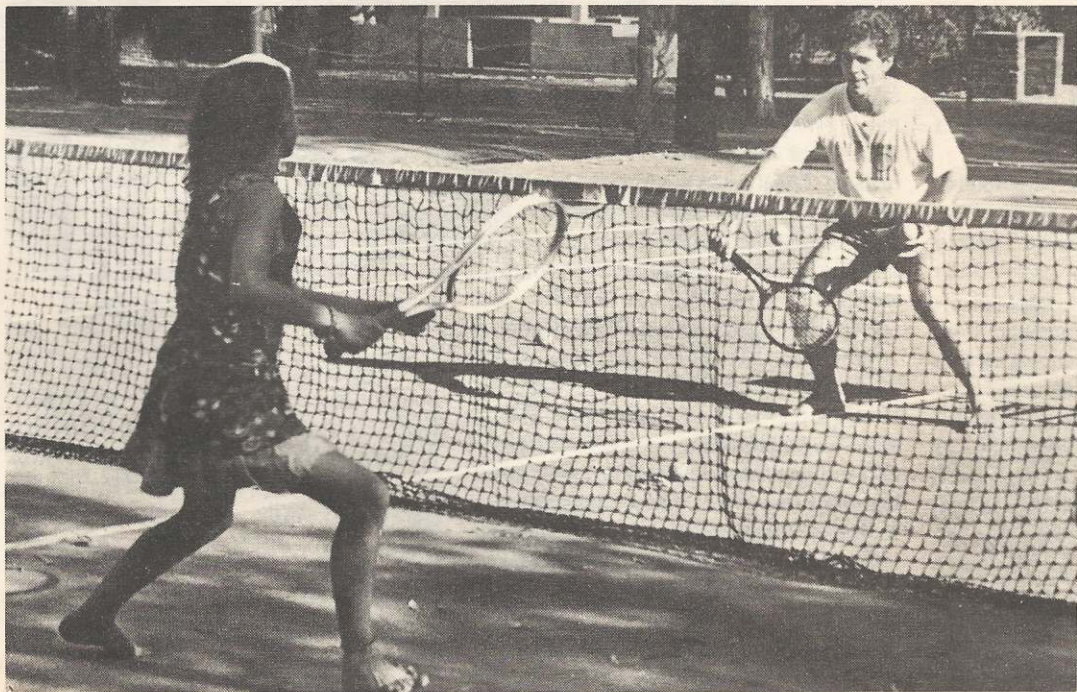


# AUROVILLE TODAY

May 1993, Number Fifty-Two



## Sports in Auroville

In this May issue we give a brief overview of news events, and take a look at the Aurogreen community. Talking with Yves, one of the sports coordinators, we put a first foot on the sports grounds and explore physical education as a feature of Auroville life.

Photos: John Mandeen

## The Mother on Physical Education

We have been given a body not to reject it but to make it into something better. And that is precisely one of the goals of Auroville. The human body must be improved, perfected, and it must become a superhuman body capable of expressing a higher being than man. And this certainly cannot happen if we neglect it. It is only by an enlightened physical culture and by using physical activities—the activities of the body—not for little personal needs and satisfactions, but for making the body more capable of expressing a higher beauty and consciousness. And for that, physical education has an important place...

