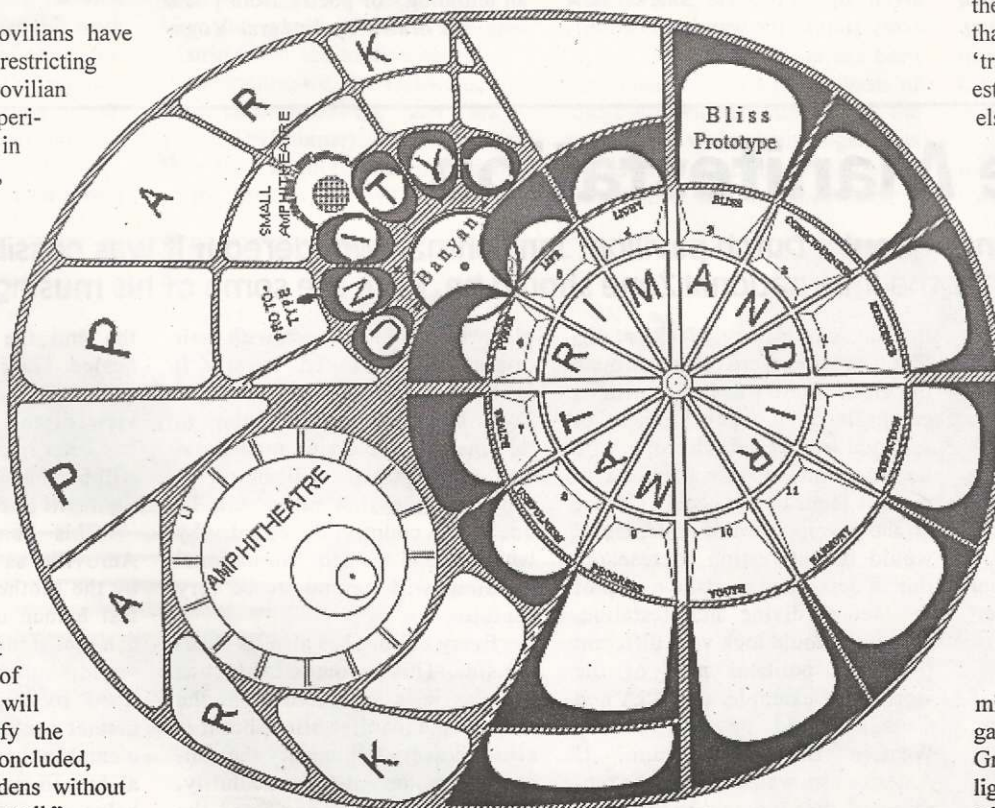
### The Prototypes

Nadja came to Auroville eight years ago. Looking back, she feels that most of this period was, unknowingly, a preparation for her present involvement in the Matrimandir gardens. There was, for example, her work in the Forecomers nursery, her healing work and her experience of arranging the flowers in the Solar Kitchen. "For more than two years I had been feeling a call to work in the gardens," she explains, "but only towards the end of last year, after the politics around Matrimandir had subsided and I felt more confident in myself, did I feel the time was right."

From afar, all you can see of the prototype of the garden of Bliss is a dome-like framework. As you approach, you notice that the upper half of the garden, from the cusp of the small petal down to the dividing path, looks like a fairly conventional garden, with grass, benches and arrangements of shrubs and flowers. The larger outer part of the garden is striking, however. Here the earth is bare and a broad spiral path sweeps round to the entrance of an 18 metre diameter dome. When the excavation is complete you will step down as if into the womb of the earth. A short distance from the dome there is a shallow depression and a circular platform made of wood.

"I needed to find out what wanted to be here, to manifest on this spot. I didn't want to impose anything," says Nadja. "For the path I kept asking the land, 'Where do you want us to walk?'" Many of the elements of her prototype garden also came through meditation.

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Map of the Matrimandir oval area

The present group responsible for the gardens "have embraced this concept of Roger as a guiding principle of garden design in the inner gardens,"

tiation for Matrimandir: they are sacred and, like the Chamber, may only be open to visitors one day a week or once a day. The inner park,

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# Social Venture: A new approach to promoting businesses in Auroville

Chandresh Patel shares his ideas to infuse vitality into Auroville's economy

*"The lack of monetary resources has created a clamour from every facet of our growing city. Severe shortages of money in all units and departments now beg our attention. What money represents we have failed to engage. Shrinking from the money-power has produced a shrinkage of resources."*

The author is Chandresh Patel, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur, who is a friend of Auroville and a board member of both Auroville International U.S.A., and Auroville International. For the past 8 years, he has been passionately involved in fund-raising for Auroville, often employing American ingenuity and enterprise. He has also been quietly supporting new start-ups and projects in Auroville using his own personal resources. Now he feels it is time to move on towards more organized and grander collective ventures to promote Auroville's economy.

"The idea is to come up with a venture pool to promote new business units in Auroville," said Chandresh on his recent visit to Auroville in July. He strongly believes that raising money through venture capital is the way to go for Auroville. The phenomenon of venture capital developed in the United States of America as a means of financing start-ups and early stage businesses, usually of a technologically innovative nature. While venture investments generally carry higher risk, they also offer the potential for above-average returns if they succeed. But in case a venture fails, then the entire investment has to be written off.

"For Auroville, I see 'social venture', a form of venture capital, as the possible model to follow," says Chandresh. "The concept is similar to what venture capitalists do in a capitalist system, but without any expectation of a return to

the investors. Because when a return is expected, it becomes a loan, and brings with it the burden to pay it back. And this can dampen creativity, exploration and innovation. If there is interest involved with the loan, the situation is worse!

"Instead, social venture is rewarding in that when the venture succeeds, a percentage of the profits has to be put back into a venture pool fund for promoting newer businesses. It is a kind of golden handcuff!" For Chandresh, this new business development model in Auroville will create a positive atmosphere that encourages entrepreneurs to be bold, come up with new ideas, and explore their full potential without the accompanying encumbrances. He clarifies that the selection of these potential businesses will be rigorous and made by a panel of individuals well aware of the ground realities that exist in Auroville and the knowledge of what will and will not work here."

"The idea is to support 2-3 new Auroville business units each year, work with them, help them develop a good business plan, do risk assessment, market analysis, and really support them in all ways. The hope is that these businesses would be 'cash-flow positive' by the end of the third year and profitable by the fourth or fifth years.

"In the real world, less than 15% of ventures succeed," he adds, "so the risk has to be assessed well. If it does succeed, it becomes a win-win situation for all." Chandresh says that the net profit would be split in three ways – a third going back into the unit for expansion and research, another supporting the Central Fund for services and infrastructure, and the last third returning back to the venture fund pool for supporting upcoming units.

The kinds of businesses that Chandresh is keen on promoting

are technology related, where his own background and interests lie. "If Auroville can get into technology, then it can get really interesting, and the next generation of young Aurovilians can take it further." He shares an idea that has been brewing in his head for a while. "Telemedicine and Tele-education are just coming in, and these technologies are still in the research phase so Auroville can get into it, we'll be right on time!"

While these dreams are grand and await manifestation, Chandresh has been testing ideas on a more personal and less grand scale. Using the same model of 'social venture', he has provided financial backing for a few Auroville business start-ups. In 1999, he got involved with Avitra, Auroville's translation unit, with Michael and Lloyd. "I promised them that I would support them for 3 years, but it extended to a year more. Now for the past 1 ½ years, Avitra has been self-supportive. It is established, people know about it, and it provides employment to about 17-18 translators." For Chandresh, this is most gratifying. "And recently they have even started putting money back into the venture pool." Even with the formal ties over, Chandresh continues to maintain contact with Avitra, offering ideas and suggestions for improvement.

