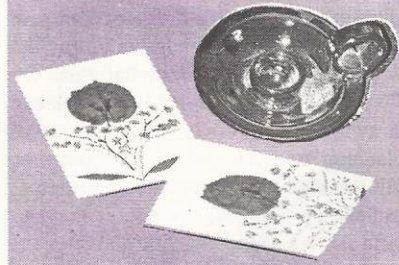


Auroville Today

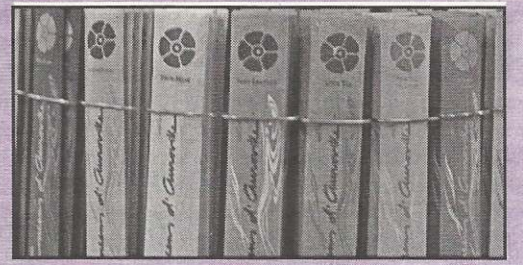
OCTOBER 2001, No.153



SPECIAL THEME: A changing economy

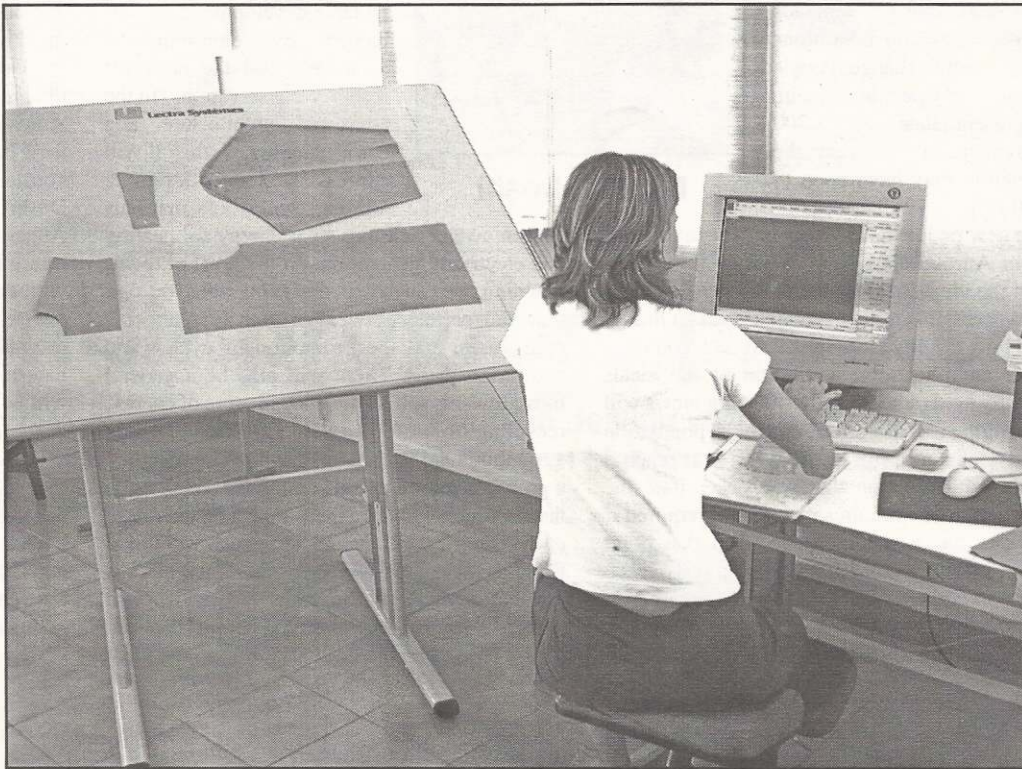
- Coping with change
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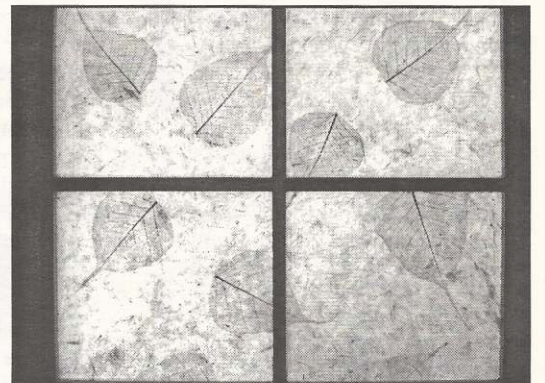
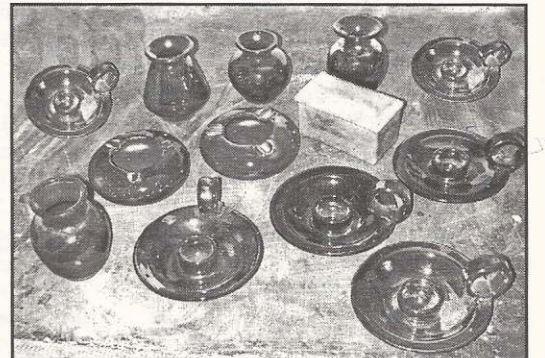


Globalisation and free trade have a tremendous impact upon the Asian economies and India. Auroville too, is being affected. Auroville's economy has many sources of income, but the profit contributions from Auroville's commercial units are critical to Auroville's maintenance and growth. Throughout the years, contributions from this source have increased to a substantial level and the global recession notwithstanding, Auroville's last financial year was good. The question today is whether this level can be sustained.

Entrepreneurs in the community differ on the dimensions of the changing economy and on the responses to be taken. However, there is consensus that it is getting increasingly demanding to be in business these days. In this issue of Auroville Today we highlight the problems that beset Auroville's commercial units and how they cope with the onslaught of change.



Coping with change: Filaure has introduced computer-aided design (CAD) technology for pattern-making; Mantra has embarked on new ceramic glazes, while Shradanjali has expanded into making screens with panels of leaves and flower arrangements.



Globalisation heralds uncertainty

About twenty years ago, the world of commerce and finance opened its ears to a new buzzword: globalisation, heralding an increasing integration of the world's economy. It also heralds uncertainty.

International trade liberalisation is the essence of the economic thinking of the World Trade Organisation WTO. Its aim is to make the national markets 'distortion free,' meaning improving market access for foreign products, and time-bound reduction in existing custom tariffs, export subsidies and domestic support, leading ultimately to free trade amongst the nations. The benefits and costs of globalisation are the subject of intense debates the world over.

Until 1991, India was one of the most heavily regulated economies in the world. In 1991, witnessing the rise of the Asian economic tigers through

their export-propelled growth policies and international market integration, India made a decisive shift towards a more open and liberal economy. It slowly liberated its markets, joined the World Trade Organisation in 1995 as one of its founding members and, though its economy is still considered as being isolated, has made significant advances in international integration. It pulled out most of the plugs on regulation and market protection, which had largely characterised its economy until then. While India profited as its industries gained access to foreign markets, foreign producers in turn gained access to India, competing with a previously protected industry. Thus, globalisation brought more to

India than just Kentucky Fried Chicken, Microsoft, branded luxury food products and foreign cars. It also ushered in, albeit stealthily, an era of changed and ever-changing trade and business models. Major Indian public sector undertakings, known for their inefficiency and bureaucracy, not to mention taxpayer support, were amongst the first to feel the crunch. Downsizing has become the dreaded word whose echoes today reach further and further into Indian corporate corridors. Smaller units too are not spared. Countless industries around the nation are either reporting sick or simply calling it a day.

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Coping with change

Auroville business can only meet the demands of the ever-changing market if new entrepreneurial skills are developed and a new type of business economy is actively promoted.

Asked to comment on the extent to which the forces of globalisation tend to affect the performance of Auroville's commercial units, Angad, of Mantra pottery, answers with two observations. "There is tremendous potential for India to make a bid for global markets along with other developing countries like China," says he. "With the developed world showing an increasing tendency to outsource the bulk of its manufacturing, there is scope for any player who is ready to respond appropriately. That, for us here in Auroville, is a wonderful opportunity to exploit. But we have also to deliver. And for this we should be prepared

to play by the newly evolving rules of the game." And, he adds, "The days of easy profits seem to be over." Valerie of Filaure and Prema of Auromode, both garment manufacturers, agree. It is no longer sufficient to have capital, resolve, ability and dreams. You now also need inventiveness at a dizzying pace together with financial and managerial flexibility to make the best bid to get the order.

These newly evolving rules of the market are governed by changing parameters. In the past, products resulting from a combination of quality and originality commanded a high price. Today, the customer of the new

global market demands the very best in quality for the lowest possible price. Intense competition, greater market awareness and more buying options have cumulatively engineered this change in buyers' attitudes. This pressure to provide high quality at competitive prices necessarily lowers profit margins.

To cope with these changes, new tools of production and management have to be embraced. Adaptation, however, is seldom a uni-dimensional affair. It demands a movement as a whole and not in parts. "If pricing is going to be offered as the competitive edge, then a complete overhaul and re-look at other related factors is nec-

essary too. This calls for critical management," declares Prema unequivocally. "Cheap labour, which is one of the main attractions for overseas buyers to cultivate producers in India, is no longer as cheap as it used to be. It is becoming increasingly a price-quality factor. In labour intensive manufacture, the need to uphold quality means that more qualified people are involved in the production line. We then need to either recruit capable staff or upgrade the skills of existing ones. These investments add to costs. It calls for very efficient management of resource and manpower."