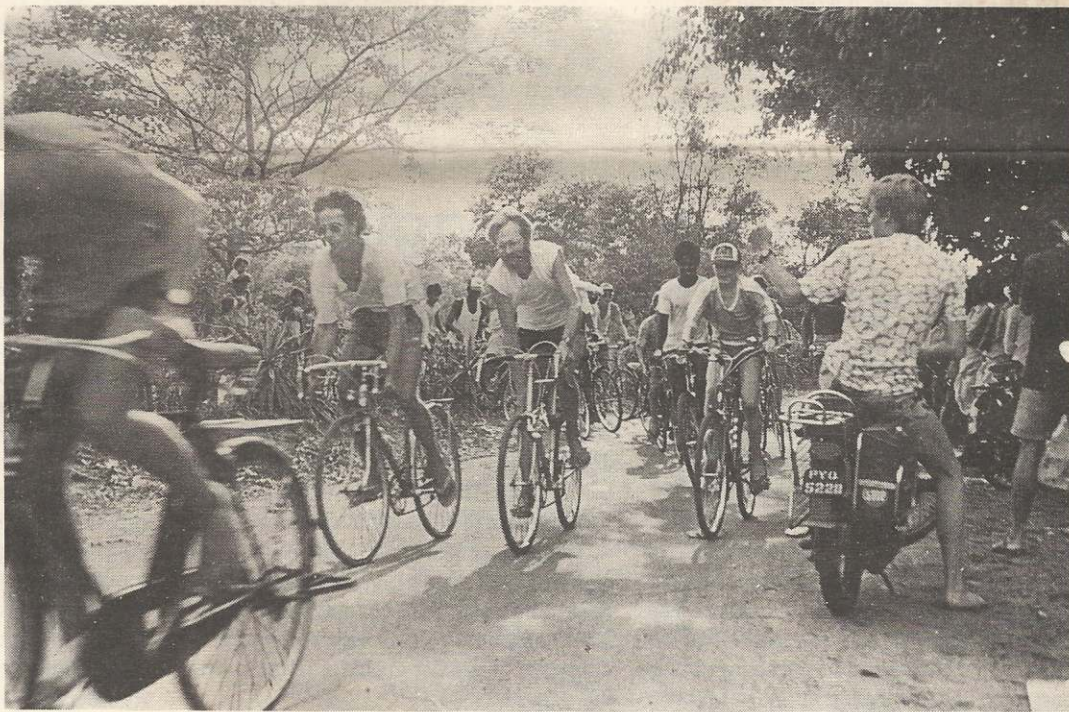
(The Mother, 2.6.1970)

Of all the domains of human consciousness, the physical is the one most completely governed by method, order, discipline, process. The lack of plasticity and receptivity in matter has to be replaced by a detailed organisation that is both precise and comprehensive. In its organisation, one must not forget the interdependence and interpenetration of all the domains of the being. However, even a mental or vital impulse, to express itself physically, must submit to an exact process. That is why all education of the body, if it is to be effective, must be rigorous and detailed, far sighted and methodical.

(Collected works of The Mother vol. 12 page 12)

Physical culture is the process of infusing consciousness into the cells of the body. One may or may not know it, but it is a fact.

(Collected works of The Mother vol. 10 page 29)





# The deeper necessity of sports

**A**ny afternoon. Four o'clock. Certitude sports grounds comes to life, and soon shouts and screams can be heard all over the place and beyond it. The majority are the high-pitched voices of the children; in between, sonorous men's and women's instructions can be heard. Over and above the din, one voice abounds: that of Yves, a professional Canadian tennis teacher who came to Auroville two years ago and has since been involved with the organisation of the Dehashakti\* sports programmes.

**REORGANISATION** When Yves came to Auroville, sports popularity had hit a low. It was widely felt by the teachers and pupils that the sports programme had become monotonous and that the children's discipline and commitment left much to be desired. Yves presented a proposal for improvement, leaving the students the choice to participate or not. However, once the commitment to participate was made, regular attendance was to be compulsory and failure to attend would result in dismissal from further participation. In order to prevent the boredom of doing the same things week after week and to keep the motivation high, Yves proposed to divide the sports programme into four flexible phases. During the first phase, ending with the Summer Olympics in August 1992, athletics and gymnastics would predominate. In the second and third phase the students would prepare for teams sports and individual sports, which would end with the Winter Aurolympics in December. The competition or league season was the fourth and concluding phase.