However another venture that has not been as successful is Guruamps, an Auroville unit set up by Roy Chavat for creating highly specialized electronic amplifiers for guitars. "The idea is fantastic, but for all kinds of reasons it hasn't worked out." Chandresh has not given up hope. He shares how every step of the way has been dif-

ficult and frustrating; licenses, legal issues, permits, customs clearance. "Both Roy and I have put tremendous effort into it, but Guruamps has not worked out – yet." This experience, so different from Avitra, has made Chandresh realize the need for a larger umbrella unit that would support all other business units in Auroville. "This would be a business unit just offering support and help. It will know all the ins-and-outs of issues any business has to deal with in India. In addition, it can also offer services such as centralized accounting system, administrative assistance, and the other day-to-day services that individual units currently need, so that they are free to do the more creative and demanding issues that the business requires."

Chandresh's latest project is Avipro. "It is an affiliate of Avitra for self-publishing and editing over the net so that anyone can make professional publications or documents." Once again, a rigorous three year business plan has been drawn up. "It is not one of those things I'd support if we were starting something formal; this is more my own personal thing," says Chandresh. Avipro's first project is an anthology of poetry from poets who are drawn by Integral Yoga.

Chandresh himself has contributed a collection of his own poems. "If nothing else, my dream of publishing my poetry will come true! But it may be that the editors will not select any of my poems as they may not qualify. That's also fine, helps iron out the personal ego," he says with a grin.

Why Auroville? What makes Chandresh Patel, a graduate of the Ashram School (1979 batch) so passionate about this city and its cause? "Auroville is a natural extension of what I am doing – the work for The Mother. One of Sri Aurobindo's dreams is the ideal of Human Unity. So if one wants to do the Divine's work and be part of evolution, I believe that there is no better project than Auroville."

A dreamer and doer, Chandresh's optimism and enthusiasm are infectious. On September 18th if you are in Maui, Hawaii, you will find him pounding 26.2 miles across the scenic highway by the Pacific, running the Maui marathon – once again fund-raising for Auroville. "This time the cause is education!"

Priya Sundaravalli

## INTERNATIONAL ZONE

# Mapping the Divine Manifestation

Last year there was a discussion in AVI-Netherlands about a Dutch pavilion. Jan Lohman wondered if it was possible to think about such a pavilion as long as it is not clear what the International Zone should be. Here are some of his musings on the topic.

The Mother said that all countries should be representing features of their country in the International Zone. But as the soul of the country is more important than the actual political unit, she insisted that we have to understand the country's soul.

When I try to find the soul of my country, I discern at least two levels: one, more exterior, that is characteristic of the Dutch mind, and one underlying level that we have in common with surrounding countries. On that deeper level I am aware of being part of a greater cultural zone which I shall call the Western European culture. That culture was formed after the fall of the Roman Empire, after the invasion of all those Germanic people from the Far East: Franks, Alemans, Vandals, Goths and Visigoths, Huns, Longobards etc. All these people had to be bound together into one empire, with one religion, and that religion was Christianity.

These people had one thing in common: they were earthbound, more interested in terrestrial and material things than in spirituality. This disposition has greatly influenced Western Christianity, which has been dubbed the 'Germanisation of Christendom'. In this they were different from Christians in the Levant from where this religion came, and even more different from other eastern people like the Indians.

Seeing this I began to wonder if it was the intention of the divine spirit in his manifestation to create great cultural blocks, each with its own interest and particularity that it had to work out in order to prepare this world for the divine descent. In other words, as white light, falling on a prism, is broken up into different colors each with its own vibration, so perhaps the divine will to manifest evoked, in the different races around the world, the will to work out one particular facet of the Divine. Thus, in

the course of history, blocks of different cultures were created around the globe: there was India, with its emphasis on the development of spirituality, Western Europe with its development of matter, Egypt with its focus on the occult; Greece on the development of mind, etc. It would be interesting to research this in detail and to make a map of the actual divine manifestation. This map would look very different from the political map of the world. For example, the USA and Canada would be part of the Western European culture. If America as a whole were to be represented, then it would be rather by the cultures of the American Indians and the pre-Columbus cultures of the Aztecs, Mayas and Incas.

This map could lead to better understanding and international cooperation as the feeling of being part of a worldwide movement will improve human understanding. This will also encourage those peo-

ples who have lost touch with their original cultures to rediscover it. It is also logical that the International Zone be organized according to this map of the divine manifestation, although what will be represented in the first place will be one's own country, the country by which one is formed. So, national pavilions will continue to be very useful.

Every culture has also its shadow side. This becomes evident as soon as it is separated from the total divine manifestation, but it is also necessary to intensify the concentration on its particularity. India, for example, neglected the material life so much that it came to be regarded as an illusion; Western Europe was so immersed in matter that God, soul and spirit faded from its consciousness and were looked upon as fantasies of the mind.

But even if this regression is an indispensable phase in the preparation for the divine manifestation, in

the end the dark side must be healed. The shadow will disappear as soon as the link with the overall view of the divine manifestation has been reestablished. The many will become One again, the 'White light will be restored'.

This can best be done in Auroville, as it is the place created by the Mother for trying to manifest human unity. While cultures can be studied anywhere in the world, Auroville is the place destined to unite people within a greater context and thus be instrumental in the formation of an actual human unity. This perspective helps us understand those points from Auroville's Charter – 'Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole' and 'Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future' – in a more profound way, and helps us recognize that Auroville will truly be the city the earth needs.

Jan Lohman  
(AVI The Netherlands)



## Evolving the Matrimandir gardens

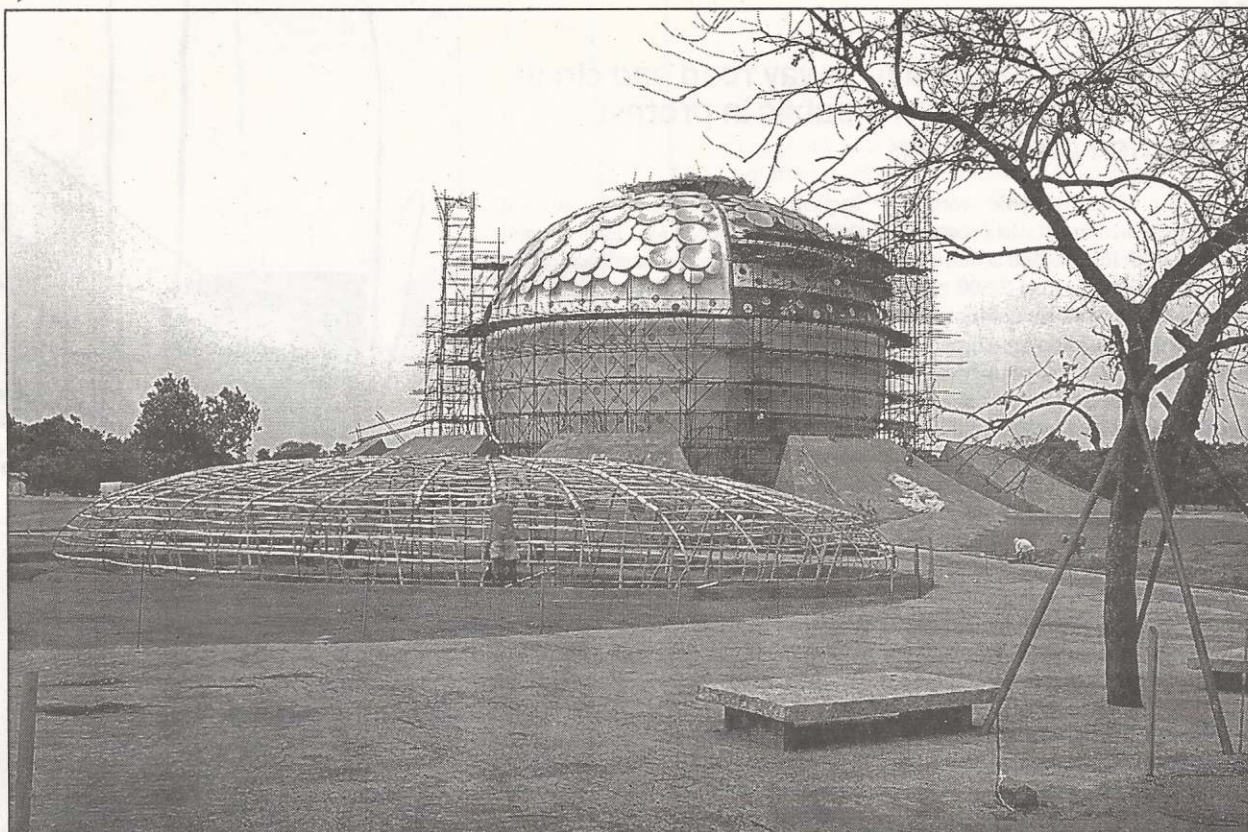
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"I saw the dome, for example, as a kind of solidified gas: the flowers and the leaves came through it but it was somehow waterproof, closed. The ground all around it was sparkling like diamonds. The materials in these visions were futuristic – they don't yet exist on earth – so the challenge is to translate them into what is available. In one very strong meditation, I found myself inside the dome. I was wondering about some dimensions and I started receiving very specific measurements, like 4.27 and 13.51.