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New mantra: "Think globally, act locally"

Mr. B.V. Doshi, one of India's foremost architects and town-planners, came to Auroville in the first week of September, combining his visit with a seminar on energy-conscious architecture in Pondicherry. In an impromptu meeting with members of the community in SAWCHU he offered his help in further designing the town.

Balkrishna Doshi is no stranger to Auroville. Already in the early 1970's, at the beginning of his career, he visited the raw desert where the city was to be built. "I remember how fascinated I was by the idea. When I visited Auroville for the second time, about 10 years ago, I saw the changes in the land brought about by the pioneers – a demonstration of what a few people can manifest with inspiration and dedication." This was his third visit, but, he says "I haven't come here as a town-planner to advise, but as an individual to see and learn. For you are not building an ordinary town. Building Auroville cannot be compared, for example, to restructuring the ancient city of Hyderabad in which my firm is involved. There the mandate is clear, and because the mandate is clear, the solutions are clear as well. But here, in essence, the ideal is the spiritualisation of matter. You talk about transforming the earth, about revealing something which is hidden within. How does one do that if not through groping and error and friction? How can a planner lay down a town structure that is bound to change due to the development of interior perspectives as much as to changing exterior circumstances?"

As was to be expected, the recently approved Auroville Master Plan was shown to Mr. Doshi and his views were being solicited. "This," said Doshi "should not be termed a Master Plan but a concept plan. And as with all concepts, you can be sure that the final outcome will be different. For you don't build a city in a few years. Even

Chandigarh, [the capital of the Indian states of Punjab and Haryana designed by the French architect Le Corbusier, eds] took 20 years to build and it has taken 50 years to become a nice city. And there, money was available aplenty.

Doshi went to some length to clarify his statement. "Over time ideas change, demands change, costs and conditions change, people change. People get older, new people come in. At present there are 1,700 Aurovilians, in a few years the population may have risen to 2,500 or more. What ideas do those new people have? How is their interpretation of Auroville's ideals? What do they know about the ideals held by the pioneers? Are these ideals accessible to them so that they can understand how the city has evolved so far? You must expect complications, a dilution of the ideals presently held rather than that existing views will be strengthened. Moreover, due to the population increase changes will come when you reach a certain critical mass: that will necessitate the introduction of structures that are not required if your city has a smaller scale. And that point might be reached more suddenly than you expect. For a continuing development, it is necessary to build the life around a community organization; around institutions that uphold the values and the



Mr. B.V. Doshi

culture of the community."

Another reason why the concept plan has to be seen as dynamic and evolving, rather than static, is the impetus for change that will come from changing outer circumstances which Doshi termed "global mega-trends". A major one is the present move towards sustainable development, accompanied by environmental awareness and the need for resource conservation. "In the areas of architecture and town-planning, this will express itself into designing buildings with roofs that harvest rainwater and trap solar energy for heating and electricity generation. At the level of town-planning, we can expect designing transport systems that use electric devices such as solar-powered buses, and the promotion of cycle- and pedestrian paths. There will also be a general move towards self-sufficiency in areas of energy, recycling of waste and some practice of urban agriculture and animal husbandry. There will be a growing volume of self-employed, small businesses which will have their impact on the future of the factories, offices and homes and will therefore affect the nature of the cities. Then there is the impact of the world wide web, which will allow designers to learn quickly from developments anywhere in the world and apply them

locally. Designers living in a different continent may offer solutions for problems in Auroville. The new mantra will be: think globally and act locally," says Doshi. And he predicts "You can expect a synthesis of vernacular principles of urban planning and modern global concerns, which will generate a townscape with a design of public gathering spaces and streets conducive to the specific socio-cultural and spiritual community of Auroville. And this may make Auroville and other such communities models demonstrating the way of the future."

Doshi's views about the Master Plan being dynamic and not static were questioned by Auroville architects who have experienced that their building plans are vetoed because they are considered to deviate from the Master Plan. Doshi explained that he would be meeting Roger Anger to have his perspectives, and that, at some future time, they might discuss the concept plan with the community together. "But you should realise that only a beginning of Auroville's manifestation has been made," replied Doshi. "Things have to develop from here, and a lot of discussion will be required to know what the best next steps will be. You shouldn't take the Master Plan as a cage, but as an instrument to build further on. It may take months for a common understanding to develop. Here my firm may be of assistance. We have been asked if we would be willing to help with the planning of Auroville, and I have answered that we would indeed like to participate in this interesting project."

Carel

Trafficking in Auroville

Hans Billinger, an experienced and reputed traffic consultant in Germany, proposes a traffic system for Auroville.

Last year, when Helmut of "Auroville Associated Architects" approached Mr. Billinger for help in designing a traffic system for Auroville, the latter was immediately drawn to the idea of a city that "boldly wants to spring towards future realisations." Consequently, in August this year, Mr. Billinger outlined a traffic concept for Auroville that is based on the objectives of the Master Plan and the existing traffic situation.

Pointing out the recent movement in town-planning in Europe to improve city life and environment, largely by reducing the number and the dominance of motorised traffic, Mr. Billinger proposes a similar concept for Auroville. He notes that "the proposed layout of Auroville is ideal to develop into a motor-free city" as one can walk across the city area, limited by the Outer Ring Road, in 36 minutes.

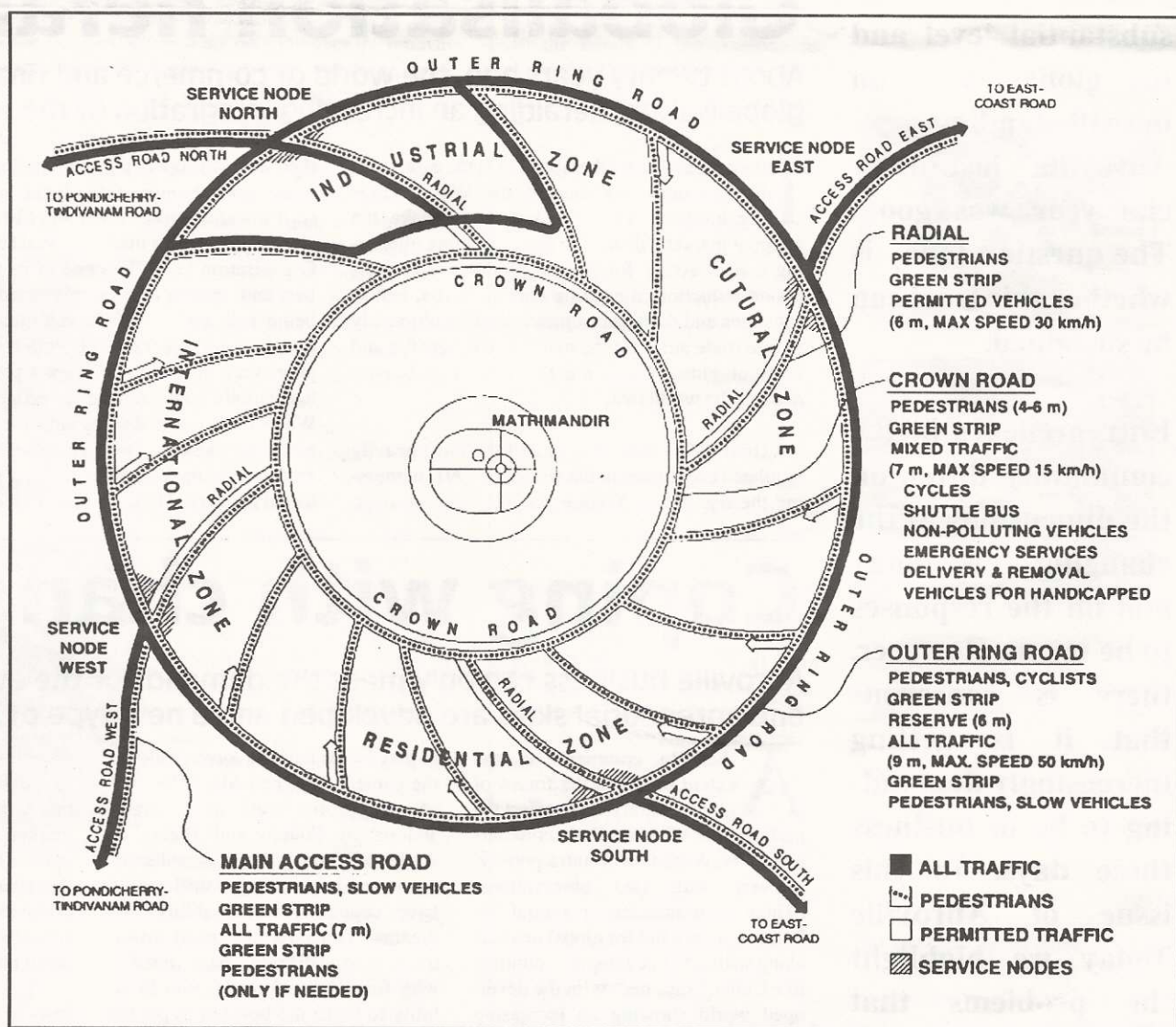
The biggest advantage of a motor-free city is that buildings can open right out onto the streets instead of turning away from them as there is no noise and pollution being caused by motorised vehicles. Quality urban spaces can thus be created where modern buildings, beautiful streets, green corridors and public squares interact with one another leading to a rich city life. Without the dominance of motorised vehicles, other traffic participants, such as pedestrians and cyclists, also get to enjoy the streets and its environs.

