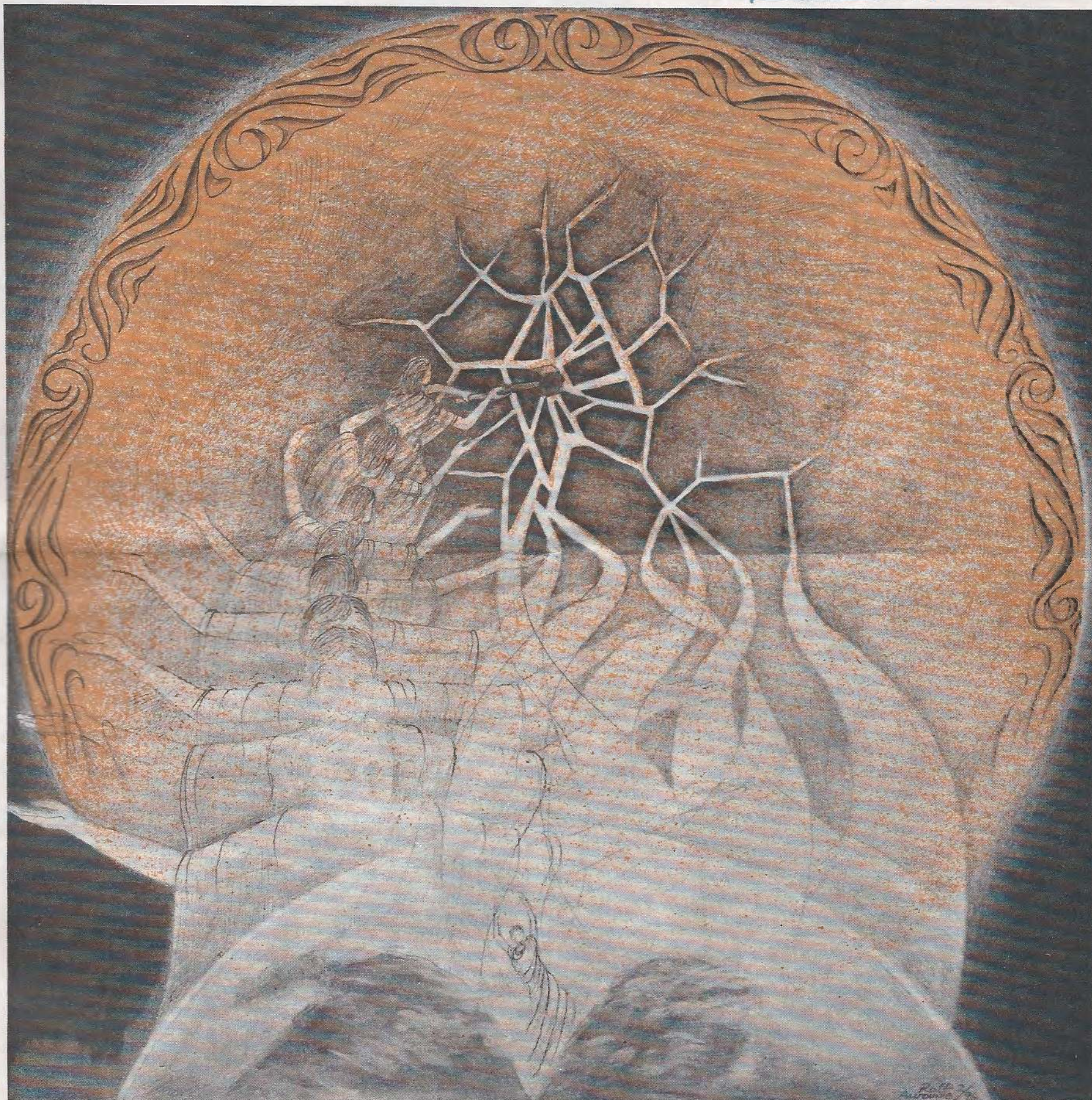


AUROVILLE TODAY

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DRAWING BY ROLF

"This evening the Divine Presence, concrete and material, was there present amongst you. I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe, and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine. As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single moment of consciousness, that 'the time has come' and lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow, one single blow on the door and the door was shattered to pieces. Then the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow."

(As recorded by the Mother in her diary on February 29, 1956 and made public four years later)

Transcending differences

Visitors to Auroville often fulfil vital functions. They keep the community in touch with the latest on what's happening 'out there', and they also have the knack of asking questions which force us to re-evaluate what we are doing and where we are going. A good example of this was the recent visit of students from the California Institute of Integral Studies who, in a mere three weeks' study of the community, managed to meet and interview more Aurovilians than some of us encounter in ten years!

One of the issues they raised concerns the relationship of Aurovilians to the local villagers. Do the local people get the same opportunities to develop themselves as do Aurovilians? Is Auroville being built on local labour and, if so, is this correct? Is as much attention being paid to improving the situation in the villages as is paid to building the township? Are we, in short, looking at a form of colonialism in the 'City of Dawn'?

On these pages we examine a topic which has crucial implications for our attempt to realize an 'actual human unity'.



PHOTO: ALAN

CIIS students l. to r.: (back row) Kathy, Carole, Charlie, Taj, Kalyani; (middle row) Andy, Elise, Earthlyn, (front row) Joyce, Susan, Penny, Colette.

Introducing "cultural synergy"

For a week last December, small groups of Aurovilians and visitors could be seen huddled in corners, under trees or in tea shops all over the community. What was going on? Well, the visitors were Ph.D. students from the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), and they had chosen Auroville as a site for a 'cultural synergy' project.

But to begin at the beginning. The California Institute of Integral Studies was founded in 1968 by Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. As its name suggests, this independent graduate school draws inspiration from Sri Aurobindo's concept of integral development, and seeks to integrate the intellectual and spiritual insights of Western and Eastern traditions. One of the tools it has evolved to do this is 'cultural synergy'.