Later, when we were working with the computer, it turned out that these figures gave a diameter of exactly 18 metres for the dome. So I knew it was right, that it fitted."

As to the symbolism of the dome and the nearby shallow bowl in the ground: "I felt that bliss is both something that you receive from above – the bowl is there to receive it and the dome has an opening to the sky in the centre – but, as Sri Aurobindo wrote, it's also something that you can find deep inside yourself, and this is why, after walking the spiral path, you enter the dome and go down into the earth. The only flower Mother gave for this garden is the hibiscus she named 'Ananda', and she described this quality as being calm and sweet in its truly simple austerity. That word 'austerity' changed my whole conception of bliss. It's not vital, dramatic – this flower is quiet, unassuming, it needs empty space and simple surroundings."

On the outer framing 'wave' of the garden there are three small trees and some benches. "In the final design the trees will be bigger to give shade: after working full mornings here in the full sun I'm very aware of the need for shade. For sure, more trees will come in the gardens but this will come through collaboration not through conflict, not through people confronting Roger. In fact, the first message I got when I began this work was that this is a work of collaboration, and I feel that part of my role here is to build bridges between people with differing perceptions." "Regarding the gardens, all of us, including Roger, have evolved quite a



Prototype of the Garden of Bliss

lot," adds Alain.

"My dream for Bliss," concludes Nadja, "is to have a team of 6-8 people who try to go as high as possible to contact the concept for the garden which, I believe, comes from a higher plane and is waiting to descend."

The prototype of Bliss will be finished soon. Meanwhile in the garden of Unity – which is situated between the Banyan and the Matrimandir offices – one of the six designated plots already hosts a completed prototype. Here, pots of 'Spiritual Speech' surround a low marble shelf and eight seats. At the centre will be a small shade tree. A nearby sign explains that this is an experiment in a 'new type of landscape'. "Leonard's concept for the Garden of Unity is totally in the exploration stage," explains Alain.

What about the lake or water channel which will surround the oval? Have any decisions been taken as yet? "No," says Alain, "in any case, whatever the final decision it will not affect the design of the gardens. My hope," he concludes, "is to have the whole of the oval – the Matrimandir, the meditation rooms, the amphitheatre, the pathways, the inner gardens and the inner Park – finished by February, 2007. If, by that time, there is still no concept for some of the gardens, we will cover those

plots with grass, sand or stone while they await their final form. For many of us feel that when the final shape is there, even if all the details are not completed, it will call something from above."

### What role for the larger community?

What does the larger community feel about what is happening right now in the Matrimandir gardens? There seems to be widespread support for the fact that, at last, something is being manifested. As to the actual designs, when Paulo and Roger presented their differing concepts for the twelve gardens some time ago, they generated considerable, often heated, discussion. Now that the gardens have been given over to individual designers, there's more a sense of 'wait and see'.

Certain unclaritys remain, however. One is the role of the larger community, if any. At present, the Gardens Reflection Group envisages that the final decision regarding the design of the gardens will be taken by a yet-to-be-constituted panel. The Gardens Reflection Group has been constituted by Alain on the basis of "those Aurovilians interested by the gardens and with whom Roger feels comfortable". It seems likely that the panel will reflect the same orienta-

tion. This is only natural for those Aurovilians who believe, based on certain statements of the Mother, that Roger should be the final (or, at least, most influential) arbiter of the gardens' design. Other Aurovilians disagree. They point out that the original design of the gardens has evolved over the years, that Roger himself, by handing over responsibility for the design (albeit temporarily) to Paulo had admitted that the gardens were not his strong-point, and that it is time that the community as a whole has more of a say in deciding the setting for its 'soul'.

These represent old tensions in the community which have merely been transplanted to a new setting: as ever, Matrimandir is a remorseless lens, throwing into sharp focus our unresolved issues regarding authority, the interpretation of Mother's vision, even the nature of the 'new' spirituality. What exacerbates these tensions at present, however, is a lack of information regarding exactly what is manifesting on site, and why. Recently, Aurovilians visiting Matrimandir have noticed a construction coming up near the Garden of Unity. "It's a small amphitheatre," explains Alain. "Roger designed it. It will seat 300 people and is intended for small, intimate gatherings."

Exactly why this could not have been reported in the News and Notes or on the AVNet is unclear, but it adds to a suspicion that the larger community is viewed by the executing group as an obstacle rather than as a possible source of creative input in the manifestation of the Matrimandir gardens. While there may be some reason for the executing group's stance – the community has often proved itself incapable of charting a clear and intelligent course – the net effect of the present situation is that everybody involved becomes locked in self-reinforcing positions: as the walls go up, the shouts from without grow louder which, in turn, push the walls even higher.

Perhaps it is this negative spiral of mutual distrust, rather than any issue of individual design, which is the real challenge we have to surmount if Matrimandir is finally to be a living symbol of human unity.

Alan



The new amphitheatre next to the Unity Garden

## In brief

### New Secretary

The Ministry of Human Resource Development has appointed the Finance Officer of the Auroville Foundation, Mr. Srinivasamurthy, as Acting Secretary with effect of July 7, 2005. This appointment implied the effective termination of the term of office of Secretary Mr. S.R. Sharma.

### Organic Cashews

The No More Pesticides Team reported a 281% increase in the harvest of organically grown cashews. While in 2002 the harvest was 160 kilos of raw cashews from one acre – 30% less than the average harvest in Tamil Nadu in 2000 (224kg) – the yield increased in the following years to 320kg and 310 kg in 2003 and 2004, and to 450 kg in 2005. The team found that neem oil was the most effective pest control and vermicompost and natural compost improved the soil. Mulching and pruning were also employed. Out of 74 trees, 14 were lost due to root- and stem-borer activity.

### Pour Tous

The new Pour Tous, soon to be opened near the Solar Kitchen, will probably function differently from the Pour Tous store in Aspiration. At the request of the Funds and Assets Management Committee, a small group of people have reflected on how it could become an instrument to implement the economy envisaged by The Mother. They envisage that the new Pour Tous become a distribution centre, providing basic food as well as household and personal hygiene requirements to Aurovilians and Newcomers. The maintenances of those who participate in the new Pour Tous would no longer be credited on their accounts but would be given directly in the form of food and sundry articles. Community eating spaces offering a variety of diets would also be an integral part of this new system.

### Rapid Fat Loss Plan

The Solar Café organised a two-week Rapid Fat Loss diet course. Fresh vegetables formed the basis of the diet. Also included were brown rice, fruit juice, milk and dairy products, together with meat and poultry. The fat-burner programme proved very popular, with no less than 16 people signing up.

### Medical camp and film screening

On the occasion of the Dalai Lama's 70th Birthday the Tibetan Medical and Astro Institute conducted a two-day medical camp in Auroville at the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture. A film on Sowa Rigpa, the Tibetan system of medicine, was also screened.