Mr. Billinger lays down a hierarchy of roads and access ways that gives priority to pedestrians, particularly in the inner city area, and shifts fast moving vehicular traffic to the periphery. The network of roads comprise two concentric circular main roads – the Crown Road and the Outer Ring road; four radial roads that join both these circular roads and connect to each of the four zones of the city; and four access roads leading out from the Outer Ring road.

The Crown Road is conceived as a circle around the centre of the city, the Peace Area, with a radius of about 700 m. The Crown Road will be divided by a line of big trees to form a 4-6 m wide inner promenade for pedestrians and a 7 m wide road on the outer side for non-motorised transport and a non-polluting shuttle bus service. Motorised traffic on the Crown road will be restricted to delivery, removal, emergencies and special cases and their speed will be limited to 15 km/h. To facilitate mobility, a shuttle-bus service with a frequency of 10 minutes is recommended to run on the Crown road.

The design and transport patterns of the radial roads will be similar to that of the Crown Road. Besides the four major radials, the only direct connections between Outer Ring Road and Crown will be pathways for pedestrians and cycles. The widths of these will be determined according to the local need and architectural design.

The Outer Ring Road, beyond which is the green belt comprising farms and forests, lies within 7 minutes walking distance of the Crown Road. The Outer Ring Road leads outward traffic via two main access roads in the west and south to the Pondicherry-Tindivanam Road, and via two in the east and north to the East Coast Road connecting Chennai and Pondicherry. The Outer Ring Road will be used by all types of vehicles. The main access roads will join the



Outer Ring Road via roundabouts.

Visitors arriving in Auroville will be received at four nodal points, located at the junctions of the main access roads and Outer Ring Road. These nodal points will offer necessary public amenities and serve as "transport mode exchange areas." Here visitors would park their vehicles and choose a non-polluting transport mode offered by Auroville such as a public bus, a rented cycle

or a horse-drawn carriage!

The traffic system thus proposed will be sufficient to meet the needs of the intended population of 50,000 inhabitants, but will need to be worked out in greater detail to be compatible with ground realities. Given the complete freedom that is currently enjoyed by motorised vehicles all through the city area, the proposal would have to be realised in small steps. And an efficient public

transport, such as a non-polluting shuttle bus service is an essential pre-condition for the proposal to work. Mr. Billinger however suggests that, to obtain practical experience, Auroville should start to experiment with motor-free zones. It remains to be seen if Auroville is ready to take this step towards the future.

Bindu

Minister dedicates solar bowl

On September 11th, 2001, the Minister of State for Non-conventional Energy Sources (MNES) Shri M. Kannappan dedicated the solar bowl of the Solar Kitchen. The function was attended by Dr E.V.R Shastri, other dignitaries and members of the Indian Press.



Right: Shri M. Kannappan, second from right: Dr E.V.R Shastri Adviser, MNES, left: Gilles.

HRD committee visits Auroville

A high powered committee appointed by the Union Minister of Human Resource Development, headed by Prof. G.C. Pande, visited Auroville from September 25th-28th to evaluate Auroville's Development proposal amounting to Rs. 129 crores (US \$ 28 million). At various places in Auroville such as SAWCHU, the Pavilion for Tibetan Culture, the Centre for Indian Culture, the Savitri Bhavan, Super School and Transition School, the varieties of the Auroville activities were shown to the members of the visiting committee. The Committee also held discussions with the Chairman of the Auroville Foundation and the Management Committee of SAIIR in order to arrive at an appropriate recommendation for the consideration of the Government of India.



From left to right: Deepti, Prof. G.C. Pande, Mr. P.K. Gupta, Dr. Kireet Joshi, Mr. Srinivasamurthy, Lola, Dr. Khashyap (looking sideways), Alain Bernard, Claude and Dr. Venkatasubramanian, on their way to the exhibition at Transition school campus.

MATRIMANDIR

Matrimandir progress problems

After the Governing Board laid down the correct procedure in dealing with the internal matters of the community, the Working Committee called for a General Meeting on the topic of the Progress of Work at Matrimandir, which took place on September 24th.

In the meeting of the Governing Board held in Auroville in January 2001, board-member and architect Roger Anger had stated that the progress report submitted by the Matrimandir Co-ordination Group was not accurate. The Board then asked Roger to submit a report of his own. This report was discussed in the next meeting of the Board held on September 15th - 16th together with the progress report of the Matrimandir Co-ordination Group submitted for that meeting.

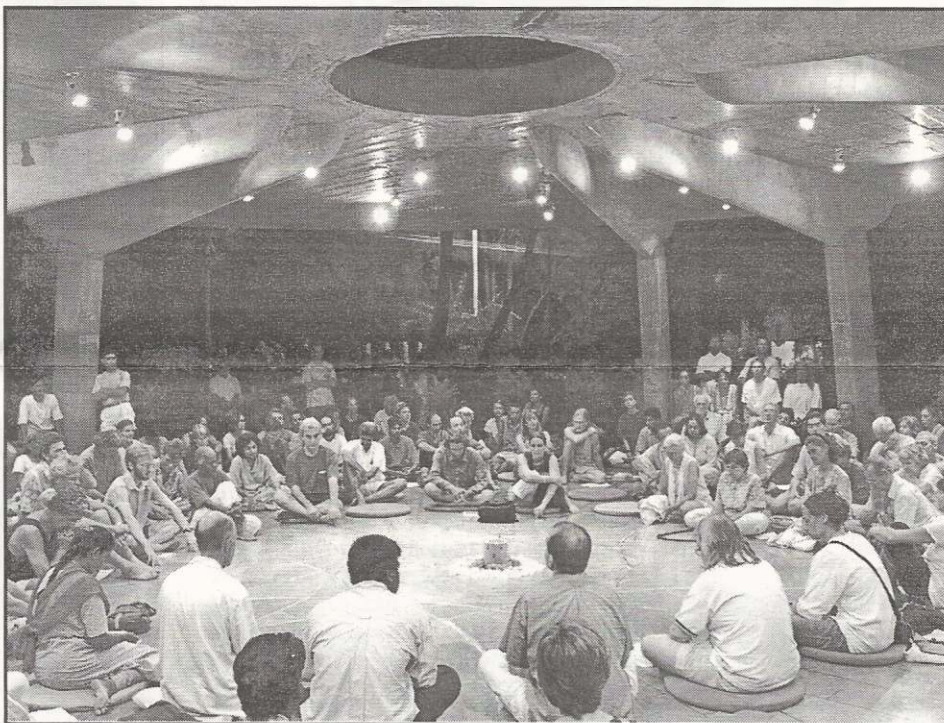
Governing Board considerations

A suggestion was made that the Board should invite the members of the Matrimandir Co-ordination Group and also a number of Aurovilians who had stopped working at Matrimandir recently. This suggestion was not favoured on the whole. The Chairman referred to two sections of the Auroville Foundation Act 1988 to explain what should be the correct procedure. Section 17, which deals with the powers and functions of the Governing Board, states that the Governing Board shall promote the ideals of Auroville and co-ordinate activities and services of Auroville in consultation with the Resident's Assembly for the purposes of cohesion and integration of Auroville (emphasis added). Section 21, dealing with the role of the Auroville International Advisory Council, mentions that the Council will endeavour to secure that the residents of Auroville are allowed freedom to grow and develop activities and institutions for the fulfilment of the aspirations and programmes

envisaged in the Charter of Auroville (emphasis added). These sections emphasise the freedom which is given to the residents of Auroville by the Foundation Act. The Board then agreed that at no time the residents of Auroville should feel that their freedom is infringed or abridged by the intervention, decision or action of the Governing Board. Consequently, the Governing Board directed that the letter and the report be sent to the Working Committee so that they could be considered by the Residents' Assembly as expeditiously as possible. The Working Committee thereafter decided to call, on three days' notice, a General Meeting which was attended by about 200 Aurovilians. The report of the Matrimandir Co-ordination group as well as the letter from Roger Anger were circulated prior to the meeting.

The meeting progress

Roger Anger's letter stated that there has been insufficient progress at Matrimandir. He proposed to reorganise the construction work by creating separate working groups, each



General meeting held at SAWCHU on September 24th.

headed by a person qualified in the respective field, and to abolish the present system where a small group of people is empowered to decide on all aspects of construction, decoration and fitting out "in view of their lack of competence and qualifications." He described the present situation as de-motivating.

The Matrimandir Coordination Group responded to this letter in the meeting. Acknowledging that difference of opinion on design aspects of the Matrimandir and its gardens had blocked positive cooperation, the MCG invited the Aurovilians to make a community decision on the issues under dispute. It said that Roger Anger is not properly oriented toward the importance of the gardens as expressed by The Mother, and that the disagreement on this issue had also blocked the resolution of other issues. The Aurovilians who recently had stopped working at Matrimandir did not speak in the meeting.

Access problems

The majority of the Aurovilians who spoke afterwards did not address the proposals from either Roger or the Matrimandir Coordination Group, but instead shared different observations. Many felt that the Matrimandir is presently too much "controlled," Aurovilians being asked by guards to register their names at each visit, contrary to the

past when Matrimandir was open to any at all times. This control has led many Aurovilians to no longer visit Matrimandir. Others said this was but an excuse of the ego, and that security is absolutely necessary to prevent incidents. Aurovilians who objected to the increasing number of tourists visiting Matrimandir daily between 4 and 6 p.m. were reminded that "the Matrimandir doesn't belong to us Aurovilians, but to The Mother" who had laid down that the Matrimandir is for those who are serious and sincere. Consequently, some Aurovilians may not qualify to enter while some visitors and tourists do. Others observed that too few Aurovilians are participating in the construction work and that the community is not earmarking any of its funds or the Matrimandir. The Working Committee, which chaired the meeting, called for written input from all concerned Aurovilians proposing a course of action and announced that in two weeks time another meeting would be held.