The method is relatively straightforward. A situation or culture is studied by people from another culture or background. The study enables the researchers to understand the perspectives of the people they are studying, but it also enables them, in the process, to clarify their own viewpoint, the 'lens' through which they are looking. Sometimes differences arise between the point of view of the researcher and that of the individual or group being researched. The researcher is then expected to suspend judgement and ask 'Why?' questions in order to understand where the other person is coming from. When both parties can fully understand and respect the validity of the other's perspective, they can then try to create a new outcome, larger than either of their separate points of view but inclusive of both. This expansion is termed cultural synergy.

The CIIS students came to Auroville to learn about what was happening here and to practise the cultural synergy technique. But they also wanted to share what they might discover with the Aurovilians and to train them in what they described as this 'consciousness-expanding' technique.

What did they discover?

After receiving a one week introduction to Auroville, the students split up into three groups to focus upon three different themes: Auroville's organization, Auroville's eco-

nommy and Auroville and the bioregion. The organization group identified differences between organization in Auroville and organization in the U.S. Two of the most important differences, they felt, were that social organization in the U.S. is ultimately enforced through law whereas in Auroville it is understood to be a consequence of individual consciousness, and that leadership in the U.S. is generally 'institutionalized' whereas here there is more scope for 'inspired and mobile leadership'.

In terms of Auroville itself, the organization group found strong differences between the perspectives of the service units which they termed 'collectivistic' and the commercial units ('capitalistic'), and between tendencies in the community to improve the material or-

When both parties can fully understand and respect the validity of the other's perspective, they can then try to create a new outcome, larger than either of their separate points of view but inclusive of both. This expansion is termed cultural synergy.

ganization of Auroville as opposed to those which favour raising the level of consciousness by 'inner' means.

None of these 'discoveries' is exactly revolutionary; some are simplistic. More interesting was one student's comment that, although we have virtually no laws in Auroville, there are quite a number of 'unexpressed expectations'. A newcomer, for example, had told her that "for the first year I have to conform, after that it doesn't matter any more".

Charlie, a member of the group studying Auroville's economy, noted that "We soon realized that we were looking at something which is not linear, not neatly packaged, but something infinitely more dynamic and complex." Reflecting this, the economy group began conceiving of the Auroville economy as an ecological system, a lotus pond. The issues, as one student explained them, include: Where are the nutrients coming from? How

many are being generated locally? Is the system in balance, or is it expanding too fast?

"I have a background in business," continued Charlie, "and one thing which surprised and concerned me here, in a place which is trying to do things differently, was to see low-income labour being used to generate income for the community. We also noted how the abundance of cheap labour allows Aurovilians to hire somebody to do a job rather than getting another Aurovillian to help with it, and that this may make it harder to achieve a genuine collectivity."

How Auroville relates to the bioregion and, in particular, the local villagers, was the focus of the third group. "I live in southern California", explained Elise, "and work in Mexico. Every day I get in my car and I drive

down an eight-lane highway to the Mexican border, and when I cross the border suddenly there are big holes in the roads, shacks by the wayside and poverty everywhere. What I realize is that here you encounter this opposition every day without there being a border!"

The bioregional group identified numerous 'tensions' or points of difference between the villagers and the Aurovilians. They also observed that many Aurovilians, when confronted by the problem of the villages, tend to acknowledge the problem but then take a step back, "go inward", or have the expectation that "Mother will take care of things", rather than becoming actively engaged in changing the situation. This was particularly difficult for some members of the group to accept as they worked as social activists in the U.S.

But the major concern of the group had to do with something else. Is Auroville exploiting the local people? Is Auroville yet another

colonising power? Are Aurovilians racist? The questions were more than academic, for three of this CIIS sub-group were African-Americans who had experienced racism in the U.S., and one of them was dealing daily with its effects on members of her community.

Since one of the main purposes of the CIIS visit was to transfer the skills of cultural synergy to Aurovilians, and since it was preferable to do this through dealing with a 'real' issue, it was decided to make this topic the focus of an afternoon session to which Aurovilians were invited.

Colonialism?

Colette, one of the African-American students, opened the discussion. She was concerned because all over Auroville she had observed that people with dark skins were in the roles of servants, that the concerns of the local people were not fully understood by non-Tamil Aurovilians, and that within Auroville itself the Tamil people did not seem to be much involved in decision-making. "And this reminded me of my experience of being an African-American woman in the U.S. where the white people are dominant, and where they have proved they are willing to exploit other cultures in order to carry out their agenda."

In reply, Guy (AV) pointed out that it wasn't the white Aurovilians who had set the agenda, but Mother. "We were called here and faced by the reality of Auroville, which is that it's a microcosm of the world with all its problems. The question is, What are we going to do about changing this?" He agreed that, in relationship to integrating the Tamils into Auroville and improving conditions in the local villages we haven't done enough. But he also pointed out that 220 people from the local culture are Aurovilians and that some of them are performing key functions in the community. Meenakshi (AV), a Tamil poetess who for many years has acted as a liaison between Auroville and the villages, sees "no racism here. It's natural, for example, that the people from the neighbourhood should come and work here. If Auroville was in America, we would have American workers."

However, Janet (AV) pointed out that if we were in America we couldn't afford Ameri-

can workers. "Nothing affects the lifestyle of Aurovilians more than the fact that we have an unending supply of cheap labour. We can't change this in a day. But at least we can be honest about it and stop pretending that money is not the 'sovereign Lord' here at present."

Rita (AV) agreed and was further concerned that "the needs of many non-local Aurovilians keep expanding. Many Aurovilians are unaware of the needs of the local people. I choose to live simply so I can give a bigger piece of bread to my workers. Isn't this what human unity is all about?"

"It's our lack of consciousness which makes us relate so poorly to the local people," felt Alain (AV). "When I look at the local people, I marvel that they are so joyful given the conditions they live in. In some ways, I feel they are truly superior, and that we haven't begun to understand their true potential."