**RESULTS** How did it work? The results are mixed, writes Yves in his preliminary report (April 1993). During the first phase the participation was high, though many students found it difficult to attend all five school days of the week, which was compulsory for this phase. (The students were allowed to limit their attendance to three days a week only if they were involved with physical education activities elsewhere in Auroville during the other days, such as horse riding, karate, and dance.) Failure to attend fully meant that the student could not participate in the Summer Aurolympics; and failure to participate in the Summer Aurolympics would result in the discontinuation of sports for the remainder of the year.

After the Summer Olympics, participation slackened, and attempts to improve discipline increased. Excuses such as "I missed the bus", "I didn't feel like it" and "I don't like this sport or that teacher" were not accepted, and resulted in a dismissal from sports for some days. If students started to skip a particular activity, they were sent home and only allowed to participate again a week later in the same activity they had formerly missed. In case of frequent absenteeism, the students were not allowed to participate in the sports programme for the remainder of the year. Consequently, many children stopped attending afternoon sports during phases two and three. But after the Winter Aurolympics, many children were given—and took—again the chance to participate in phase four.

The creation of teams and leagues improved the awareness of team concept and spirit, and the motivation was stimulated by posting the league results on the notice board.

**DISCIPLINE** Why so much stress on discipline? "Well", says Yves, "you cannot train your body sufficiently by doing physical exercises just for a few hours a week. You can compare it to learning to play a musical instrument: a few hours a week simply won't do. You see, the true reason for physical exercise and sports has not yet been understood by the children and, I believe, also not by many adult Aurovilians. They consider sports still as a hobby, a game. And I believe that we, the teachers, have to improve in this area. We have to explain why Sri Aurobindo and Mother have given such an importance to sports, that it goes beyond the maintenance of health and fitness in the body and that physical culture is, as Mother said, nothing less than the process of infusing consciousness into the cells of the body. And for those who are ready for it, we should try to explain why this is necessary in the light of Sri Aurobindo's yoga and for the realisation of the aims that Sri Aurobindo has set. Many Aurovilians, perhaps due to their own education, still consider physical education as the least important of education. They lay stress on the development of the mind, and to a lesser extent, on the development of the emotional nature. The development of the body comes last."

Yves' report concludes that, overall, a marked improvement in regularity and discipline was noticed. But lots has still to be done. Says Yves: "There are a number of fresh objectives now. First we have to explain the deeper necessity of sports. Then we would like to find out why so many more



Yves at Certitude sports grounds.

Tamil children than Western children participated in sports this year, and why so many teenagers did not attend. We also would like to create a more organized programme, with the aims clearly spelled out, and involve the students more in the organization. Ideally, we would like to see a general sports programme as an integral part of each Auroville school, and the Certitude Sports as a specialised programme for those who really want to develop their bodies further. There is progress, but it goes slowly.

Carel

\*Dehashakti (Sanskrit): the full power and perfection of the body.

## ECONOMY

**I**n the months of March and April two seminars on Auroville's economy took place, both of which may be classified as failures.

The first seminar was called by the Economy Task Group, the working group that represents Auroville's practical attempt to realize a centralised, shared economy. (See box)

It brought two problems to the attention of the community. The first problem was the stagnation of the collective income. The Economy Task Group observed that the monthly collective income had grown in the past three and a half years from Rs 1,00,000 to Rs 5,50,000. But in this period, it had become necessary to create many more services. This, together with an average inflation of 15% a year had increased the expenditure. At the same time, the income needed to maintain Auroville's infrastructure at its present level was not increasing. Consequently, it was no longer possible to expand existing services or to create new collective services.

Secondly, it asked the community if Auroville should continue to increase the personal 'maintenance' (see box) of Aurovilians, or whether the needs of the Aurovilians should be met in kind. To continue increasing the amount for personal maintenance encourages an economy that is the same as anywhere else in the world. In order to change this, and to grow more towards the realization of Mother's dream, it would seem necessary to increasingly offer goods and services, rather than cash. Proposals were made to start subsidizing collective kitchens; to stimulate collective transport; to study the possibility of collec-

## Struggling...

tive payment of electricity bills and of starting a Solar Fund, from which contributions to the purchase of new batteries could be made.