### Cell phone tower withdrawn

A cell phone company, having been refused permission to erect a 42-meter-high tower in Auroville, started building the foundations of the tower on privately-owned land close to the Matrimandir. Many Aurovilians protested peacefully at the site and work has stopped.

### Paver blocks

The Auroville Planning and Development Council (APDC) has requested all drivers to adhere to a speed limit of 30 km/hr. in view of the dust on our roads. The APDC also approved an experiment by the Road Service with so-called Paver Blocks near the Matrimandir visitors' entrance.

### Passing

Italian long-time resident Silvio Patrian passed away due to heart failure on Sunday May 29th. He was 48 years old. He is buried in Adventure.



# The land acquisition controversy

**On June 23rd, concerned villagers blockaded a highway road and circulated misleading pamphlets about Auroville to the public in protest against compulsory land acquisition proceedings.**

In August 2003, the newly appointed Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, Mr. S.R. Sharma, a retired I.A.S. officer, took office. One of his first decisions was to immediately stop all land purchase, to the consternation of many Aurovilians, and in particular of the executives of Auroville's Land and Estate Management (LEM). For at that moment two major negotiations had just been concluded and awaited the Secretary's signature. One was the purchase of a large 50-acre plot in the Green Belt, for which Auroville had initiated an international fundraising campaign. Negotiations to obtain this plot had been painfully long but finally had met with success, and the Governing Board of the Foundation had given its conditional approval. The other one was a key plot in Auroville's Industrial Zone which finally had become available. But the Secretary refused to sanction the purchases, as he considered the time had come for a new strategy for consolidating Auroville's land holdings instead of the present piecemeal approach. He argued moreover that the advance to be taken from Auroville's Central Fund to finance the not yet fundraised amount required for the purchase of the 50 acres would be an unacceptable risk to the Auroville Foundation. Arguments of the Working Committee and LEM that the risk of the advance was defensible in view of projected income, and that prices were reasonable in view of the prices paid for land in the vicinity, were not heeded.

The Secretary was concerned about the slow pace of land purchases and increasing prices. Over the past 10 years, Auroville has only been able to buy 200 acres in the city area and over this period prices have increased by 550%. At the request of the Auroville Planning and Development Council (APDC) the Secretary presented in December 2003 his views on land acquisition to a joint meeting of mem-

bers of the main Auroville working groups. He stated that it was necessary to have a fresh look at land acquisition for Auroville. More than 2,500 acres are still to be bought. He questioned if Auroville could afford to go through a process lasting 40 or 70 years before it could acquire all the land and stressed his belief that The Mother would not have wanted such a slow pace. He concluded that land acquisition through purchase is an unsuitable future strategy and that, instead, the Auroville Foundation should request the Tamil Nadu government to compulsorily acquire all the land required by Auroville under the Land Acquisition Act. The Tamil Nadu Government should be asked to notify all these lands, after which they could be acquired in phases depending on Auroville's priorities and availability of funds.

Land acquisition under the Land Acquisition Act had become possible as in January 2003 the Tamil Nadu Government had issued a Government Order that recognizes Auroville as a project of public purpose, a prerequisite for acquisition under the Act. The Government Order also stipulates certain protective measures for those lands in the planned Auroville Township area that need to be acquired. The Secretary stated that land notification would not only ensure that all land required would ultimately be owned by Auroville, but would also put a stop to the present situation where land prices are determined by the seller. "This should be a buyer's market," said the Secretary. The meeting concluded with the Secretary's invitation to each of the working groups to consider the matter. He stated that "if Auroville is happy with the way land purchase has proceeded so far, and wishes it to continue in the same way, I will not object."

The APDC investigated the matter with two retired Tamil Nadu land

acquisition specialists. They warned that court proceedings against land acquisition are normal and that courts have a tendency to allow for a higher compensation than awarded by the government. Consequently, they advised to purchase lands whenever possible and use land acquisition only for priority lands which cannot be secured otherwise. Their views were communicated to the Secretary. When in August 2004 the Secretary indicated that he wished to ask the government to notify all lands, the APDC repeated its preference for a 'twin-track' approach and wrote to the Secretary: "The APDC is in favour of land purchase whenever possible. It admits that for certain key areas [compulsory] acquisition may be the only way to acquire them within a reasonable period of time... If lands are for sale at a reasonable rate, Auroville should purchase these lands as soon as possible and not resort to [compulsory] acquisition." The APDC expressed concern at the threat of roadside lands in the Green Belt being purchased by outsiders or developed for commercial purposes, and warned that a single focus on lands within the city area might be a dangerous policy. It also proposed that the Auroville Foundation inform the relevant Panchayats [village councils] that land acquisition proceedings are under consideration for specified lands and of the reasons thereof, so that any problems with neighbours and those affected may be kept to a strict minimum. However, no action was taken.

In early September 2004, the Secretary requested the District Collector to take steps to notify all private lands (2,600 acres/1,053 hectares) in the designated Auroville Township area for acquisition. Subsequently the District Collector requested the Auroville Foundation to furnish all necessary details, including a certificate for availability of funds. The Secretary's request and his earlier decision to put all land purchases on hold was discussed with Dr. Karan Singh, the newly reappointed Chairman of the Auroville Foundation, who visited Auroville a few weeks later. Community representatives reiterated the desirability of the so called 'twin-track strategy'. These views were consistently repeated in further letters to the Chairman and the Governing Board.

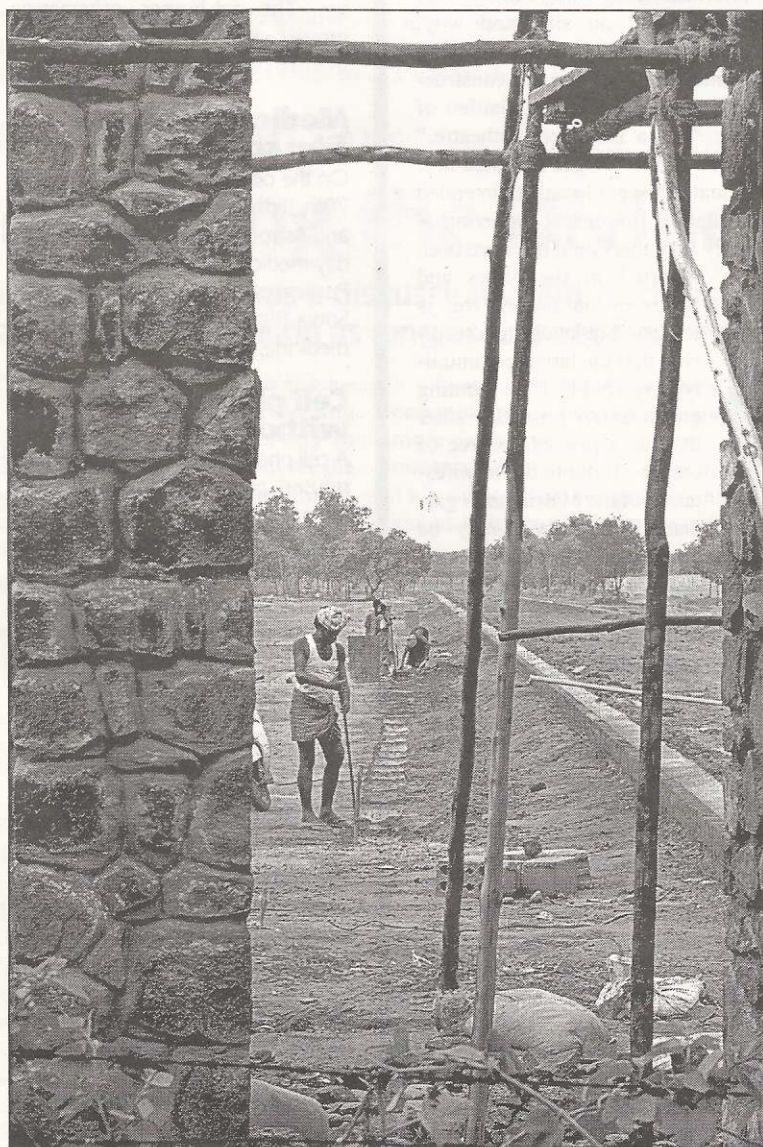
In December 2004, following a request from the Secretary and Working Committee, plans were approved by the APDC to prioritize land acquisition in phases. The APDC proposed that 180 acres of critical roadside land in the Green Belt be included in the first phase as they are prone to house plotting and commercial developments. But the Secretary decided to focus on acquiring all lands within the city area. His decision was afterwards – reluctantly – agreed upon by the APDC and Working Committee. In January 2005, the Secretary submitted the official request to the District Collector for initiating land acquisition proceedings for the remaining 226 acres of private lands in the city area.