Rabiya, (AV) who comes from the U.S. is aware that she grew up in a racist culture. "But for me now one of the most debilitating feelings is guilt. If I look around me every day in Auroville and feel guilty about what is happening, I'm likely to cut certain things out of my awareness because they're too painful to

deal with. On the other hand, if I can just remain sensitive to what's happening around me, to always relate to the workers as other human beings, then maybe I'm beginning to change something."

Michael (AV) felt there was a confusion of categories. "We are confusing economic realities with racism. If many Tamil people are doing manual work in Auroville, it's not because of the colour of their skin but because they are not qualified to do other things." In reply Carol (CIIS) pointed out that if the local Tamil people are not qualified to do other work, "I want to know why. If they are not being better educated, why?" And she explained her definition of colonisation. "If what you want to do here is more easily accomplished because you can cheaply get a group of local people to support that agenda, then you have the elements of colonisation."

Joss, (AV) however, felt the whole issue was being oversimplified. "I don't look down upon the local people. On the contrary, I feel incredible gratitude to be able to live among one of the seed cultures of the planet a culture which, millennia ago when most of us were in caves, had the economic clout to em-

ploy Roman centurions. And the modern reality is also more complex. Twenty-five years ago, much of the land around here, including several villages, was owned by two families who employed lower castes. There have been huge changes in the past 25 years, but these changes have been due as much to developments within India as a whole as in Auroville. Above all, if Auroville wasn't working, wasn't in some sense useful to the local people—who have watched Etruscans, Carthaginians, Romans, French and British come by and drop into their tea shops—we would have been out of here long ago."

What was learned?

Many of the Aurovilians who attended the afternoon session felt it represented something of a watershed: certain issues were being discussed openly for the first time in Auroville. How did the CIIS students perceive it? "I feel we tackled a very important issue, but we tended to oversimplify and didn't go deeply enough," said Colette. The others agreed, citing lack of time as the main reason for this, but they also noted that "We've left behind a whole new terminology, another way of look-

ing at conflictual issues."

Charlie had participated in a cultural synergy project in China. "Unlike what happened there, I don't think something larger, synergistic, emerged out of the discussion with the Aurovilians yesterday. Maybe it's there, and we didn't recognise it, or maybe Auroville is not yet ready for it regarding this topic."

This raised the question of the efficacy of the cultural synergy process and its relevance to Auroville. One student wondered if all conflicting positions could be synergised. "For example, I don't think I could ever synergise with the Ku Klux Klan." Alain from Auroville had raised another doubt during the previous day's discussion. "In Auroville we seem to have two dimensions. A 'horizontal' dimension, which represents our attempts to build Auroville, and the 'vertical' or transcendental dimension which is represented in India by the guru, and which for us is represented by Sri Aurobindo and Mother. The latter dimension is something you have to open to—cultural synergy can't help you here—but I do think it can assist us to work better on the horizontal dimension."

Alain

... It's a remark that's heard fairly often at this time of year, generally from Western visitors who notice that, all over Auroville, rooms are cleaned, meals cooked, holes dug and cloth stitched by the local Tamils while the Western Aurovilians seem to occupy all the managerial positions. And it's a suspicion which is reinforced when these same visitors hear that the local wages are something like a sixtieth of what their counterparts in the West are earning.

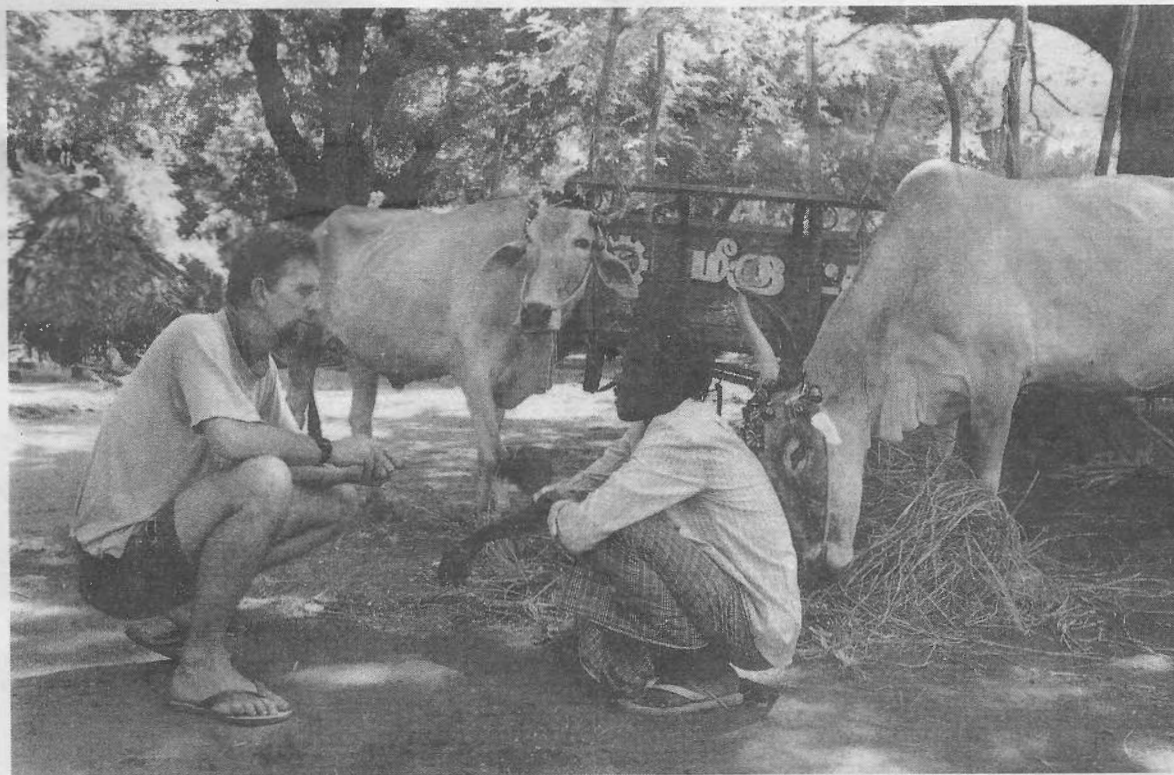
Are we colonialists? Well, let's first clarify the terminology. Colonialism as normally understood involves the exploitation of a local people to enable a non-indigenous culture to impose and fulfil its agenda. This usually involves the disruption or destruction of the local culture through making it economically, culturally and psychologically dependent on a 'master' culture. Underlying colonialism is generally some form of racism: the belief that the colonised race is inherently inferior and needs to be ruled 'for its own good'.