It has been a long time since so many Aurovilians came together to discuss the development of Auroville's soul, and the meeting was high-energy positive. Nevertheless it does appear that only the beginning of a process has been made to lead all involved to a point of cohesion.

Jason & Carel

In brief

WTC prayers and condolences

Auroville offered its prayers for the victims and their families of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and those in the plane that crashed nearby Pittsburgh in a collective concentration on September 16th held at the SAWCHU Building, Bharat Nivas.

Governing Board meets

The bi-annual meeting of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation, held on September 15th and 16th, was attended by Dr. Kireet Joshi, Chairman, and the members Dr. Subash Khashyap, Ms. Jyothi Madhok, Mr. Roger Anger and Messrs C. Balakrishnan and D. Sudhakaran from the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Earthquake in Auroville

On September 25th at 8:26 p.m. Indian time an earthquake was felt in an area ranging from Chennai to Pondicherry. The epicentre was in the Bay of Bengal 25 miles off the coast of Auroville (11.95N 80.23E) at a depth of 10 km. The quake had a magnitude of 5.5 on the scale of Richter. No major casualties in the area have been reported.

Landslide in the offing

Auroville's land purchase department has changed its practice from buying plots of land piece by piece to proposing a premium rate provided landowners agree to sell their lands "in bulk". This has already resulted in the offer of 20 acres in the city area and about 45 acres in the Green Belt area. Positive though the "landslide" is, funds to purchase all lands are still lacking. For info e-mail: landfund@auroville.org.in

Project Co-ordination Group reports

The report of the Project Co-ordination Group for the financial year 2001-2002 showed that educational and housing projects were the primary beneficiaries of the grant of US\$ 69,325 from the American Foundation for World Education. In the same period, the Dutch Stichting de Zaaier contributed approximately US\$ 78,000 to fourteen different Auroville projects.

Appeal for help for housing

The Housing group has once again issued an appeal for financial support so that adequate houses can be built for Aurovilians without a proper house. For info e-mail: housing@auroville.org.in

Plaza cancelled

A project called 'The Plaza' consisting of a number of buildings around a city square next to the Solar Kitchen has been cancelled in view of the inability of the Plaza Group and the Solar Kitchen team to reach a harmonious co-operation.

Passings

Former Aurovillian Pierre Charles left his body in France on September 22nd. He was living in Dana.

Joe Spanier, a devoted friend of Auroville, passed away on September 26th in Boulder, Colorado, at the age of ninety.

Indira Gandhi: Government does not want to control Auroville

When the Auroville (Emergency Provisions) Ordinance 1980 was being prepared, Dr. Kireet Joshi, then education advisor of the Government of India, received an explicit directive from the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi: "The government of India does not want to control Auroville." She directed that provisions to this effect be laid down in the Ordinance. This directive was carried out by inserting a special provision guaranteeing the freedom of the Auroville residents to implement the ideals laid down in the Charter of Auroville. Her directive has also served as basis for the Auroville Foundation Act 1988, which was enacted four years after her assassination.

Coping with change

Continued from page 1

The adoption of new technologies is an important aspect of changing market contexts. "Computer Aided Design (CAD) is becoming more important to our work and is likely to become central to it in the years to come," reveals Valerie. "The market of the future is becoming very hard to pin-point. CAD could give us the leverage we need to make our manoeuvres in this ever-shifting scenario. With it Filare can seriously consider both product customisation, sampling collections, pattern-making and even design consultancy". In fact the new economy is being characterised more and more the world over by such auxiliary activities.

Harish Joshi of Imagination, a maker of handloom textile products, has discovered another way (albeit by accident) of adapting to these changing dynamics. His unit has been affected by a severe drop in business. Long-standing buyers have gone into mute mode and a few potential customers are driving very hard bargains because they have other and, possibly, cheaper options.

"I am forced to activate survival measures," he says. These include laying off surplus staff, delaying infrastructural expenditure, however vital, and developing a new product line – handmade soaps. The reasoning is simple. "This product has long-term demand, and is produced as cheaply as we can. Though the profit margins are low, they provide a steady turnover, which, in the end, is the life blood of a unit," declares Harish.

Innovation is another way to cope with changing markets. Mantra has been developing a new range of pottery products besides its regular line. This has given it access to new markets, even if only for a while, for both competition and copying are intense. "You have just that bit of head start before someone begins to cash in," laments Angad. Abha of Shradanjali,

Diversification and innovation, it would seem, are emerging constants in this new economic drama – unless one manages to hold some kind of product exclusivity, either by way of design or production technique. Prema seems to have just such a secret weapon in her arsenal. Auromode's hand-painted silk scarves, she points out with pride, are the only of its kind being made in India.



A mirror encircled by tiles, shown by Angad, is one of the many new products of Mantra.

Commercial units that wish to survive in this time of globalisation, then, will have to be very professional. "That," says Manou of the Auroville Board of Commerce (ABC) "is exactly what is lacking in many units." Along with that, most units – over 80% – are still very small in terms of capital outlay, turnover and profits. Almost as an aside, he adds "Our avowed spiritual aspirations keep getting in the way of seeing business in a positive light. Yet, business, if done in the right spirit, can be as much a part of one's spiritual path as any other activity."

Money is the forbidden word in our community. Yet it takes up much of our time and thinking. The continu-

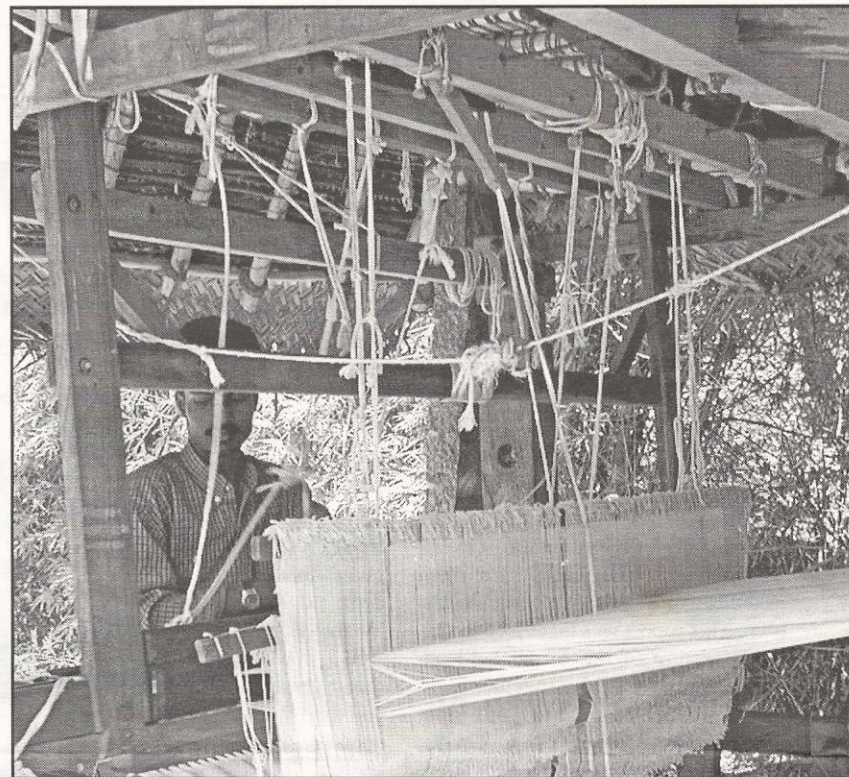
ness undertaking that was singular or outstanding in some way, good enough to run with the best. "It's time we ask ourselves why we do not attract top calibre entrepreneurs, those who are knowledgeable in emerging cutting edge fields and who can lead us to participate in the new global economy," iterates Ulli. "For this to happen we should take the pains to create the right climate for such a species to come to Auroville. A cli-

mate that is stimulating and supportive rather than one that is limited by its own confusion and absence of clarity. What we have now is essentially a cottage industry economy that by its very nature cannot meaningfully upgrade or upscale beyond a point. Such a production system represents a waning industrial type of economy. It is based on cheap unskilled labour and high running costs. As such it cannot hope to compete in the markets of the future beyond a specific level, no matter what trimming and pruning is done. Auroville has to resort to a new economy that is capable of taking advantage of the emerging info-economy and develop a system of wealth generation that is based on knowledge, expertise and leadership. What affects the world will affect us and the global trends and demands will dictate the way we do business eventually," says Ulli.

Manou believes that, apart from developing knowledge based industries, Auroville's future businesses should also focus on sectors like organic and chemical-free food production, traditional and natural health care products, appropriate building construction materials, non conventional energy systems and natural fabrics. In the service sector Auroville could provide consultancy in the fields of water conservation, afforestation and renewable energy systems. Another development may be the areas relating to culture and entertainment, which could turn into promising business propositions in the long run.

Mother spoke about Auroville as a self-sustaining township. Ultimately, all our business, whether targeting outside customers or providing for the city itself, should work towards this objective.