The Secretary defended his actions in the first meeting of the new Governing Board in February 2005. APDC representatives, however, replied that "The views and actions of the Secretary have not been the subject of a consensus among the Auroville working groups concerned, nor in the community at large." Recalling that concerns were expressed in a meeting with Dr. Karan Singh in September 2004, the APDC reiterated the need for the twin track policy and requested the



Top: Gateway to a large plot in the  
Bottom: Developme

Preparing the plot in the Greenbelt



Secretary to review his position and approve the purchase of land offered at reasonable prices through direct negotiation while simultaneously notification for land acquisition is pursued with the Tamil Nadu Government. In their subsequent meeting with the residents of Auroville on the roof of the Solar Kitchen, the Chairman stated that the Governing Board was considering the option for compulsory land acquisition but that the Board was also worried that land purchase had been stopped.

The local landowners, during these years, were becoming increasingly concerned. LEM was no longer allowed to purchase lands that were offered – and land is normally only offered when the owner is in dire need – and rumours about compulsory land acquisition intensified. The Secretary told them that land acquisition is a fair process which provides legal means to the landowners to protect their interest and that they should communicate their concerns to him and to the Tamil Nadu Government. The landowners left his office frustrated. Meanwhile, the real estate agent of the 50-acre plot in the Green Belt purchased an adjacent piece of 8 acres with access to the main road, and bulldozed the area in preparation for farmhouse plotting. Articles started to appear in Tamil newspapers such as the *Malaal Boomi* of March 2005, under the heading "Are Tamils being expelled from their land to set up the international township?" and calling on all villagers to appeal to the Central and State governments. As could be expected, this article contained a lot of invective against Auroville.

The villagers' frustration reached its peak on June 19th. An all village meeting was called at the eucalyptus grove near Certitude. The agenda mentioned – falsely – that the people of 16 villages around Auroville would have to vacate their villages and that 3,000 acres of lands would compulsorily be acquired by Auroville. A vituperative paper distributed at the meeting called for a ban on all the activities of the

Master Plan of Auroville. Though this meeting was only attended by 100 people, the next action was a road blockage near Kootroad on Sunday June 26th. The police arrested over 200 people for blocking the road. Tamil newspapers like *Malai Malar* and *Dina Thanthi* carried a report on their front pages, repeating some of the false accusations against Auroville in the process.

Auroville's response to the developments came soon afterwards. A general meeting was called on June 23rd in which Aurovilians expressed their concerns: opinions against and in favour of land acquisition were voiced. The meeting decided that proper action should be taken. A public clarification regarding the false rumours was to be made. Proper background information was to be provided containing both the pros and cons of compulsory acquisition. The Working Committee and the Auroville Council were instructed to initiate meetings with the Panchayats of the villages to discuss their concerns.

While discussions are ongoing, the community was informed that Mr. Sharma ceased to be the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation with effect from July 7th, 2005. The Finance Officer of the Auroville Foundation, Mr. Srinivasamurthy, has been appointed Acting Secretary and has been instructed to call a meeting of the Governing Board and International Advisory Council of the Foundation by the end of August. The final decision on how to consolidate the lands for Auroville may be made in these meetings.

Carel





Greenbelt area which may be developed for farmhouses. It is located along the Certitude-Kuilapalayam road.



## A Clarification from Auroville

Issued by the Working Committee to the surrounding villages

The residents of Auroville deeply regret the fact that many villagers have been worried and troubled by false rumours concerning large scale acquisition of land and possible relocation of villages. These fears are not based on true facts; therefore Auroville wishes to clarify its position.

The rumor that Auroville plans to evict the people living in 16 villages around Auroville is not true; there is no intention to evict any villager from their houses nor to forcibly relocate any of the villages in the Auroville area.

We want to continue our dialogue with all the villages' representatives so as to be able to clarify doubts and answer questions. We also propose that a joint body of representatives from the villages and Auroville be formed and meet regularly to discuss things of common interest. Auroville's policy has always been to secure the land by voluntary sale via negotiation with the landowners, with no compulsion or coercion, keeping in mind their needs and long term welfare. This method will continue to be pursued for lands to be secured for Auroville's development.

Land in the Greenbelt may also be developed jointly by the landowner and Auroville along mutually agreed upon guidelines.

However, Auroville reserves the right to initiate appropriate action on all levels to protect the land within the Auroville Universal Township Master Plan area from any incongruous developments by speculators and developers.

Land acquisition will be considered only in cases where purchase or lease agreements can not be finalized within a reasonable timeframe or where the lands are earmarked for essential developments such as roads, utility structures, etc.

Auroville can only be built with goodwill, collaboration and a spirit of brotherhood, as the Mother wanted. This is the spirit in which we want to interact with our neighbours.

As the Mother said on 8th September 1965, "Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, above all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity."

Let us all work together to realise this great ideal.

Auroville  
Date: 11 July, 2005

**There are different views in the community regarding compulsory acquisition of land. Here are some of the main pros and cons:**

### Rationale against Land Acquisition

- 1 Auroville owns 75% of the lands in the designated city area. Most of the landowners in this area are our immediate neighbours. If we are allowed to buy the lands as we have done before, we may be able to secure most of it by voluntary sale, at not greatly increased prices.
- 2 If we have the funds required for purchase and if we could create a good atmosphere in the villages, it may not take more than 10 years to secure the land in the city area.
- 3 As there are no large plots of land in the city area, it is unlikely that large-scale real estate development will take place in this area, although small-scale developments by landowners and outside developers cannot be excluded.
- 4 Most landowners are far from being rich; they are simple families whose only wealth is two or three acres of land. If forced to sell, the local people may have a grudge against Auroville, and this may hamper the peaceful development of Auroville.
- 5 If the Tamil Nadu Government agrees to land acquisition, the process of compensation etc. could result in an amount that would be higher than that which would have been paid through normal purchase.

### Rationale for Land Acquisition

- 1 Land prices in the city area have increased by 550% over the past 10 years. Assuming the same pace of purchase and the same rate of escalation, the total cost of purchasing the remaining 226 acres of private land in the city area will be in the range of Rs. 33 crores (approx. US \$7.5 million).
- 2 The purchase of the remaining land in the city area has become increasingly difficult as fewer people are offering their land. Without compulsory acquisition it may take 15 years or more to secure the land in the city area.
- 3 Meanwhile, the vicinity of Pondicherry and increasing population pressures in the region are likely to attract more land speculation and real estate developments in Auroville.
- 4 Not only land in the city area is in danger. Also, the lands along the access roads in the Green Belt are particularly sensitive to commercial use and real estate development by both landowners and outside developers. Lands along these roads are hardly on offer.
- 5 Compulsory acquisition would allow land to be secured according to Auroville's development needs instead of being dependent on offers from the landowners. This is especially important for planning infrastructure developments in the city area.