Is this what is happening in Auroville? Clearly, Auroville's 'agenda' is different from that of the surrounding villages: left to themselves, the villagers would not have created an international township on their doorstep. Yet that agenda was not drawn up by the Aurovilians but by Mother, and the intention as distinct from the usual colonial model is not self-aggrandisement but the creation of a genuine human unity through a transformation of consciousness.

Ultimately such an agenda must include and be of benefit to all. But the Aurovilians, as yet, are far from realizing this ideal. So how far have our first, stumbling attempts to create Mother's Auroville included the local people? One indication is the number of local villagers—220, by far the largest cultural group—who have joined Auroville, and the fact that some of them are in positions of great responsibility. Again, Auroville as the largest employer in the region has enabled numerous villagers to have an assured weekly income for the first time in their lives. Auroville has provided or improved the infrastructure in neighbouring villages, providing water connections, improving drainage, constructing a Health Centre, a school, creches and toilets. Skilled doctors, dentists and nurses are avail-

"But this is colonialism!"

Auroville's intention as distinct from the usual colonial model is not self-aggrandisement but the creation of a genuine human unity through a transformation of consciousness. But as visitors so readily perceive, the physical contrast between Auroville and the villages continues to reflect a familiar First World/Third World model of 'haves' and 'have nots'.



able for the villagers, and night schools, funded through Auroville Village Action, supplement the very basic education offered by government schools. Villagers have acquired skills in Auroville which have allowed them to start up their own businesses and import new technologies like ferro-cement into the villages, and Auroville farmers and greenworkers have assisted village farmers in preventing erosion and improving the fertility of their fields.

As a response to accusations of colonialism this sounds unanswerable. And yet...the provision of material help does not necessarily mean that the relationship is non-colonialistic: after all, it's in a coloniser's interest to keep the colonised happy. A more accurate indication of goodwill is the extent to which an incoming culture works with and supports the indigenous culture. And here it gets more complicated. Because the indig-

enous culture of this region in 1968, the year of Auroville's inauguration, was not something pristine, unadulterated. The majority of the local villagers were not skilled artisans or Brahmins upholding an ancient culture, but poor landless labourers, living in primitive conditions and locked into a feudal relationship with a few large landlords. Auroville has undoubtedly contributed over the years to the process of social change in the villages—by depriving farmers of cheap and ready labour, by helping break down traditional patterns of authority through providing new role models for women etc.—but the influence, for example, of a developing consumer culture in Pondicherry and India as a whole has been at least as powerful. Nor is it clear that the changes wrought by Auroville have been negative from the villagers' point of view. Village elders may regret that they no longer have authority, but in a recent survey village

women employed in Auroville talked enthusiastically about the new freedom they enjoy, to daily escape the suffocating boundaries of village life.

And yet, as visitors so readily perceive, the physical contrast between Auroville and the villages continues to reflect a familiar First World/Third World model of 'haves' and 'have nots': while some Auroville communities begin to look like the fashionable suburbs of a Western city, the villages around Auroville continue to be dirty and run-down. In addition, alcoholism is rife, violence against women is common. So the question remains: in the 28 years of its existence, while acknowledging the best efforts of individuals and of organizations like Village Action, couldn't Auroville have done more for the villagers? And if the answer is 'yes'—which it surely is—what's been stopping us?

One influence here is Auroville's separation, 'apartness', from the villages. It's a phenomenon remarked upon by many villagers—a recent survey reported one of them describing Auroville as "a bunch of whites, with lots of money, fancy gadgets and crazy ideas"—and it may well be a dominant factor in determining our daily relationship with our neighbours. This separation is created or supported by a number of factors: very few Aurovilians have mastered the local language, and many of the local villagers appear to Westerners to be uneducated, uncultivated and superstitious.

None of these circumstances offers a full explanation—the local language IS difficult, but an anthropologist researching the villages would have mastered it within a year: Western Aurovilians, particularly the children, were in and out of the villages in the early years and some even attended village meetings—so clearly other factors are at work.

One of these relates to lifestyle. In the early days, many Aurovilians lived in simple huts, ate local food, worked the land (or helped construct Matrimandir, which remains an aspect of Auroville to which all villagers can relate) and used cycles, much like the villagers, and there was a certain feeling of camaraderie. Today, while the villages may have changed, the Auroville lifestyle has changed even more to-

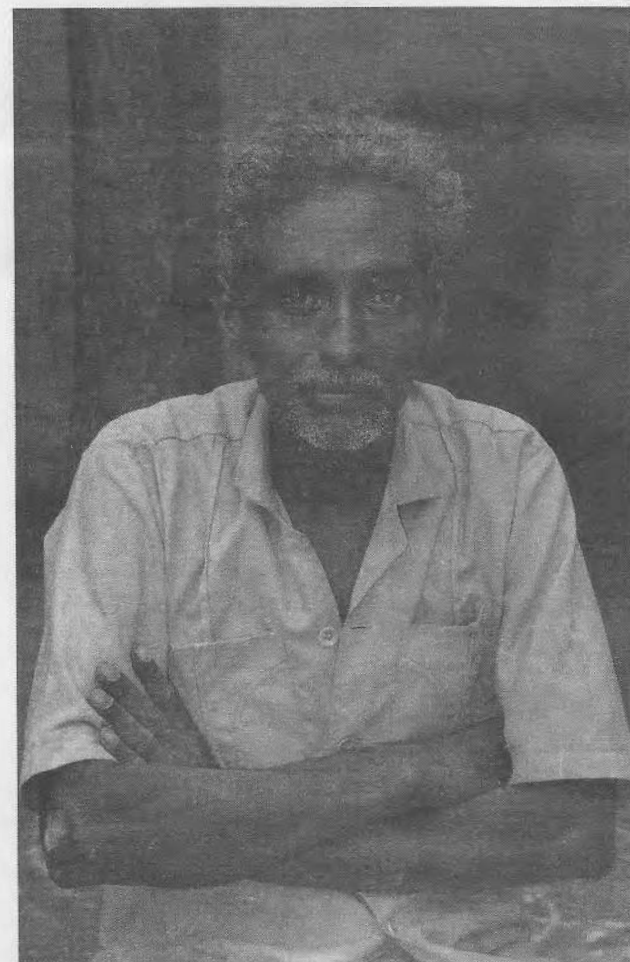
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Listening to their dreams