Tejas



Flower stationery is still a major part Shradanjali's turnover. Competition, however, is fierce.

a maker of floral stationery and decorative items, encounters the same problem, as does Guy of Radiance, a maker of lanterns and decorative crafts. However, he reveals yet another coping strategy. This is the targeting and cultivation of the niche market, which simply means developing exclusive products for an exclusive market. "The problem with this," he confides, "is that such niche markets are trend driven. Its exclusive value is subject to changing market trends."

ing attempts to spiritualise money-making have only resulted in a kind of materialistic myopia and collective hypocrisy. Perhaps we give money more attention than is needed. It is after all just a means to an end. And the more we have of this means, the better for all. Why can't we face this truth?

Ulli, the former manager of Shuttle, thinks this is true indeed. He goes on to point out that over the past years Auroville has had no new busi-

A call to help Auroville's economy

Friends and well-wishers in India and abroad are urgently invited to help the economy of Auroville. The Economy Group struggles to covers the budgets of Auroville's service units and to pay the monthly maintenances of more than 900 Aurovilians and children. The income of the Central Fund is stagnating while expenditure is on the increase.

The present moment is fraught with difficulties. Contributions from units are stagnating and even in several cases reducing, probably in part as a consequence of the gathering economic crises in the world; business income is becoming less instead of increasing as it has during the past few years. At the same time, the cost of living keeps rising and many Aurovilians find it more and more difficult to manage with limited resources. It is the same problem for a few essential services that depend substantially on the Central Fund, among which education suffers; we could only marginally increase the monthly amount of support due to insufficient income. When we look at the prospects for enlarging the resources available to the Central Fund, they are not particularly encouraging. And, we are concerned about being able to provide better for the needs of Aurovilians."

This message from the Economy Group appeared in the AVNews of September, together with the overview of the receipts and payments of Auroville's

Central Fund in the month of August. It showed that the total income of almost Rs. 40 lakhs (US\$ 85,000) is completely being used to pay for the running budgets of 40 service projects and units. More than Rs. 21 lakhs (US\$ 44,000) goes towards the monthly maintenance requirement of 630 Aurovilians and 275 children. On average an Aurovilian maintained by Auroville receives a monthly maintenance of Rs 3,300. This amount, according to the general consensus, is barely enough. But it is the maximum the community can presently afford. There are more and more people entering Auroville, and the number of people that need to be maintained by the community is increasing. Recently the Auroville schools asked for a budget increase, but the Economy Group could only give a token raise to cover inflation. The schools, meanwhile, have decided to go for their own fundraising. In the same AV News they too published a cry for help:

"There are more children being born (25 babies joined the pre-crèche) or arriving with the Newcomer parents. This implies a

need for more teachers, funds for running expenses, facilities to be developed, built, maintained...all the SAIER units are running on extremely tight budgets, which barely cover the daily requirements...there are not enough funds to care for buildings and equipment...the present monthly budget is Rs. 5,5 lakhs (US\$ 11,500) while the actual requirement is Rs. 6,8 lakhs (US\$ 14,250) which means that we are short of Rs. 1,3 lakh (US\$ 2,750) a month, or a foreseen deficit of Rs. 15,6 lakhs (US\$ 33,000) for the school year that has just started...we call on your solidarity: your contributions are needed."

Stagnating business income

The shortfall in the Central Fund income is partly due to a diminishing or stagnating income from the commercial units. The income from the commercial units' profit contributions, as shown in the August overview, was nearly 12,5 lakhs (US\$ 26,500), or 31 percent of the total income of the Central Fund. The commercial units are expected to

contribute one third of their profits unspecified to the Central Fund. The last financial year showed that most of the units have, in fact, given far more, there was an average of 58 percent profit contributions. But if the business units income goes down, it of course affects their profits and in turn the income of the Central Fund.

While the Funds and Assets Management Committee meanwhile has recognised the need to support and help business, the Economy Group struggles to maintain the status quo and cannot add new budgets. A re-prioritisation of the Central Fund expenditure is scheduled for October.

However, there is something that can be done right now. The Economy Group, a few years ago, requested all Aurovilians to put their individual resources, which were gaining low interest in current bank accounts, into their accounts with the Financial Service. Deposits from Aurovilians, deposits from project holders as well as from a few commercial units have created a corpus fund. A part of this corpus

fund is lent out to Auroville projects and to Auroville commercial units against interest; another part gains interest on medium or long term deposits with Indian banks. In the month of August, the Financial Service has been able to support the Central Fund with a contribution from these interest earnings of Rs. 7,5 lakhs (US\$ 15,000), "the highest contribution ever," writes the Economy Group. It appeals to all Aurovilians to help by depositing funds in Auroville's Financial Service. Auroville's friends and well-wishers in India and abroad are also invited to participate. They too can open an account with the Financial Service and deposit there some money they don't immediately need. The deposit will be returned whenever required. Meanwhile, the deposit would help to gain interest, which in turn will help Auroville to sustain itself in this difficult period. Those who can help are asked to email to economy@Auroville.org.in or write to the Economy Group, c/o Auroville Fund, Aspiration, Auroville 605101.

Globalisation heralds uncertainty

Continued from page 1

Cheap imports from an ever-intrusive Asian market, notably China, are blamed. The near collapse of the Unit Trust of India, arguably the country's oldest, strongest and most respected financial institution, mirrors the complex dynamics at play.

But globalisation has another impact as well. Traditionally, due to high labour costs, manufacturing is being farmed out from the developed to the developing world. While industrial production of goods and commodities still remains the primary economic activity in India, a burgeoning service sector is developing. Telephone operators in New Delhi now routinely answer calls from London enquiry, Dutch dictionaries are being typeset in Pondicherry, and the software export turnover of India's information technology industry has shown an exponential increase and has the potential, according to a McKinsey report released recently, to reach \$47 billion worth by 2010. There is a marked movement away from an industrial economy based on manufacturing and production towards one that is based on knowledge and information. This latter has been variously termed "post-industrial" and "the emerging new economy."

Technological preparedness then could very well decide the fate of future business



On September 30th a new shop opened at the Visitors Reception Centre. "Mira boutique" is an initiative of Auromics (garments and leather products), Filature (garments), Flame (pottery), Miniature (furniture and garments) and Shradanjali (stationary, lamps and folding screens). This photo was taken a few days before the opening.

in India. It has been pointed out by observers that it is precisely this up-grading that has made China such a successful and aggressive entrant to the world market. Visitors to China marvel at its near-flawless infrastructure in terms of transportation, telecommunications and related logistical support systems, built in such a short time. India, in comparison, has not been able to achieve even a third of this after a half century of independence. The Chinese have also comprehended the vital role of technological adaptation and proficiency and are sparing no expenditure in the creation and fostering of technical schools that can groom future workforces. This too is going to be the challenge for India. For how will India, which has not even been able to man-

date compulsory primary education as yet, ever catch up?

Globalisation has yet another uncontrollable consequence. Upswings or recessions in the economy of one part of the globe have their impact on other parts. In good times growth in one economy boost others. But when bad times hit, it sets off a chain reaction, where weakness in one economy augments weakness in its trading partners, resulting in massive shakeouts, mergers, layoffs and closures the world over.

At present the US economy is going through a time of recession, which has already caused Asian high-tech exporters of computer equipment to crash. The economy of Germany, Europe's largest, has also ground to a halt and there are signs that for

the first time in twenty years the world economy has experienced a quarter of negative growth. The International Monetary Fund recently downgraded its prediction for world growth this year to 2.8%, just above the 2.5% threshold for a global recession. And no-one can predict what effects the terrorists attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon will have on the economy in the USA, and consequently, on the rest of the world, leave alone how the world economy will develop if the US and its allies become engaged in a protracted military action. India's Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his finance minister have already issued statements warning of tough times ahead.

If there is one word that describes the new global economy, it is uncertainty. The changes underway seem to hold Tofflerian* overtones. There are many who think that the present disruptions in the economic world reflect deeper and more fundamental social shifts in perceptions and attitudes – if for better or for worse, only time will tell. And one is reminded of the prophetic words of The Mother written in 1956: "The age of capitalism and business is drawing to a close. But the age of communism too will pass." The age of communism has indeed passed. Does the attack on the World Trade Centre, the symbol of international capitalism, announce the passing of capitalism and business as we know it?

Tejas and Carel

* Alvin Toffler, the noted futurist and social historian predicted such economic and societal shifts in his seminal book "Future Shock", first published in the late 1970's, hinting that they may lead to a new world order.

From top to bottom:

Auromode's hand- painted silk scarves are the only of its kind being made in India.

A handloom at Imagination. It has become difficult to find a market for handloom textile products.

Packing insect-repellent sachets. Maroma's product diversification has been steady.

Imagination has diversified into hand-made soaps with a low profit margin but a steady turnover.

Wake up to an insecure environment!

There is an escalation of thefts in Auroville. At the same time there is an increase of violence in the surrounding villages.

The Auroville Horse Tournament 2001 drew hundreds of people, most of them for the show. Some visitors, however, had other interests. During the show four thefts took place in various communities in Auroville. "I have nothing against a horse-riding tournament, but there is a security issue in inviting public into the Auroville area," wrote a rather exasperated Paul Vincent. "Please have the next public event outside Auroville. There has been a steep increase in criminality and hard thefts in recent weeks, culminating from an average of one theft a month to nearly two thefts a day. There is something wrong here friends, it is high time to wake up to the new insecure environment we have allowed to develop. It is time we talk about it soon and do something before it is too late." Earlier, Paul had warned about the increase of incidents of bag snatching in day-time.