## Land Acquisition Act A Summary

- ◆ Through notification under Section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act, the Tamil Nadu Government declares its intent to acquire land for a "Public Purpose". (Public Purpose is defined in the Act as "of general interest to the community" but "not necessary available to the public at large".) Notification is given through publication in the Official Gazette, two daily local newspapers and at convenient places in the locality. After notification, the land is open for survey and inspection and the landowners are not allowed to sell their land to third parties. (As per July 15, 2005, no notification has yet started).
- ◆ Objections have to be raised by a landowner within 30 days after the date of publication of the notification. The Collector is bound to give a personal hearing to the objector and has to give a report on the objections with his recommendations to the Government, whose decision will be final.
- ◆ After notification under Section 4, there will be a period of up to one year prior to actual acquisition under Section 6. During this period, the landowners may sell their land through negotiation to the prospective purchaser.
- ◆ A declaration of acquisition by Tamil Nadu Govt. under Section 6 of the Land Acquisition Act has to be made after one year from the date of publication of the notification and published in the Official Gazette, two daily local newspapers and at convenient places in the locality. Afterwards, the Collector gives a notice to the landowners to appear before him to state their interest in the land. (Section 7 - 10)
- ◆ Within two years from the date of publication of the declaration, the Collector has to make an award which states the compensation to be given. The Collector may take possession of the land after making an award. Sale of land through negotiation may even continue during this period of two years, before the Collector makes the award.
- ◆ A person who has not accepted the award may require that the matter be referred by the Collector for the determination of the Court.
- ◆ The Land Acquisition Act ensures that proper compensation is given to the landowners. The compensation is fixed by the Collector on the basis of the market value of the land at the date of notification + 12% per year calculated from the date of notification to the date of the award (max. 3 years) + 30% of the market value "in consideration of the compulsory nature of the acquisition".



# "Bring me a kilo of consciousness!"

Appreciating Ann



Ann's outdoor dispensary (with helper)

At 11 o'clock in the evening, Kuilapalayam is something of a ghost town. But while everybody else would have shut shop and gone to bed, likely or not one small figure would still be bustling around with a bucket full of bread scraps, a crowd of dogs at her heels. Until recently, that is. For Ann, 'Animal Care' Ann, passed away in June after a severe illness.

The spontaneous outpouring of affection and appreciation from Aurovilians and villagers alike at the news of her death was evidence, if any was needed, that Ann was a very special person. Born in New Zealand, she came to Auroville in the mid 1970s. Coming from a farming family, she loved animals and, from the first it seems, was always surrounded by them. As she had some basic veterinary knowledge, Aurovillian friends started asking her to treat their pets. Word got around, and soon her constituency had spread beyond Auroville to Kuilapalayam and other local villages, where the condition of many of the animals was dire: the countless abandoned, wounded or terribly suffering tiny pups and dogs were the silent victims of poverty and ignorance.

Ann set to work to remedy this. On her old moped she carried a large tub which she filled with food scraps from the bakery and community kitchens before redistributing them to her 'children', the hungry village dogs. Once the feeding was over, the medication would begin. As rabies is endemic in India, Ann, assisted for many years by Kittu and, later, Radhakrishnan, initiated a programme of mass-vaccination in the villages. "We set up a system," explains Kittu. "We picked a few individuals from each village, and told them to contact us if there was any sign of a rabid animal." Once a sighting was made, Ann and Kittu would track the animal (once for a full day all the way to Pondicherry), capture it and then put it to sleep. "Even with a rabid dog, Ann always looked for the most humane way to put it to sleep," says Kittu. "This in itself was an example to the villagers."

Her rabies work was the most high-profile, and dangerous, aspect of her work and perhaps her greatest social service, but there were plenty of other diseases she had to deal with. For example, canine distemper – a highly infectious disease which can lead to an agonizing death for an ani-

mal – took up more and more of her time. The distemper vaccine is expensive, but through her contacts with vets (who were always happy to help her, often free of charge) and animal workers Ann discovered that the far cheaper human measles vaccine is just as effective. She also discovered that large doses of vitamin C worked too. "She made many small discoveries like this," says Kittu. "That is why it's important that all her efforts don't go to waste." You only have to see the healthy animals in Kuilapalayam today to realize how successful those efforts have been, and what a strong riposte this is to those who criticized her for caring for village dogs. "As a result of our work, pups are healthier and more attractive, and because of that people want them more and there are less uncared for dogs wandering around," she once explained.

Ann was on call day and night: "She was the most dedicated to her work I have ever seen in Auroville,"

said, 'I've never seen such a noble lady. She's so sick but she's only thinking about me.' And immediately he went to the chapel to pray for her."

Ann's simplicity and humility caused many people to misjudge her. "When I came to Auroville and saw her for the first time," remembers Aryadeep, "she was radiating a pure and innocent simplicity, with the smile of a herdsman. I told myself, 'So in Auroville not all people are intellectuals or studying Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.' How wrong I was! She loved books: Sri Aurobindo's Life Divine was one of her favourites." Bhavana recalls that when Ann was living in Fertile she listened to tapes of Mother's Agenda all day long, learning French in the process. Aryadeep remembers, asking her on one occasion if she would like him to bring her something from Pondicherry. "Yes, a kilo of consciousness," she replied. In hospital, near the very end, she asked a friend to put something on her behalf in the Auroville News and Notes. It was a quote from Mother: "Do not be sad – things happen because they have to happen and finally everything leads to the ultimate victory of the Supreme."

"I'm convinced," says Kittu, "that she was already transformed inwardly but many people didn't realize this because she neglected herself." In fact, Aurovilians were shocked to learn recently that for a long time she hadn't had a home but had been sleeping in a tiny room under the State Bank of India in Kuilapalayam. This led Amy and other friends to raise funds for a house and compound in which Ann could live and look after her needy animals. Unfortunately, it came too late.

"In many ways, she was not made for this world – she was too naïve, too



Vets were always happy to help Ann

says Turiya. "She was a workaholic," says Kittu, "She never took a break and I don't think she ever slept more than 2 hours a night. She was treating animals in villages stretching from Marakkanam in the north to Pondicherry in the south, all on her old moped. She needed a jeep, a team, but she never considered herself: she was a giver, a complete giver, that's how she wore herself out. Even in hospital she kept getting out of bed to greet her friends. We had to tell her, 'Ann, you're here to rest.' Near the end, when she was very ill, a doctor came to examine her. She told him, 'Don't come too close, you may get infected.' He was very touched. He

trusting," says Kittu. "For example, she never wanted to ask anybody for money." "Sometimes," remembers Radhakrishnan, "she'd tell me she couldn't pay my wages. But then she'd go up the road and meet somebody who would spontaneously give her money – often exactly the amount that she needed!"

Rita remembers being one of the Aurovilians who affectionately told Ann: 'get your act together'. "To which she one day responded, 'My act is together, Rita.'" After witnessing the outpouring of love and affection from simple villagers at her laying in and funeral, and how Ann's face changed after death from that of a pre-

## ANN

(remembered by Vijay)

*In Australia, at the estuary's calm waters at dawn we gazed where pelicans and black swans so serenely, ever so slowly floated as if all eternity had they; then of fine white sand vast dunes to the ocean crossed, by no other footprints but our own marred... a world it was easier for you to live in than the City of Dawn not always quite ready for someone like you.*

*Under the inward shade of majestic, ancient gum-nut trees I once told you: "Ann, of Auroville you now dream – ten years, twenty years from now a memory our life here will be, already dimming, fading away..." Now in our collective being's most primal, archetypical levels so much more than a mere memory your presence endures deeply etched forever.*

*In Chennai when you came at last from the airport coach dropping point a rickshaw we took to the Broadlands lodge. Late in the night it was and so many destitutes, whole families on the sidewalks slept something you had never seen before, and with big wide open eyes holding my hand kept staring at them, unable to speak. Such empathy and immense loving compassion only in Mother and a very few other great Teachers had I known before but a hue of it was I then able to feel as well through the vastness of your heart.*

*In Fertile Windmill a bare lifestyle's simplicity we shared by the motto "we hardly really need anything at all" ruled: no mattress but a thin mat the bedding the windmill's water from an old earthenware pot our drink, of brown rice a plate and a few bananas already a feast; but when needing something always to you our workers came rather than me.*