The Economy Task group invited the Aurovilians to an open discussion on the development of the central economy and the proposals. However, the response was lukewarm. In the first seminar, not more than 40 people attended; a follow-up meeting was attended by 11 persons, and a second seminar drew only 16 people. Notably absent were most executives of Auroville's commercial units as well as those in charge of the collective services.

Consequently, not much came out, and the Economy Task group was left to struggle in the old grooves. One point of light, however, may have penetrated; it became apparent that a comprehensive Auroville Budget might be necessary, one which would include Auroville's development needs as well as its maintenance needs. Development is defined as what the community needs in order to grow. Maintenance is defined as what the community needs in order to maintain its present infrastructure at the same level. The newly created Finance and Assets Management Committee has been invited to come up with an all-Auroville budget.

Carel

## AUROVILLE'S CENTRAL ECONOMY

### How does it work?

**I**n most places in the world, people earn an income in order to meet their living expenses. In Auroville, the ideal is to have an economy which is not based on the exchange of money within the community. At present, 'maintenance' is provided by the working group or unit where the Aurovilian works, in the form of a monthly amount of money which is sufficient to bear the costs of food, clothing, electricity, telephone, fuel for transport and minor house repairs. Auroville endeavours to provide, apart from these maintenances, a number of free or subsidized services. This means that the Aurovilians pay a limited amount for a service, or do not pay at all. Pour Tous, for example, supplies food at prices lower than in nearby Pondicherry; other collective services, such as the solar, electrical and water services, do some work free of cost and other work at cost price. Health and dental care are free, and so is hair dressing and access to cultural activities. This is all possible because some or the totality of the overhead costs are borne by the Auroville collective. Apart from services which directly benefit

individuals, Auroville bears the costs of services which are of benefit to the community as a whole. Examples are the Secretariat, public works, social welfare, afforestation, environmental service, education and road repair.

The income to cover all these expenditures comes from various sources: The Rs 300 which each unit pays every month for each Aurovilian working in the unit; contributions from newcomers, Aurovilians and guests; donations from India and abroad; and contributions from Auroville's commercial units.

Auroville's Central Economy can at present only (partly) maintain the present infrastructure. The creation of new assets (for example building houses) can only be done by individuals or from donations. For that, a large number of grant proposals have been sent to funding organizations all over the world. One new development is that Auroville's commercial units increasingly wish to participate in development projects, apart from their support to Auroville's recurring expenses. In the past financial year, several units have made significant contributions to the construction of Matrimandir; now, one unit intends to contribute to housing for young Auroville adults and another unit is considering contributing towards an Olympic size swimming pool.

## To our patient subscribers

We are aware that, over the past few months, AUROVILLE TODAY has not been appearing as punctually as we would wish. We apologize for this delay, which is due to a combination of computer failures and some of our editors being weighed down by other responsibilities.

We will try to remedy this 'gear-slippage' in the coming months—though only a severely slimmed-down team will be holding the fort—and pen—during the summer.

The Editorial Team



♦ **The Auroville Visitors Centre**

The Auroville Visitors Centre (formerly known as the Information and Reception Centre) complex is now almost complete. The information office and exhibition hall, the boutique, cafeteria and video room (complete with newly-installed satellite dish) are fully operational—and powered by solar panels and twelve giant submarine batteries donated by the Indian Navy. Apart from serving as a much-needed centre of information and an appropriate technology demonstration site for visitors, the Centre is fast becoming a place where Aurovilians can gather socially on weekend evenings to enjoy food, music, the latest videos... and anyone who's still around.