Jayalakshmi, housewife, Kuilapalayam (above):

"I pray for our village; for the prosperity of our village. I wish that no diseases attack us this year. If everyone in the village is good and prosperous, then I'll be happy and prosperous. Pongal is a special day for it is the only day where you don't see any differences between the rich and the poor. Everyone wears new clothes and is happy."



Lingiswami, farmer, Kottakarai (above):

"I wish to plant kambu, ragi, sennai and vegetables if the rains come this year. Anything more? Oh I could add I would like a "pucca" house and a moped but let's be realistic."

Alamelu, housewife, Edyanchavadi (right):
"My dreams are all of my children. I pray that they have a bright future. On Pongal, I am going to cook a curry of seven different, locally-grown vegetables for Suryanarayana (the family deity) for the well being of my family. Oh of course, like everybody else, I'd like to become richer."

It is like gingerly holding up a pair of scales—trying to gauge the positive and the negative effects of Auroville on the villages. Weighing out all the ways in which the local population has benefited from Auroville and all the ways in which it has been harmed. Undoubtedly, Auroville has helped tremendously in village development ensuring environmental regeneration, education and women's empowerment, health-care, sanitation and water-supply. But by offering lucrative and less taxing jobs, Auroville has lured able-bodied men and women away from tilling the land, resulting in an undesirable switch from growing food crops to growing cash crops. And then of course, Auroville has bought up the very land that the villagers used to farm.

But no, no, no, this is not what I wish to do—gauging, weighing, determining the political correctness of Auroville's actions. For underlying all our human endeavours, behind and beyond our actions, there is something that is much bigger than all of us. From somewhere a breath blows across this

land, a spirit moves, and now and then, most unexpectedly, it reveals itself, in the pride of a farmer as he tends his bullocks, in the loveliness of a woman's smile as she goes about her numerous household chores, and in the rich and careless laughter of naked, dark-skinned children as they play in the sun.

The weekend before Pongal (an important festival in Tamil Nadu celebrating the harvest) I spent roaming the villages that lie within the area marked out for Auroville—Kuilapalayam, Kottakarai and Edyanchavadi; watching the villagers at work and at leisure; letting the women slip red-and-blue bangles over my hands; partaking of their offering of green-coconut water drunk through papaya-stem straws; talking to them and listening to their hopes and dreams as they prepared for a new season. Their candour, the utter simplicity of their lives, the frankness of their smiles, their hospitality and their warmth...these are the gifts that the villagers bear for Auroville; and this is perhaps why we, the forerunners of a city of the future, and they, a race and culture that have endured for centuries, now find ourselves sharing this sacred and yet environmentally scarred corner of the earth.

As best I could, for I do not speak their tongue and have grown stranger to their culture, I gathered some of the dreams of the villagers as they prepared for their harvest festival to interweave with our dreams of Auroville as its 28th birthday approaches. What the future holds for Auroville and for the villages, no one can tell. But for the moment, it suffices to remember that, as Sri Aurobindo says, "to feel love and oneness is to live."



Pandurangam, farmer, Kottakarai (above):

"Rains. I am constantly dreaming of rains. My pump set broke (the coil of the motor burned out) a few months ago and I have no money to replace it. Now my crops are dying out and I can only helplessly watch. So this Pongal, more fervently than ever, I pray for rains."



Poorni, housewife, Edyanchavadi (above):

"This Pongal, I pray to Iyenar (the family deity) for the good health and prosperity of my children. I hope there is more rain and people get good yields. Whatever crop yields well, I'll make a dish out of it and offer it to the God."



Interviews and commentary by Bindu, with assistance from Shankar and Veerappani

The new internal organization

Commentary

Once again, an attempt towards a new organisational structure has been made. Some would say: in keeping with the experimental nature of the process and the attempt to reach the ideals which are expressed in Auroville's Charter. Others would express more emotional or even slightly cynical reasons. Whatever the reasons, the new structure was approved in the Resident's Assembly Meeting of 11th January.

The process was a long one. It began in October last year when a Residents' Assembly meeting tried to select a new Working Committee. In the discussions it became clear that the previous Working Committees had been overburdened. They not only dealt with all matters relating to the Auroville Foundation but also with internal Auroville affairs. An ad-hoc study group was appointed to work on a proposal for a new organisation. After three weeks, it presented a comprehensive plan in English, French and Tamil, with several unique features.

To guarantee a wider community input in Auroville's decision-making processes, as relatively few people attend the General Meetings and meetings of the Residents' Assembly, the study group proposed a system of so-called Local Area Meetings. Auroville was divided into about 20 local areas, each with a co-ordinator, which would discuss the various topics and make recommendations. These, in turn, were to be discussed and decided upon in a General Meeting or a meeting of the Residents' Assembly.

Another unique proposal was to create 4 interdependent working groups to take care of Auroville's internal and external affairs. The Working Committee, whose function and membership are laid down in the Auroville Foundation Act, would restrict itself to all external matters. An Auroville Council, consisting of two sub-committees, the Executive Committee and the Concept and Communi-

cation Committee, would deal with all internal affairs; the Executive Committee with practical work, the Concept and Communication Committee with preparing plans, proposals and guidelines. A fourth group, the Charter Council, would comment, upon request, on major issues in the light of the Charter, and act as an appeal body in case of contested decisions.