*So clearly I still see you still walking, say, from the kitchen to our humble abode, to where the cows were tethered; like in a dream where each step ineluctably followed the next, of so many little secret joys full, with a smile taking care of all; in a dream where all animals in a language spoke to you you alone could understand. Then in the evening to cassettes of Mother's Agenda you listened so many times already had you heard.*

*(On yet another level such a calm, ever silent fire was in you in high, subtle flames suddenly blossoming, intense evocations raising which more at ease in the rain dwelt, or in the twilight just before dawn and almost invisible remained in full sun, a wordless song of peace merging with the trembling of the leaves in the high monsoon winds, secret rivers and waterfalls quietly flowing into all inner deserts of this world.)*

*Then along Auroville bypaths and all surrounding villages you wandered with whatever help you could afford and a kind word for all and as the years ever so slowly, ever so fast passed by some began to call you saint Ann, and only partly in jest. But on the road just an unkempt woman in old clothes visitors may have noticed, no longer young, often exhausted looking 0 although with eyes so intense and alive, such clear windows to the infinite gentleness of your soul.*

*Our dear friend, lovely Ruth, last time here told me: "Don't you wait up for me tonight, I won't be back but stay at Ann's. Even with all the cats and dogs' mess sleeping in Ann's room, I reckon, is a bit like sleeping in a temple...."*

*Have a good journey onwards, dear soul, fare thee well, and to a new and much better world may you return where no animal ever starves, ever suffers, and no conflict ever rises amongst men, a new world... ready for you!*

maturely old woman to someone young and fresh, Rita changed her mind. "You indeed have your act together. Sorry about that stupid advice."

"Saint Ann. She always was," wrote her close friend, Bhavana, recently, "We loved to have her look after the rabid dogs, and she loved to do it. But she didn't inspire me to care for them, she 'overdid it' I felt. And yet, she was an exemplary woman – always striving to do her best, self-effacing, hard-working, caring." Ann herself was anxious not to be portrayed as a latter-day saint. A few years ago, in the only interview with Auroville Today which, reluctantly, she agreed to, she told Jesse that "I'm often short-tempered and selfish." "Ann may not be perfect," observed

Jesse after following her around for an exhausting day, "but the dogs of Kuilapalayam don't seem to mind. Although the small, skinny, sand-coloured almost-pup yelps and winces as she forces the distemper medicine down his throat, the moment she finishes the procedure and walks away, the animal rushes to her side with the air of a living being recognised for the first time in its life."

Kireet sums it up for all of us: "You did a work none of us could. You were a beautiful woman."

Alan

(Ann Plummer, Aurovillian, 57 years. Died 25th June, 2005, cremated in Adventure.)



# Viaggio in Italia

Pitanga opens with Marco Feira's Voyage through Italy

After a dreadfully long summer devoid of art or entertainment, the newly renovated Pitanga brought life back into Auroville – Marco's photo narrative, 'Viaggio in Italia'.

Going to any show on the opening night is a special treat – it is not just about art awaiting contemplation, but getting to meet the creator of the works, getting to hear about the 'Aaah' moments and the stories behind, meeting friends you would otherwise not see until perhaps the next bonfire at the amphitheatre, and of course, the delicious snacks – in this case, Italian Pizza!

Says Marco, "It is more than 25 years since I left Italy and this was a way for me to see Italy again – like a tourist but with the Italian eye." So for two months last autumn Marco, along with his wife Liliana, toured Italy by train, staying with friends and family. "All we had was a Lonely Planet guide and a directory of the best restaurants of the

country!" The journey took them through Torino, Trento, Napoli, Puglia, Milano, Toscana, Vatican city, Roma, Sardegna, Firenze, Salento, and both the Ionio and the Adriatic shores.

The photos reveal the spirit of the journey – images of movement, direction, and transport – taken both with an intimate understanding of the insider and the fresh perspective of an outsider.

For a subject as complex as a travel narrative, Marco's kaleidoscope of images have succeeded in revealing the quintessence of Italy – a living potpourri of life, humanity, religion, culture, architecture, and the end-

less Italian skies. His 'Italia' also seems to evoke a feeling of India in its vibrant people and in the presence of the sacred in every



Some of Marco's photographs  
bottom left to top right: Train;  
Homeless, Milano Central Train Station;  
Italian family, Ionio shore

day life. 'Jesus is always with her' shows the face of the young Lord shining compassionately out of an old lady's shopping tote as she rests exhausted on a stone bench; or the little shrine to Mary and a baby Jesus in front of the fish market. The Indo-Italian connection also appears in the shot of cactus blossoms from Sardegna – 'Fichi d'India' (figs of India). "In Italy, they believe it comes from India," says Marco, "but I have never seen it here!"

erously peppered by Italian Aurovilians. Santo stands gazing at a photo – a night scene of a street in Trento. He turns to a passer-by, "I grew up in this neighborhood," I hear him say, "just around that corner." I watch her peering at the softly glowing cobbled street. Perhaps she sees young Santo playing beyond....

Priya Sundaravalli



## NEW PUBLICATION

# "There is nothing nebulous about the supramental"

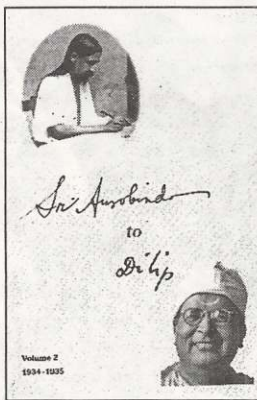
Volume 2 of Sri Aurobindo to Dilip, the correspondence between Sri Aurobindo and Dilip Kumar Roy during the years 1934-35, was recently released. Here is an extract:

August 22, 1935  
(Letter from Dilip)

But do tell me please do you really get anything solid from this nebulous Supramental? He looks too suspiciously like leaving-in-the lurch kind of customer. Nirod tells me you scaled and winged like lightning on its pinions. Have you really? I mean did it mean something like motion or a sort of Marvellous Calm which seems like motion through some Supramental jugglery of consciousness. Some enlightenment on this bewildering problem would be highly edifying even to the mortals and humans you may be sure. Also Rajani has to be gagged somehow: he talks of nothing but the Supramental. And what am I to answer? Shall I try some imaginative blood-curdling stunt? Please let me know if I may.

(Sri Aurobindo's reply)

You have created your own "bewildering problem" by supplying your own data! There is nothing nebulous about the supramental, its action depends on the utmost precision possible. As for solidity, since I



have got many solid things from much lower forces, I do not see why the highest ones should only give nebulosities. But that seems the human mind's position, only what is earthy is solid, what is high is misty and unreal – the worm is a reality, but the eagle's a vapour!

However, I have not told Nirod that I am scaling and winging – on the contrary I am dealing with very hard practical facts. I only told him I had got the formula of solution for the difficulty that had been holding me up since last November and I am working it out.

To return to the supramental – the supramental is simply the direct self-existent Truth consciousness and the direct self-effective Truth Power. There can therefore be no question of jugglery about it. What is not true is not supramental. As for calm and silence, there is no need of the supramental to get that. One can get it even on the level of Higher Mind which is the next above the human intelligence. I got these things in 1908, twenty seven years

ago and I can assure you they were solid enough and marvellous enough without any need of supramentality to make it more so! Again, a calm that "seems like motion" is a phenomenon of which I know nothing. A calm or silence which can support or produce action – that I know and that is what I have had – the proof is that out of an absolute silence of the mind I edited the Bande Mataram for four months and wrote six and a half volumes of the Arya, not to speak of all the letters and messages, etc., etc. I have written since. If you say that writing is not an action or motion but only something that seems like it, a jugglery of the consciousness-well, still out of that calm and silence I conducted a pretty strenuous political activity and have also taken my share in keeping up an Ashram which has at least an appearance to the physical senses of being solid and material! If you deny that these things are material or solid (which of course metaphysically you can), then you land yourself plump into Shankara's illusionism, and there I will leave you.