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♦ **L'Avenir d'Auroville**

After several meetings over the past months between the Development Group and Aurofuture, a new organization of activities under the title *L'Avenir d'Auroville* (Auroville's Future) has been proposed.

In brief, the former organization of 'Aurofuture' has been disbanded and under the new organization, the architectural activities of Aurofuture will now be located at Auromodel Atelier. The functions of the **Development Group** will include defining priorities, fund-raising and allocating financial resources for Auroville's development. **Zonal Planning Groups** will focus upon solving planning problems in the Residential and Industrial Zones, and a **Research Group** will study options for the future transportation needs and roads of the future township. Finally, in cooperation with the concerned services and individuals, a **Planning Service** will concentrate on planning the general infrastructure of Auroville.

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♦ **Renaming 'The 'House of Mother's Agenda'**

For some years now, 'The House of Mother's Agenda', which is opposite the State Bank of India near Aspiration, has been providing a space and facilities for anybody wishing to learn about and explore Mother's *Agenda*. Recently, Dr. Mahendra Hamsa, who has been studying Mother's *Agenda* in the light of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* for over ten years, joined the coordination team, and it became evident to everybody that the time had come to unify the study of Mother's *Agenda* and Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* in one location. Consequently, 'The House of Mother's Agenda' is also known now as the 'Savitri Research Institute', and a programme of research upon the two works is being prepared.

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♦ **Bharat Natyam**

More recently, 'Pitanga' also hosted a beautiful Bharat Natyam dance performance by Saroja and another dancer from the academy where she has been studying. Saroja, who is an Aurovilian, was born in a local village, and has spent some years training in the prestigious Kalakshetra Dance Academy in Madras. This was her first solo performance.

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♦ **Newcomers Orientation Week**

Recently, a small group organized and ran the first orientation to Auroville course for newcomers. Elements included an introduction to the Integral Yoga and spiritual background of Auroville; a short history of the community; and presentations on landwork, the villages and community organization. The participants were enthusiastic, and have formed their own support group to continue

organizing activities for themselves. The second newcomers orientation week is planned for August.

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♦ **Auroville Basketball Tournament**

As part of Auroville's 25th Anniversary celebration, Auroville hosted an all-India basketball tournament in New Creation between the 23-25th April. The nineteen teams participating came from as far away as Madras and Coimbatore, and the play was of a standard not seen before in Auroville (the Auroville teams didn't make it to the final stages!). At the end of a very well organized tournament, the trophy finally went to the State Bank of India team from Madras.

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♦ **Pondicherry Garbage Dumping**

Since October, 1992, some of the Pondicherry garbage (which amounts to 25 tons a day) has been dumped in and around Auroville. This has had serious consequences for the health of the villagers and the Aurovilians (see AVT no.47 for more details). A group of Aurovilians have made proposals to the Pondicherry Government concerning how this garbage can be processed, under controlled conditions, into compost. The authorities have agreed to this, funds have been allocated... but to date nothing has been done by them, and the uncontrolled dumping continues.

Consequently, five Aurovilians filed a petition for an interim injunction with the Madras High Court to prevent the Pondicherry authorities from transporting, or allowing the transport of, Pondicherry garbage into Tamil Nadu. The High Court subsequently granted the interim injunction. We will keep our readers informed of further developments.

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♦ **Low-cost housing for the village**

The Auroville Building Centre (AV-BC) has just completed 20 low-cost houses for Harijans (the former outcastes) at Kottakarai Colony, near Auroville. At a cost of 18,000 rupees (\$600) per unit, the construction has been financed by the District Collector who inaugurated the houses on April 26th. The walls are made of Compressed Earth Blocks and the roof of ferrocement channels. The grant does not cover taps or electricity, but latrines will be installed soon. As the collector is very happy with the result, AV-BC has now been requested to build a school in the vicinity.