Paul Vincent is Auroville's 'Police liaison officer', a rather thankless and exhausting job which he took up once again after finishing his term in the Auroville Working Committee. Paul speaks Tamil, a job requirement. He is the man who is called at any odd hour of the day and night when a burglary has been discovered or when there has been a fight. He has the task to notify the police and he also is the first to suffer from a hot disappointment when once again all the work comes to naught. Says Paul: "The Auroville Police Station, which is located on the main road between Pondicherry and Tindivanam, is supposed to cover an area of 100 square kilometres, Auroville included. The staff used to be around 15 people, now there are hardly five policemen headed by an overworked Sub-Inspector. In the last one and a half months we had five or six major thefts, where crowbars were used to get into the



The understaffed Auroville police station located on the road between Pondicherry and Tindivanam, opposite Aurobrindavan.

houses and break-open the steel doors, windows and cupboards. Mostly electronic things were stolen. We reported the thefts to the police, finger prints have been taken, but what is done is less than what we would like."

"The violence started a few years ago, when the traditional *natams* of village elders were replaced by a *panchayat* of elected persons. In the village of Kuilapalayam violence between various groups of village youth has since become common. In May this year one person was killed, sometime later in an act of retaliation another person got killed. The police, meanwhile, have rounded up everybody involved and are investigating. So of course, the atmosphere in the village is highly disturbed. We have tried to get the parties around the table, but that effort has failed and only resulted in threats of violence issued to ourselves."

Violence in the village has unavoidably an impact on Auroville. Says Paul: "A few Tamil Aurovilians are indirectly involved, as they hail from the village and are closely connected to whatever happens to their

friends and family members there. Some of those involved are working in Auroville's units or private households. In one case, due to his close connection with his employee, an Aurovilian employer got suspect as well. Many western Aurovilians do

not know what is going on or are confused about the issue."

Paul puts the blame for the increase of thefts and violence on social and political developments in villages, part of which are a direct consequence of Auroville's growth. "The social fabric of the villages is changing: new people have come to live in the villages because they found employment in Auroville, while at the same time some educated youth are unemployed. Then there is the change brought due to the influence of television and cinema. And lastly there is the change brought by tourists, many of whom have easy money and exhibit dress styles that are foreign to the village culture. And of course, there is also the presence of wealth in Auroville and sometimes the improper exhibition of such by Aurovilians."

What solutions can be offered? "At the level of Auroville, an obvious step to take is to become more proactive and conscious about what is

going on. Concerning the thefts: we should give sufficient and timely information if we want the police to help us. Theft has to be reported within 48 hours for a proper police action to take place, but many people do not bother because they think it's just a headache which doesn't pay off. I agree that not much of what has recently been stolen has been returned, but if you don't take the trouble to make a police complaint, you can't expect them to look at the complete picture and to upgrade their police force so that something can be done. The non-action leaves the thieves a free hand to increase their activities." And regarding the violence? "There is no other option than to take the responsibility for our security into our own hands," says Paul. "We have to realise that we have wealth, and that our wealth attracts undesirable people. We have to study how to step up our security system."

Carel

Insecurity increase

A perspective from the village

While some Aurovilians put the blame for the increase of thefts and violence on happenings in the village, some people from the village put the blame squarely on Auroville itself. They believe that the escalation has a lot to do with Auroville not wanting to see its own problems and, in the rare case that it does see them, not putting its foot down when that is needed. The general complaint is that Auroville doesn't investigate into its problems and doesn't want to take corrective

measures. As a consequence, rumours abound, some of which may be far from the truth, but some also that may be correct. These rumours spread outwards. They give a bad name to Auroville and, on top of it, attract all kinds of undesirable people with questionable motives to come to live in the vicinity of Auroville. This again has a bad impact on its own youth and on the youth of the villages. Until such moment that Auroville accepts its responsibility to act against misbehaving Aurovil-

ians and gives an Auroville body the power to do so, there will be little trust in the villages.

Security is an issue that concerns villagers and Aurovilians alike. A joined effort would be ideal, but this implies a willingness from all parties involved to look into all aspects openly. If the villages and Auroville could consent to setting up a joined working group to deal with these issues, a positive step towards solving security problems could be made.

ENVIRONMENT

Neem oil can replace chemical pesticides

Recently India's national newspaper The Hindu and the magazines "Down to Earth" and India Today reported on the toxic effects of chemical pesticides in agriculture. Aurovilians too suffer from pesticide spraying. But they can effectively change their environment by giving a leaflet and a bottle of neem oil to their employees, argues Emilie.

Too many things are happening just too fast and this isn't even a new phenomenon anymore. The West is struggling with mad cows, genetically modified foods, the radioactive fallout from Chernobyl, pollution, the ozone hole, unfettered greed for profit, youthful serial killers, obesity, tobacco addiction, cancer, Aids, the list just goes on and on, and it is all accelerating and simultaneous. India too is going through an unprecedented acceleration at such a speed that it could derail with awful consequences. Can we do something, anything, a word, a gesture, so that things may improve?

In February 2001 two Indian magazines and a newspaper published special reports on the toxic effects of the chemical pesticides in the agriculture of Kerala. These pesticides (primarily Endosulfan) are sprayed by aircraft and affect the inhabitants of the villages, causing severe malformation of children and illness to adults. Thanks to the action of Sri Padre, a farmer and journalist, and Mohana Kumar YS, a doctor practising in the area, the villagers have become aware of what is happening to them and have started to protest. While Endosulfan has been banned for a long time in many countries, its use is still legal in India.

Auroville is also affected as an overwhelming quantity of pesticides (primarily Endosulfan) are manually sprayed on a large number of cashew fields that surround and are interspersed with the lands of the city and greenbelt areas. From early February onwards one can smell a very particular odour. It gives a burning sensation to the eyes, the



This cartoon by ex-Aurovilian Laura Lombardi illustrated the article "The true costs of cashews" in AV Today issue # 54 of July 1993. The situation has not changed since: villagers still spray pesticides using their bare hands, not wearing protective clothing and not covering their noses and mouths.

throats swell, bronchitis appears, as do coughs, fevers, muscular pains, unexplained fatigue, even bouts of depression, and all this in people who are not in direct contact with the products being sprayed. The immediate and long-term effects on those spraying the chemicals from open barrels or handling them with bare hands, will be much worse.

The battle against the use of chemical pesticides around Auroville goes back a long way.

This year Rita and Njal of Center Field, in co-operation with Boris and Village Action, have taken a different approach. Their strategy is based on establishing a direct line of communication with the cashew farmers, and on spreading relevant information in the villages in order to create an awareness of the noxious effects of the chemical pesticides. Rita and Njal not only distribute Tamil and English leaflets but also organise meetings with the villagers, always bearing in mind the advice of the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, Mr Bala Baskar: "Speak with the villagers, not to them." They also meet with many Auroville employees. The

experiences of the farmers as expressed in these meetings are disturbing. To name a few:

- After spraying, my body became dark, I had pain in the belly and felt I had lost half of my weight.
- I applied pesticide on my cow to kill lice. The cow died 4 hours after.
- I have seen dead snakes and squirrels in the sprayed topes.
- The incidence of suicide and death is very

high in my village, almost one every 16 days! Could the poison have something to do with it?

These examples show that the villagers through bitter experience realise that chemical pesticides are dangerous.

Is there an alternative? The question is often asked. In fact there is a traditional pesticide, which was almost forgotten in the drive towards modernisation. Neem oil, a product from the berries of the neem tree has been used as a pesticide since centuries. Neem oil has now been rediscovered – multinational companies, by the way, have applied for patents on neem oil as pesticides! – and is now promoted by the Departments of Agriculture of the states of Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu. These departments, for the last five years, are no longer encouraging the use of chemical products and are willing to support training workshops for farmers in the use of neem. Laboratories all over India are producing increasing quantities of neem pesticides and the pest-control distributing agency of Pondicherry is ready to offer interesting wholesale rates.

Is this a ray of hope in the miasma? Indeed it is! So why aren't things moving faster? Simply because two people are not enough to change established attitudes. But if all Aurovilians would put their energy behind the elimination of chemical pesticides by giving a leaflet and a bottle of neem oil to their employees and other villagers they know, they would effectively change the environment.

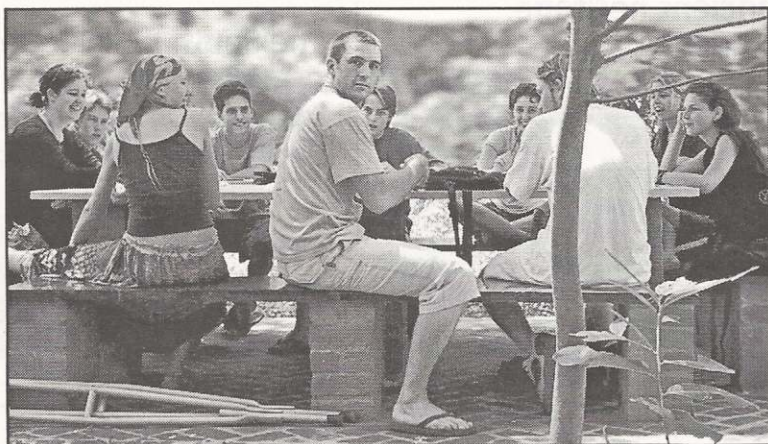
You are not expected to like it...