You will say however that it is not the Supramental but at most the Overmind that helped me to these non-nebulous notions. But the Supermind is by definition a greater

dynamic activity than mind or overmind. I have said that what is not true, is not supramental; I will add that what is ineffective is not supramental. And finally I will conclude by saying that I have not told Nirod that I have taken possession of the Supramental – I only admit to be very near to it or at least to its tail. But very near is – well, after all a relative phrase like all human phrases.

I don't know how you are to "gag" Rajani. You might perhaps by my two formulas, but it is doubtful. Or perhaps you might tell him that the supramental is silence – only it would be untrue! So I leave you in your fix – there is no other go. At least until I have firm physical hold of the tail of the supramental and can come and tell the mortals and humans no doubt in language which will be unintelligible to them, for they have totally misunderstood even the little I have already written about it.

(Available from Mira Aditi Centre, 62, Sriranga, 2nd Main 1st Cross, T.K.Layout, Saraswatipuram, Mysore – 570009, India, or at Freeland Bookstore, Edayanchavadi, Auroville, 605101, Tamil Nadu. Price: Rs 200 + postage.)

## In brief

### AVI meeting Cape Town

The Africa – Auroville International meeting 2006 will be held in Cape Town from 17 to 26 March, on the theme of The Magic of Transformation. This first Auroville-related meeting ever in Africa is seen as an important milestone in making Auroville better known on the African continent, as well as enhancing Africa's presence in Auroville.

There is a hope that the fourth Peace Table crafted by George Nakashima will arrive in Cape Town at the same time as this meeting. For further info contact [jasmin1@africa.com](mailto:jasmin1@africa.com) or [tine@auroville.org.in](mailto:tine@auroville.org.in)

### Hall of Peace call

The International Zone Group has called for funds to build the Hall of Peace, which will be the proper home for the Peace Table crafted by George Nakashima and gifted to Auroville. The estimated cost of the building, which has been designed by Piero and Gloria, is Rs 45 lakhs. For further information, contact [unitypavilion@auroville.org.in](mailto:unitypavilion@auroville.org.in)

### Kuilapalayam School Trust

Kuilapalayam School, which has over 1000 students from Kuilapalayam and neighbouring areas such as Kootroad, Morattandi, Sanjeevinagar and Pillaichavadi, reported that all its 10th standard students have passed their exams, with average scores of 79 out of 100. The school is supported by Auroville's Palmyra/DIK.

### Ilaignarkal building inauguration

The new premises of the Ilaignarkal Education Centre were inaugurated on 14th July. At the same time, a set of research books sponsored by SAIER were released on the topics of bullock carts, kolams and the Palmyra tree. A publication entitled 'Mother's Blessings', with contributions by Tamil Aurovilians, was also released.

### Aurovilian wins environmental award

Architect Jana Dreikhausen won an award at an international conference on 'Ecological Architecture and Environment in the Tropics' for integrating the full range of today's sustainable building ideas into the innovative design of a residence in Sukhavati.

### Petrol station

New Creation Transport Service has requested Bharat Petroleum in Chennai to build a petrol station in the village of Kuilapalayam, near the community of Protection, so that it can serve Auroville vehicles and those from the villages. The issue is being discussed in Auroville.

### Royal Express no longer

A month ago The Royal Express, a non-polluting electric 3-wheeler which can seat nine people, started a public transport service plying between the Town Hall and Pour Tous at a top speed of 20 km/hour. Unfortunately the axle broke and now Nikolai, the pink-suited driver, is appealing for funds for repairs.



# Ultimate Relief: the Gift of Peace

Bhavana reports on one of the Auroville Tsunami Rehabilitation team's least heralded but most important successes



Cricket, lovely cricket – except when the wrong side wins!

The two fishing villages of Thanthirayankuppam and Nadakuppam are located next to each other on the coast, a little to the north of Auroville. They've been feuding for years – the young people refuse to speak to anyone from the other village, just like their elders.

After the tsunami, all the fishermen up and down the coast decided they wouldn't go fishing until the government paid compensation – they didn't want them to say it was all fine now, and back to normal, and delay for ever their receiving all the money which they know has been collected in their favour. That gave those of us in the rehabilitation scene quite a challenge: it's not been possible to just go ahead with getting everyone back on their feet, to get over the trauma by getting on with life as usual, to work off the shock with lots of hard work. Faced with so many healthy young men in enforced idleness, we took up their request to organise a cricket tournament between all the cricket clubs of the 23 'kuppams' (fishing communities) which Auroville is working with. The elders promised that they would maintain law and order.

Alas, when it looked like Thanthirayankuppam would win against Nadakuppam (and the game was being played in Nadakuppam) the youth and even the grown-ups couldn't control their emotions, and a brawl broke out. The game had to be called off, the tournament was stopped, and the elders felt embarrassed and disgraced.

Thanthirayankuppam leaders even drew up plans and an estimate to build a big wall between the two communities.

But it didn't end there. When Moris, the Coordinator of Village Action, went to discuss this with the elders it came out that they'd been feuding for years, and wanted to take the opportunity of Auroville's presence to settle it. Several preliminary meetings had to be held, and several postponements occurred, but eventually the elders of both villages, together with the respected elders of the other villages as well, met. They brought up stories from 10 years ago, they screamed and shouted.

Moris was afraid the Kuilapalayam villagers, in whose Cultural Centre the meeting was being held, might come and protest, adding to the fire, but they didn't. And finally, they agreed to bury the hatchet, give up their old resentments, and carry on freshly. It was wonderful to see the handshake between the two leaders, the sense of relief as if a great burden were being removed from their shoulders, and to see immediately the young men slapping each other on the back and talking animatedly together.

A few days later, the headman of Chinnamudiarchavadi Kuppam told Moris, "This is really by far the most valuable thing you have given us, it's worth more than all the food and boats and houses." We think so too, and feel that the mutual recognition of this is a tiny step toward Human Unity which is our Aurovilian goal.



Ganesh the cricketer

## REFLECTION

### Confessions of a TVS Addict [Uncensored]

It wasn't easy. Believe me. When I first arrived in Auroville I bought a TVS, albeit 16 years old, but still it was my pride and joy. Zooming along those red earth roads with the wind in my hair and that feeling of great power between my legs. I felt truly free! But the feeling didn't last long. Something was wrong. I had started to realize that maybe I was not as free as I first thought. After a number of punctures and repairs and a fair amount of money spent on petrol I was in doubt. After a couple of people I knew had unfortunate accidents on their bikes I really did begin to wonder. After three months here I realized that I had not used my legs to walk except to the bathroom or around Pour Tous. And the more I rode my TVS the more mechanical I started to feel. I started doing things that I would never have dreamt of doing before I

came to Auroville. I started dreaming of mandates, policies and rules to order my life. I even started to master plan my own garden with my new and inflated sense of power and control.

I wondered could this evolution, this progress in my mobility actually be affecting my mind in some way? Beginning to sense the walkers', cyclers' and The Royal Expressers' (the Royal Express is an electric three-wheeler public transport vehicle driven by Nikolai eds.) sense of peace before I passed them by with a tornado of dust, my doubts grew even greater. Finally I could take it no more. I had to do something about it. Somewhere deep down I felt guilt and I just knew that this could be the cause of my lack of peace. Maybe I had fallen out of sync with what the divine required of me in Auroville? It was when I tried to actually change

my life that I realized I had become a TVS addict.

I started with a bicycle. I felt stupid at first. Somehow unfashionable, a rebel just like those scruff necks that organized Earth Day! What will those Aurovilians think of me now? Will the Entry Group allow me to stay here? It took courage and certitude and I wasn't sure if I was going to make it. But step by step I started to use my legs again. And as my left leg moved around in unison with my right leg I felt as if a divine union was also at work in my mind. A sense of calm and peace descended over me every time I went out on my bicycle. I realized that cycling is yoga! I felt truly self-empowered and no longer a slave to consumer advertising. The rest is history and these days you can see me walking, cycling and, Royal Expressing all over Auroville.

Nikolai

Kicking the habit: Nikolai on a cycle



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