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♦ **The Collective Kitchen Project**

Some months ago, a project for a collective kitchen which would cater for all the present inhabitants was presented to the community. A site has now been allocated for the project—a central location within the Residential Zone—and some preliminary funding has been received from Aurovilians, friends and a Dutch foundation, Stichting de Zaaier. So things are about to happen.

On the 4th of July, the foundation for the water tank will be laid, at about 300 metres from the Centre Guest-house. In the first phase, a kitchen and a dining hall will be constructed. The kitchen will cook food for 1,000 people, (using steam produced by an experimental solar bowl) and the dining hall will initially accommodate up to 300 people. Later phases of the project include shifting the activities of 'Pour Tous', Prosperity, and the Free Store to the new complex, and creating a resource centre for food preparation/processing as well as a culinary laboratory to discover what Mother referred to as 'the food of tomorrow'.

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Cartoon: Laura Lombardi

**Underground Movements**

"It may be doubted whether there are many other animals which have played so important a part in the history of the world, as have these lowly organised creatures", said Charles Darwin about worms.

Auroville has, through CSR, received a grant from the MNES (the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources) to study vermiculture (breeding of earthworms) in biogas slurry. The objectives of the research include finding appropriate methods of adapting and processing the slurry for vermiculture and promoting the use of worms and 'vermicompost' in agriculture. With the grant, a laboratory will be set up in CSR to

do tests on soil composition, soil moisture and other related parameters. The scientific work will be done in collaboration with Professor Ismail, a zoologist and vermiculture specialist from Madras.

Another aspect is promotion of the nutritional value of earthworms. Not only do they work underground enriching the soil, but they are also a valuable source of protein, amino acids, vitamins and minerals for poultry, fish, and... even for humans! Edward Giordano, the Auroville project holder, claims he already has some good recipes for worms, and is interested to receive more. Bon appetit!

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**Violin workshop and concert**

Some weeks back, when the heat of summer was beginning to make itself felt, Holger, an Aurovilian violinist, created a pool of stillness and concentration in 'Pitanga'. He offered, on two consecutive days, an afternoon workshop on each of the Bach concertos for solo violin, followed by a

performance in the evening of the concertos, accompanied by Carel and Pushkar on two pianos. For many of us, it was the first time that we had begun to deeply appreciate the richness and complexity of these compositions—and we look forward to more of the same.

**Medicinal Plants**

Growing local medicinal plants which are on the verge of being extinct in parts of Tamil Nadu, is a project in which four Aurovilians will soon be involved. The site for the project will be the 'Shakti' plant nursery near Aspiration, where twenty-five acres of medicinal plants will be grown during the next four years.

Why this interest in almost extinct plant species? Local traditional doctors are no longer able to treat patients as the plants they use are not available anymore. So they also cannot pass on their knowledge, and slowly this ancient healing art is disappearing. In the coastal region of Tamil Nadu, where at least 100 species of medicinal plants were growing in the past, only one per cent of the original dry evergreen forest still exists.

The Indian "Foundation for Revitalization of Local Health Tradition" in connection with the Danish funding organization DANIDA appointed five NGO's (non governmental organizations) in each of the South Indian States (Tamil Nadu, Kerala and

Karnataka) to participate in this research. The 'Shakti' nursery in Auroville is one of the five NGO's in Tamil Nadu. Each research station will first of all have to find out where the original plants are still growing. They'll have to identify the plants, collect seeds and grow them in nurseries. Only then can they be planted on the 25 acres of designated land. As part of the project, the Auroville Green-work Resource Centre will set up a 'propagation station' for distribution of plants to villagers. They will also have a 'raw drug' (dried parts of the medicinal plants which are used as medicine) museum, and a demonstration garden. The villagers will then be instructed about the value and use of medicinal plants.

Walter, Tina and Agnes of 'Shakti' will be involved with the identification of plants, planting of the 25 acres of land, making of a herbarium, and finding out about the use of local medicinal plants in Ayurvedic medicine.