After the presentation of the plan, the study group organised two rounds of local area meetings, in which about 50% of the adult Aurovilians participated. In the first round, people were asked to comment upon the set-up of the proposed new organisation, the tasks and responsibilities and powers of the various working groups, and to propose the names of those who could do the jobs. The qualifications to serve were specified: dedicated to the manifestation of Mother's Dream and vision of Auroville; capable of carrying out the specific tasks of the committee on which they serve; known for their goodwill, capacity to listen and ability to work in a team; committed to be on the committee for a period of two years; and free from addictions to alcohol and drugs. Many comments were voiced, and the names of 242 people were suggested.

After being approached by the Study group, 74 people remained who consented to join one of the four working groups. In the second round all comments raised in the first

round were discussed, and the names of those who had consented to participate were approved of or objected to. The Study Group then advised those who had received many objections to withdraw, and called a meeting of the others—and those who had ignored the Study group's advice—to discuss each group's membership and future functioning. The new organisation structure was ratified by a meeting of the Resident's Assembly on January 11th, 1996.

The comments on the new organisation were varied. Some felt that the proposal did not express Auroville, others objected to the lack of clarity on the functions of some working groups, to the fact that there were too many groups, or that the proposal was 'too mental'. In particular the proposed appeal role, nicknamed 'High Court function', of the Charter Council received heavy criticism. But that was the only criticism which finally was accepted by the Residents' Assembly. All the others were dropped in an attitude of "Let's Try And See". For once again only a new experiment has been started, since we are still far from realising the conditions for the ideal organisation which the study group described: "Only when Auroville's collective soul can act through all of us and emerge as the foundation of our society, will the true Auroville organisation manifest itself, spontaneously, intuitively and truthfully."

Bill and Carel

Structure of the New Organisation

The Auroville Council is composed of two distinct groups: an *Executive Committee* and a *Concept and Communication Committee*. Both committees meet regularly together to exchange information, review their functioning and take common decisions. They activate local area meetings. Together with the Working Committee they have monthly open forums with the community. Term of office: two years

The *Executive Committee* takes care of Auroville matters in close collaboration with all working groups and the community at large, and resolves conflicts among working groups, between working groups and the community, and between individuals and working groups and the community.

The *Concept and Communication Committee* prepares—in the light of the Charter and Mother's Vision on Auroville—plans, proposals, policies and guidelines, and facilitates communication between the Auroville Council, Working Committee, working groups and the community at large.

The Working Committee

The Working Committee takes care of all official matters related to the Auroville Foundation and to any governmental and international body. It liaises between the Residents' Assembly and the Auroville Foundation (Governing Board, International Advisory Council and Secretary). It acts as the sole interface with the Secretary on all official matters related to the Auroville Foundation, and follows up actions related to the general development and protection of Auroville with local, state and central government bodies. Term of office: two years.

The Charter Council

The Charter Council is an advisory body which will comment, upon request, on major issues in the light of Auroville's Charter. Term of office: 5 years.

The Secretariat

Receives all correspondence, prepares agendas, ensures that all matters are being properly followed up by the committees, calls for General Meetings and Meetings of the Residents' Assembly, answers all queries regarding any issue dealt with by the committees, and organises the periodic renewal of membership of the committees. The secretariat acts as an impartial body, ultimately responsible to the community. Term of office: indefinite.

Local Area Meetings

Regular local area meetings—at least once a month or as the need arises—are organised to discuss Auroville matters and issues.

General Meetings

General meetings deal with issues related to the Auroville community. They are preferably called after the issues have been discussed in Local Area Meetings.

Residents' Assembly Meetings

Meetings of the Residents' Assembly deal with issues related to the Auroville Foundation. They are preferably called after the issues have been discussed in Local Area meetings.

The question "How to secure the participation of a large section of the community in the decision making process on the restructuring of the organisation into four interdependent working groups, in order to prevent overburdening of the Working Committee?" seems, at first sight, to have been successfully solved by the introduction of so-called 'local area meetings'. For the first time in the history of Auroville, residents of the various communities of Auroville came together in small circles to discuss the detailed proposal prepared by the ad-hoc study group. These local area meetings drew large numbers of participants, far exceeding the usual number of people present in Residents' Assembly meetings. Many Aurovilians, who otherwise would have chosen to remain silent, talked and gave their opinion on matters of general interest. As an attempt to involve more people in decision making, the local area meetings are obviously a step in the right direction.

But the weakness of the system appeared already in the second round. Due to lack of co-ordination between the local area co-ordinators, different local area meetings had different understandings of what they were meant to be doing. The ad-hoc study group was unprepared—and unwilling—to deal with all the comments on the proposed new organisation structure. Neither was it willing to deal with the objections raised against various people. Its stand that 'ultimately only the Residents' Assembly meeting can decide' incapacitated it from the outset. It only listed all comments on the proposed new organisation in the Auroville News, and only advised those against whom many objections had been raised, to withdraw.

After the second round, the ad-hoc study group called a meeting of all those who had agreed to participate in one of the four bodies of the new organisation, in which each group discussed its membership and future functioning. Its outcome was discussed in a subsequent Residents' Assembly meeting. But this Residents' Assembly meeting did not deal with the comments on the proposed organisation voiced in the earlier local area meetings, nor with the objections voiced against individual Aurovilians who had refused to withdraw. The result was confused: the Executive and Communication Councils were overstaffed and had to be reorganised in terms of people willing to take full responsibility and those who only wanted to attend some meetings. The area of activity and mandate of the Charter Council was unclear and had to be clarified. And there was an unpleasant discussion about a few people who had not accepted the advice to withdraw.