Jesse describes the intricacies of teaching English literature to CFL students

When Chali asked me over dinner one night if I would teach A-level (the highest high school level) literature to students of the Center for Further Learning (CFL), I really wanted to say no, but didn't. Already I was wading deeper into commitment upon commitment and had made a promise to myself to not take anything else on until I had more time. I broke that promise and resolved to just take it a step at a time. In the past I had taught drama to eighth-graders but that was all just fun and games. This was something serious: not only did I have to teach the students English literature, I had to teach myself.

At school, I was stupefied by Shakespeare, bored by Beckett and in agony from Austen. What could I possibly have to say to these new students? Thank god for theatre through which I had come to love Shakespeare, not for iambic pentameter and verse structure, but for truth and power and the beauty of speech. An actor himself, Shakespeare wrote for actors. Even 'non-performers' (a perception only) reading Shakespeare's heroes sound heroic and reading fools, sound foolish. The epic yawning power of speeches like Henry V's St Crispin's day rouse a small broken band of English soldiers to win an unwinnable battle against a French army ten times their number. The audience may as well be that weary group of soldiers, such is the power of the speech.

I spent hours on the Internet, now the world's greatest academic and



Jesse (turning towards the camera) teaching a class at CFL.

research resource trawling through university and school web-sites, copying essays here and articles there to give to the students. The study of English literature to anyone not predisposed by nature to it, makes great demands on the student. It is not meant to be enjoyed (despite the expressed hopes of the syllabus-setters), as stated on the official GCSE syllabus web-site which recommends students read each of their nine set texts four times: "you are not expected to like the texts, if you do, great..."

Auroville students whether through Auroville's relative abdication of educational authority, or their panic that they'll never get an education, take a great deal of responsibility for themselves. Like students anywhere, they'd rather not write an essay on Aphra Behn's female characters in *The Rover*,

but when given the freedom to do it or no, they generally choose to do it. The teacher acts not as thug but organiser, stimulator and resource-provider, giving students the choice to participate or not, and in the CFL experience, they participate enthusiastically. Otherwise there's no point, because at the end of the day it's the ultimate meta-lesson: you only learn the things you teach yourself, and this they teach themselves in CFL English literature. The teacher only exists symbolically, as a reminder of their desire to expand their knowledge and their fear of ignorance.

As organiser the teacher in Auroville has the goldmine of community to draw from. When during the study of relatively unknown *The Rover* (by the world's first professional woman writer in English, Aphra Behn) upon discovery no video of the produc-

tion existed in the City of Dawn, we decided to stage a reading. The plan was anyone from the community who wanted to read a part would get up on stage with scripts in hand and we'd go through the play with the students if not reading, then at least watching. On the night a small audience of the students and some other theatre-lovers turned out to hear the reading. On stage it was heavy going, in failing light we struggled to get through the 17th-century English and make it entertaining, but it was an uphill battle. We'd dragged ourselves only halfway through the play by 10pm and it looked as if we'd be there until tomorrow when one of the performers said to me: "Hey, ah, you know we have no audience left?" I looked up from the script to see empty seats. Everyone has quietly slipped away whilst we were heads down in the text. "Thank god!" I said in relief. "Let's go home."

The reading aside, so far I've had a pretty good time: Together we've watched movies about restoration drama (now I know what the restoration is) and seen Mel Gibson wrestle with Hamlet. The 45-minute classes whizz by as if they were 30-second shouting matches: "Hamlet is NOT a misogynist!", "He is SO! Just look at Act III, Scene I, you're blind or what?" and above all a collection of fiery nimble minds inhabit the room so powerfully, I sometimes think I could just leave, but I've never wanted to. All thanks to Chali for inviting me to dinner that night.

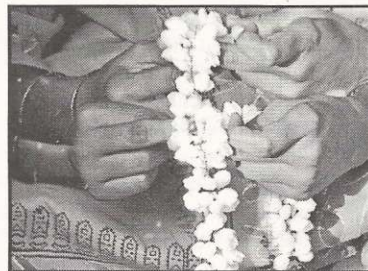
"A day in the life of Auroville"

Auroville has a series of artist-in-residence programs run by friends of Auroville, Dimitri and Emilie, that invite professionals to visit Auroville and teach. Dinh Thi Tien, a French photographer and director of video clips, came to host a 10-day intensive workshop on how films are made.

The workshop separated into three groups, each given the task to produce a short video. From the moment Dimitri announced a public screening of the finished product, an unspoken atmosphere of competition emerged, each group struggling to produce the best short (three to ten minute) video in their separate category – comic, aesthetic or documentary. Dinh taught each group how to use the equipment and offered suggestions on the structure of the work. Other on-call expertise was supplied by Aurovilian and former French television professional Basil and visiting artists cum professional video-maker Olivier. Basil, Dinh, Olivier and Dimitri loaned their cameras, computers and other equipment. Consequently, each group had its own television monitor, high-end computer, cameras and on-call expert. There were no excuses, the pressure was on to do something good.

I worked with the group producing a documentary-style video. Our brief was to work with a music soundtrack, use no dialogue 'and feel free to do whatever you want.' We chose the Solar Kitchen as our subject and drew up a list of shots. Over the next two days we shot as people chopped, carried, cooked, tasted and ate food in the solar kitchen. Next we moved to the editing studio, a large, well-ventilated room set up in the top floor of the Aurelec building. There we began the confronting task of reducing more than three hours of video down to three minutes. The night for the big screening loomed ever closer. What began as a ten-day afternoon workshop, became a two-week, eight-hour-a-day marathon.

We quickly finished our first edit, an accurate chronological reflection of food preparation in the Kitchen. It was boring as hell. Dinh suggested we start again and ignore the real order of



Right: Preparing a garland for a kolam at the Solar Kitchen – two hands multiply in four. Left: Two eyes plus one make the third eye? Village boys from Kullyapalayam.



events, "what you did was obvious," he said "now surprise your audience."

We started again, placing images of yellow bananas beside bright blue plastic crates, women sitting in morning puja beside trucks arriving and cutting in close-up panning shots of sun-speckled marble bench-tops. It was beautiful, but made no sense. "We have no idea of where it is," said Dimitri, "you should convey that it is

an international kitchen".

Once again we embarked upon a digital journey, attempting to frame the work in space, give an idea of the people and the place. We returned to the Kitchen and took long panoramas of the entire building from the outside, we took more shots of people eating and increased our one-hour tapes from three to six. The work had become massive and our deadline imminent. We had long since moved out of Aurelec and begun to work in Dimitri's home.

In the end, the three of our group huddled around Dinh as he rushed through our video on the day it was due to be shown, making last-minute changes. Despite his work, the result was disappointing when compared to the other two movies, which hung beautifully on simple, well-executed ideas.

Aside from introducing us to video-making techniques, equipment and realities, the experience taught us a valuable lesson: find a good idea and stick to it. The things you learn the best are often the most painful. As evidence, the workshop left me with this: a burning desire to do it all again, only much, much better.

Jesse

"The sparkling one"

Dinh showed up with an impressive amount of equipment: a portable computer, movie cameras, still cameras and this seemed just natural. His was a quiet presence that nonetheless made others feel as bubbly as an alka seltzer. Our residence filled up with high tech equipment and we found ourselves caught up in a maelstrom of creative energy instilled with sweetness. Not once was he without a camera. He talked little and discretely took a great quantity of shots that he then would transfer onto his computer till late into the night. His tremendous energy also found expression in other ways: the day after his arrival he expressed the wish to partici-

pate in an intensive Tai Chi course organised by Marco in Sharnga, which meant getting up at five o'clock every morning. One evening he cooked a Vietnamese meal, proving that he is an artist in everything he puts his mind to, passionate about everything he does. Dinh originates from Pondicherry, but there is also Vietnamese, French and Burmese blood in his veins.

At the time we didn't ask him to share his impressions of Auroville and India with us, but upon his return he sent us an email from Paris saying "It is



only now that I realise that I was in a hypnotic state while in Auroville and it is with great happiness that I rediscover these days the many memories and images of my stay and I realise that I haven't left Auroville untouched."

One day he told us "A month is far too short!" I've the feeling that we will be seeing him soon again, his eyes filled with laughter with his equipment on his back. As an offering to Auroville Dinh plans to create six photos that best capture and convey his stay.

Emilie

In brief

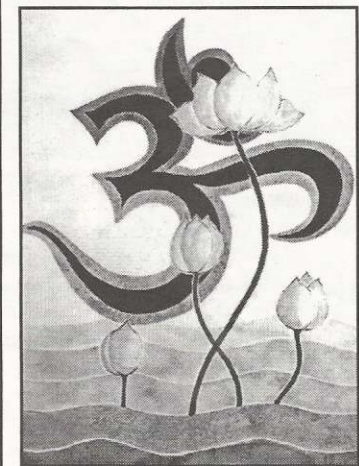
Early Ashram Life

Many Aurovilians visited the photo exhibition of the early life in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram (period 1920-1930) in the newly renovated Sri Aurobindo Ashram exhibition hall. It was a beautiful experience indeed.

Remembering The Mother

The eighth 'Remembering the Mother' gathering at Vérité was graced by a special atmosphere "as if Mother was with us" in the words of the organisers.