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# AUROVILLE TODAY

By Airmail  
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C.S.R. Office,  
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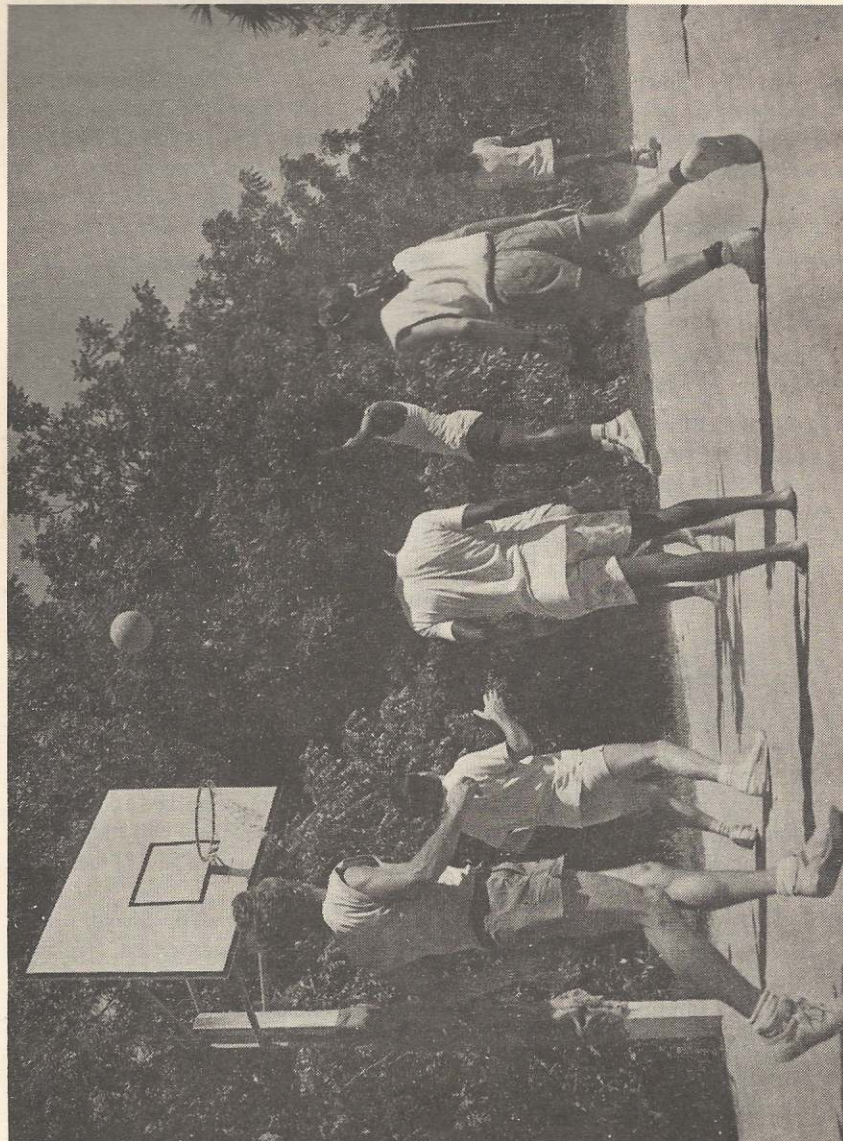


In this issue:  
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Exp. # 52

ANKE AND MICHAEL  
GRACE  
AUROVILLE

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## VERSIONS OF COMMUNITY: Aurogreen

According to the Auroville Information Directory, there are almost 80 different settlements in Auroville, also referred to as 'communities'. But what exactly do we mean by the word 'community'?

Over the next months, AUROVILLE TODAY will attempt to answer this question by visiting a number of settlements around Auroville, and trying to determine how their residents both define and live out their sense of what makes community.