The crux of the problem seems to lie in the mandate of the ad-hoc study group. Its proposal on the reorganisation was a good piece of work; but insufficient thought had been given on how to deal with the outcome of the local area meetings. Instead of calling a Residents' Assembly meeting to ask for a directive and mandate about how to deal with the comments and objections, it ignored them and started instead the process of constituting the various groups. And that is deplorable. If local area meetings are to be continued, the opinions expressed need to be taken into account. If these opinions are ignored by subsequent meetings, as has been done in this process, once again only the views held by strong and outspoken individuals will dominate—which had been successfully prevented by the introduction of the local area meetings—and the baby will be killed in its infancy.

Carel

On meetings

"The psychic self-control that is desirable in these surroundings and in the midst of discussion would mean among other things:

1. Not to allow the impulse of speech to assert itself too much or say anything without reflection, but to speak always with a conscious control and only what is necessary and helpful.

2. To avoid all debate, dispute or too animated discussion and simply say what has to be said and leave it there. There should also be no insistence that you are right and the others wrong, but what is said should only be thrown in as a contribution to the consideration of the truth of the matter.

3. To keep the tone of speech and the wording very quiet and calm and uninsistent.

4. Not to mind at all if others are heated and dispute, but remain quiet and undisturbed and yourself speak only what can help things to be smooth again.

5. If there is gossip about others and harsh criticism (especially about sadhaks), not to join—for these things are helpful in no way and only lower the consciousness from its higher level.

6. To avoid all that would hurt or wound others."

(This is a compilation of Sri Aurobindo's words from various publications.)

wards a culture based upon Western rather than indigenous values, and this has accentuated the separation between the cultures. Another reason why Auroville has not done more for the villages may be the sense that the problems of the villages are simply too big, too complex, and require too long-term a commitment for Auroville which, after all, is developing on many different fronts at once to handle. Yet another is the feeling, shared by a number of Aurovilians, that "Auroville is not a social service agency for the villages. We came for something else." And this is somehow linked to the feeling potent if unexpressed that while Auroville is for the future, for the evolution of Humanity as a whole, the villages represent a 'dead' or 'dying' past. But, against this, one wonders why Mother located Auroville here, among thousands of villagers. And why improving the situation in the villages cannot be seen as a crucial field for the pursuit and practice of that 'something else'...

So, ultimately, if a variety of factors are at work in determining how Western Aurovilians relate or don't relate to the local people, might they also include colonialism? It's more than possible. For just as every personality-type

Those who are in contact with the villagers should never forget that these people are worth as much as they are, that they know as much, that they think and feel as well as they do. They should therefore never have an attitude of ridiculous superiority.

They are at home and you are the visitors.

(Mother, September 1969)

seems to be represented on these few acres of land, so every version of the Aurovillian-villager relationship can probably be observed in our midst. But this variety of responses is surely significant. For like so much else in Auroville, the issue of how Western Aurovilians relate to the villagers is far more complex and dynamic than at first meets the eye. The culture of the Western Aurovilians is not necessarily homogenous, for example. And colonialism or racial oppression may not just a matter of black and white. North Indians sometimes have a patronising attitude to their darker southern compatriots, and casteism or 'internal colonialism' remains a powerful force in those villages around Auroville that have Harijan colonies. Again, who knows what new culture or consciousness is emerging from the daily contact in Auroville between villagers and Aurovilians? It's already clear, for example, that the villagers who

joined Auroville when they were young are quite different in something much more than a 'Westernized' sense from their contemporaries in the village, and there are plenty of long-term Western Aurovilians who, touched by the sweetness, the good-humour and generosity of the local people (who, after all, have allowed an alien culture into their midst), feel that India is their true home.

Everybody's changing, being changed by a larger force that's the reality of Auroville. We all come, with our personal histories, our cultural baggage, our preoccupations, to a place with its own history, beliefs and perspectives and, through the pressure of a higher force, we are asked to move forward not only for our own sake but for Humanity as a whole. As always, we can choose to be conscious partners in this process assisting, for example, the local people to get the education and awareness which will allow them to make in-

formed choices about their future, opening ourselves to what they can teach us or we can stumble around the ring while bioregional realities pesticide poisoning, falling water tables, land disputes, Pondicherry garbage punch us into tighter and tighter corners.

Mother had plenty to say about the arrogance of those early Aurovilians who forgot that the villagers are at home and "you are the visitors"; who adopted attitudes of "ridiculous superiority", not realizing that "a simple and ignorant peasant here is, in his heart, closer to the Divine than the intellectuals of Europe"; who thought they could "build Auroville with coolies" neglecting that "they are your brothers in spirit". After 28 years the question remains: are we any closer to understanding that what we are talking about is not only better living conditions or the transfer of technology but also and primarily a development of consciousness that will include rather than exclude, that will allow all peoples to shed their primeval fears and suspicions of other races, other realities? That, whatever our skin colour and background, we can all participate in the evolutionary movement? And that in Auroville, as everywhere else, co-evolution is the only option if Humanity is to survive?

Alan

Now and then, on the roads, at the Pour Tous snack bar, in little notes in the Auroville News (the internal weekly of the community), one hears about this person or that looking for a place to stay. Yes, there is a shortage of adequate housing in Auroville—that everybody knows. But exactly how many people are affected—twenty, thirty or fifty—nobody knew. Until thirty people, burning with hope and expectation and eager to voice their frustrations about the lack of housing prospects, turned up at a meeting that was called by Menaig of the Development Group to assess the situation.

This group of people, which included newcomers, young Aurovilians, and Aurovilians who have been here for a long time, also spoke up for others who were living in minimal housing conditions. All in all, according to the preliminary assessment made at the meeting, there are about 80 Aurovilians and newcomers, including children, who lack proper housing and have little prospect of building in the foreseeable future. It was estimated that, even if one were to ignore Auroville's current growth rate of 70 newcomers per year, 37 housing units of varying sizes to accommodate both single persons and families are needed immediately to shelter the above group of people. Some of these people are occupying old, derelict keet houses that were built twenty years ago and are now beyond repair; others are house-sitting for Aurovilians who are out of town. Newcomers are temporarily lodged in guest houses which they are due to vacate for guests, or have been permitted to carry on in their newcomer units for an additional period of time after their newcomer period ended; and one young Tamil Aurovillian is living in the village because he cannot find a place to stay in Auroville. Six adults with children who have joined as newcomers said that if the housing situation did not improve, they had no choice but to go back to their home country.