Painting exhibition



"The silent dance of universal lotus" was the theme of an exhibition of paintings by the Korean born Aurovilian Sarasija in Pitanga. Many of the mostly black and white paintings showed the integration of the lotus with the symbol Om or with the symbols of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

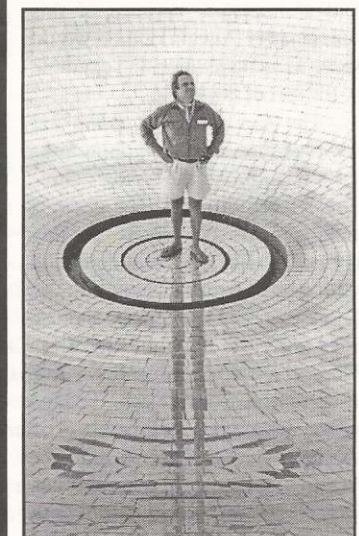
Meditations on Savitri

Savitri Bhavan has received all the 465 "Meditations on Savitri" paintings made by Huta under Mother's guidance from 1961 to 1966. The materials will only be used in accordance with Mother's instructions, and may not be used for photography or video-filming or reproduced in any way. In the design of the Savitri Bhavan complex a space has been provided for an art gallery where all these paintings can be kept on permanent display. For the time being they will be kept in safe storage.

Auroville Chess Tournament

More than 50 Aurovilians participated in the Auroville Chess Tournament which was held over five days in the Solar Kitchen. The final was a Russian-Indian affair, with Sanskrit scholar Vladimir emerging as winner.

Photo exhibition



A photo exhibition by the German photographer David Klammer was held in Savitri Bhavan. In picture: Gilles inside the Solar Bowl of the Solar Kitchen.

Basketball

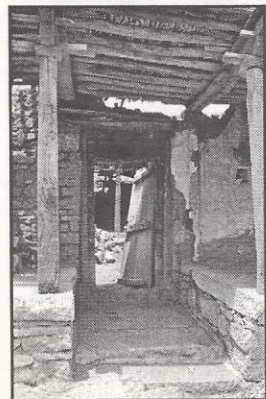
After School claimed the title in the Annual Tamil Nadu State high school basketball tournament held in Teni, Tamil Nadu.

Rebuilding Anegundi

Anegundi nearby the ruined city of Hampi has an ancient heritage. Emmanuelle spent four months in the area, observing how the Kishkinda Trust works to improve the conditions of the village and restore Anegundi to its former glory.



Up: Stone mandappas grace the Tungabhadra riverside.
Left: dilapidated house in Anegundi



In North Karnataka, Koppal district, the river Tungabhadra flows through a magical landscape of impressive granite boulder outcrops, interspersed with paddy fields and banana groves, which are the main crops cultivated. On its southern bank lies the ruined city of Hampi, once the capital of the great medieval Hindu Empire of Vijayanagara (1336-1565).

The area on the northern bank is believed to be Kishkinda, the monkey kingdom, where key episodes of the great Ramayana epic took place. The Anjanadari (Anjanaya Parvatam) mountain, less than a mile away, is believed to have been the birth place of Lord Hanuman himself, the monkey god, son of the wind, who helped Rama and Laxmana to recover Sita from her abductor the demon Ravana. The devotion the people of the area have for Hanuman is evident, considering the numerous temples and road-side shrines dedicated to this deity. Devotees come daily to offer prayer and ask for strength and courage, the qualities of which he is the embodiment.

A mile away from Anjanadari, lies Anegundi, a village of 6000 inhabitants, from where the Devaraya Dynasty of the Vijayanagara Empire is said to have hailed. Many of its ancient fortification walls and gateways are still standing, as well as some ancient temples and houses, some of which pre-date the Vijayanagara era. With a few exceptions, all of them have been neglected throughout the years and are run-down. Today's inhabitants of Anegundi are of different classes, castes and religions. Unemployment is rampant and the village has its fair share of underprivileged groups living in poverty.

The dilapidated state of the village and the poverty of its inhabitants drew the attention of Shama Pawar Shapiro, a painter from Pune, who founded The Kishkinda Trust (T.K.T.) in 1997. Her dream is to help Anegundi become a model 'Heritage Village' by preserving the rich cultural, natural and architectural heritage of this unique area. Anegundi then would serve as an inspiration and example to the rest of the world.

The first areas of action are social and income generating projects to improve the living conditions of the villagers. The greatest achievements of T.K.T. in this domain, so far, is without doubt the setting up of two cottage industries: Shorba, where accessories such as bags and mats are crocheted from banana fibre rope, and Ilkal, where clothes are tailored from traditional hand-woven cotton sarees from the area. Today, over 120 people, most of whom are women and members of underprivileged groups, are employed at the two industries. This opportunity has helped them build up self-confidence and gain a certain dignity. The two industries not only offer the people they

employ a degree of economic independence and therefore the power to make more choices in their lives, but also promote eco-friendly uses of locally available materials. Next to this, various savings and credit groups have been initiated. Another activity deals with promoting a clean environment. Trench toilets have been set up in several parts of the village. Clean street and *rangoli* (in Tamil Nadu called *kolam*, geometric patterns drawn within rice flour on the threshold of houses) competitions are held in the village regularly. The people participate enthusiastically.

In partnership with AME (Agriculture Man Ecology, an initiative of the Dutch government), T.K.T. is also helping to revive the tradition of organic farming, creating awareness of the ill effects from the use of chemical pesticides and encouraging simple techniques of recycling biodegradable wastes through methods like vermi-composting. Today, more than three dozen farmers are successfully practising organic farming and many more, including some from neighbouring areas, have shown interest.

To stimulate a cultural revival, T.K.T. invites artists to perform in this unique and inspiring area, and also trains local children in various performing art forms such as folk dance, street theatre and Bharat Natyam, through workshops held regularly with performing artists.

How to restore Anegundi to its former glory? The question is a complicated one, as it not only involves the renovation or restructuring of Anegundi's diverse traditional buildings from successive style periods, but also checking the architectural design of planned modern structures.

One of the most ambitious projects of T.K.T., still in its beginning stages, is the restoration of an entire street of traditionally built houses, many of which are currently in ruins. This "Heritage Street" project would entail restoration of each house through traditional construction methods, using locally available raw materials such as slates for the roofs and cow-dung to plaster walls and floors. It is hoped that the restoration of this "Heritage Street" will serve as an inspirational model, to be replicated in other villages. The restored buildings would house new cottage industries to provide more job opportunities for the inhabitants, and would be used for training and educational workshops. As uncontrolled building development represents a serious threat to the future of this area, T.K.T. has requested the government authorities to decide upon a master plan.

At present national and international experts, professionals and academics in various fields help Shama Pawar Shapiro in her efforts. T.K.T. is approaching potential donors to finance this dream and the Government of India, different national and international grant associations and well-wishing individuals are supporting the project with funds. Last but not least, Shama Pawar Shapiro has the active support of a large part of Anegundi's population, which is what makes her work possible, as it is only from the grassroots that any significant change can emerge.



Lord Hanuman offers his blessings

SPORTS

AHT 2001

The South India Equestrian Association organised an all South India horse tournament in Auroville from August 31st to September 2nd. It was a big success.

Never before has Auroville seen so many horses at one occasion. Riding schools from Madras, Bangalore, Ooty, Mysore, Hyderabad and Auroville put together 78 beautiful South Indian horses of different breeds. The occasion was the Auroville Horse Tournament 2001 – in short AHT 2001 – which was organised by Auroville's Red Earth Riding School (RERS) under the auspices of the South India Equestrian Association, of which RERS is a member. The event was a great

huge crowd, many from the surrounding villages, who experienced such an event for the first time. There might have been one thousand people watching the afternoon jumping competitions. Luckily most horses were used to the noise, the clapping, shouting, and loudspeaker announcements, but some got quite nervous and difficult to handle.

It was flattering to the Auroville pride that Aurovilians too made it to the victory stand. Jivatma got first in the fierce dress-



success. For the first time ever, all existing riding clubs of South India were present at a tournament.

The detailed organisation was in the hands of the Aurovilians Eric, Katelijne and Jacqueline. Eric and Katelijne came with their four sons a few years ago to Auroville. They were involved in horse breeding and show jumping in Belgium and are experts in organising horse tournaments. Together with Jacqueline, they started RERS in Kottakarai. It has 15 horses and Eric teaches horse lovers the basics of dressage and jumping.

The field had been divided into temporary stables, three riding arenas, and two warm-up lawns. Jumping heights were 60 centimetres for children and 1,20 metres for juniors and adults. The jumping track built by the judges was tough. Two of them were well known dressage gold medal winners in South Asian horse tournaments. Two experienced horse vets were present, the race course vet from Madras, an old friend of Auroville, and the vet from Hyderabad.

Overall, 350 entries were registered for dressage and show jumping in four age-groups: children from 6-11 and 12-16 years, juniors from 16-21 years and seniors above 21 years. Saturday morning at 6:30 the dressage competitions started. The atmosphere was quiet and concentrated, with few spectators, contrary to the afternoon jumping event, which was a real spectacle. Sunday afternoon saw a

sage novice (16-21 years) competition. Milan Kapur got second in PCI Prix Caprilli and third in preliminary dressage (below 12 years); Jochen Bijloos got second in show jumping (below 21 years)



1,20 metres and third in PCI Prix Caprilli (between 12 and 16 years), Jacqueline came third in dressage seniors. The youngest participant, 6 year old Ayesha (Jacqueline's daughter) and the oldest, 62 years old Frederick, received each a special 'age-award'. The official results were announced in the newspaper 'The Hindu'.

The organisation, with Auroville youth preparing breakfast and catering for lunch and dinner, was so well done that it is likely that there will be an AHT 2002.

Tine

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