'Aurogreen' is a large farm and dairy located—as its name suggests—in the Greenbelt. Charlie and Jürgen started work there in 1975, and for the first five years worked pretty much on their own—"because", says Charlie, "I wouldn't allow any Aurovilians to stay here if they were not prepared to work on the place. But after some time I realized that if I kept this up, nobody would come! So then I asked all potential residents to do at least some work on the place."

Today, there are eight 'Aurogreenies'—Charlie, Suzie, Bill, Tine, Anandi, Kumar, Sumadhi and tiny Nandini; three Americans, one German and four Tamils.

"I like it here", says Tine, "because we don't live so close to each other that we get on each other's nerves. While the sharing here is on a free-choice basis—nobody forces you to do anything—we actually share quite a lot. For example, every one feels some responsibility for the practical maintenance of the place—checking fences, repairing leaking taps etc.—and while it is rare for us to have community meetings, if there is a major problem, for example with the workers or in accommodating a new member, we all come together and help."

Tine spent the first seven years in 'Aurogreen' milking cows morning and night. Now she crosses Auroville each morning to work in 'Altec's' electronic workshop. In fact, of the present residents, only Charlie and Kumar work full-time on the place. Bill's experience of Auroville communities includes Matrimandir Camp and, more recently, Vérité. "Vérité is a much more structured community situation than here. While I enjoyed it, I think the situation here is more viable in the long run because we provide more space for people to explore what they have to work out in themselves. I feel comfortable here because the process is natural and unforced."

It sounds fine. But living as they do in separate houses and having different work, where is the glue that binds them together? "From the beginning", says Charlie, "I didn't want 'Aurogreen' to be a residential community where everybody lives separate lives. So my living space is actually a community house, storeroom and kitchen, and most of us come together and share at least one meal a day." Even here, there is no set organization. The cooking is done by whoever feels like it

on the day. ("I cooked the evening meal every night for ten years", Suzie remarks.)

Another practical binding element is the shared community account. Farm produce—with the exception of cheese—is provided free to the residents. But all other food and necessities can be purchased from a common 'Aurogreen' account to which everybody contributes equally, irrespective of how much or little they consume. (Residents also keep individual accounts for 'luxury' items.) "I decided some years ago", says Charlie, "that I didn't want to keep tracking down what individuals were consuming, because it destroys the whole community spirit. It's a little on the line of what Mother had intended for Auroville as a whole, even though the money exchange is still there."

This level of mutual trust is not easy to build. "At the beginning", admits Suzie, "it wasn't easy for me to be open to others joining the community. You see, the understanding was that we would always stand by each other in an emergency, and so as more people join, the risk of things not working out, and of the rest of us having to pick up the pieces, increases. We've had our difficulties, but for me it's been worth it. Just sharing a kitchen with different people from different cultures has forced me to look at my assumptions about how things should be done, and to widen myself to encompass other points of view. I haven't had to do this to the same depth anywhere else in Auroville. It's hard—but I wish the Auroville community as a whole would go for it more."

But how far can you successfully transpose elements from one community to another? "Each community is a unique grouping of people", points out Bill, "so it's dangerous to say that what we try here should be tried elsewhere."

Nevertheless, the key to the success of the Aurogreen version of community seems to lie in a balance struck between space for personal development and a commitment to the whole. "And you can't programme for this", says Bill. "I feel that as we grow as individuals, so other possibilities of community develop. It's an intuitive process through which we each find our place and play our part." Charlie makes a similar point. "Community is not just a matter of sharing on a physical level. It's also a feeling of connectedness to the place and to each other. I don't know how this is for the others, but for me this goes up and down all the time."

"To me", says Anandi, "community starts in day to day activities and ends up one day on a heart level." For one resident, at least, that day has arrived. Sumadhi, the wife of Kumar, was born in a Tamil village and joined Auroville recently. "In the village, my family is my relations. Here I have no relations—but everybody is my family."

Based on an interview by Alan (24.4.93)

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