The problem perhaps is not so much the lack of housing as the lack of adequate finances. New communities such as Surrender, Invocation, and Arati are being planned in the residential zone that will provide at least 24 apartments or collective housing units within 12 to 18 months in the first phase of the construction, with more to follow. But the average cost of an apartment in the residential zone is Rs. 6 lakhs whereas most of the people present at the meeting said that they could afford only 1.5 to 3 lakhs rupees for a house.

Homeless in the City of Dawn?

Some young people, especially from India and Russia, have no means at all.

At present, the cost of building a house—which includes architects' fees, contractors' fees and a mandatory contribution to the Housing Service—is a minimum of Rs. 3 lakhs, a sum barely adequate to finance a small house in an area with established infrastructure. Costs rise dramatically if one is required to purchase land or develop infrastructure from scratch. There have been numerous cases where Aurovilians have had to leave Auroville and seek work elsewhere in order to build themselves a house. The Housing Service,

which collects 10% of the total building cost from each person who builds a house in Auroville, seeks to help Aurovilians dependent on community resources by making small contributions towards repairs and extensions of existing houses. In a couple of cases, they have been able to provide Aurovilians who have been here for 15 to 20 years with small apartments. But, by and large, most people are reluctant to pay an extra 10% on top of their costs, perhaps partly because people have no say in determining the beneficiaries of their contributions.

Many of the people present at the meet-

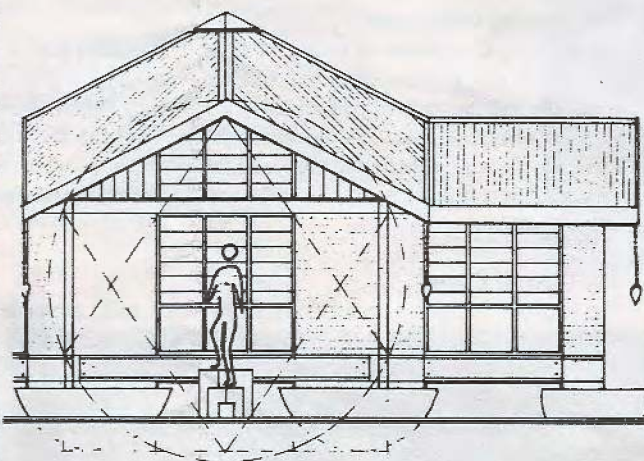
ing also expressed resentment at the various regulations that have come about in recent times regarding the development of the city area which severely restricts their building prospects. According to the current policy, proposals for separate individual houses or keet houses in the residential zone are not granted building permission, and all the land allocated to low-density development has already been earmarked for various projects, though some of these are far from being implemented. In effect, this means that the people have no choice but to join one of the collective housing projects which they feel are either far too expensive or not designed to suit their needs. A few people said that they had sufficient means to build and were ready, but were discouraged by the attitude of long-term Aurovilians who seemed reluctant to let them join their community. Even the dozen or so people who were ready to live in the greenbelt to develop newly purchased pieces of land and pioneer settlements, complained about a general lack of support for their ideas.

In response to this exigency in the housing situation, the community has recently come up with certain proposals to help solve the problem. Johnny suggests we reverting back to capsules—cheap bamboo and thatch shelters which for many years in the pioneering days were the way to provide cheap housing. Aurosaprem, an executive of the Auroville Building Centre, has come up with a new housing concept which he calls Leg-Aum, the design for which came from a study of houses in earthquake prone zones. Andre Hababou and others of the Surrender team are now offering studio-type houses, with minimum finishing, for 1.5 lakhs rupees. The costs of these studio houses in Surrender have been greatly reduced for the construction materials are being purchased in bulk and the architect, administrator and contractor are offering their services for free. Another group of young enterprising Indians have decided to ask Aurosarjan, a business unit, for a soft loan to finance their apartments. Yet another idea was to start a service that would determine potential housing spaces that are lying vacant in various communities and to act as a liaison between Aurovilians and newcomers to help the latter find an appropriate community. While it is encouraging to find such good-willed responses to the situation, it is clear that there needs to be a comprehensive change in the present entry and building policies.

Bindu

The Leg-Aum House

The Leg-Aum House is an innovative concept proposed recently to help solve the housing crisis in Auroville. Apart from the shortage of houses, the problem faced by newcomers is that they need time to experience the various communities of Auroville before they can take a decision as to building a permanent house. Also, many newcomers have limited funds for housing and cannot afford to spend money first on a



temporary and then on a permanent place. The Leg-Aum house, which is described by its architect Aurosaprem as a "synthesis of a capsule, keet hut and a 'pucca' house," solves both these problems. The house does not have foundations but rests on water basins placed on the ground as protection against ants and the like. Lacking foundations, the house which consists of interlocking earth-blocks can be dismantled and rebuilt easily without loss of materials and destruction of the environment. And being made of durable materials, it does not require additional expenditure on maintenance like keet houses do.

A basic Leg-Aum unit, which takes less than a week to assemble, has a carpet area of 19 square metres and its estimated cost is less than Rs. 30,000. Extra rooms or terraces can be added on to this basic unit. A prototype is now being built in Vikas.

The name Leg-Aum humourously explains the concept behind the house: "Leg" indicates the mobility of the housing unit as well as refers to the structural design which is similar to that of the building blocks of Lego; the Sanskrit word AUM serves as an acronym for "Auroville Unit Movable". It also points to the harmony of the architectural concept which is based on Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's symbols.

Sound containing the Divine

Having moved like Japanese wrestlers, we'll now walk around the room, reciting the alphabet like geishas." A group of 24 Aurovilians immediately tiptoe through the dance hall in Pitanga, babbling in high pitched voices. No, this is not the rehearsal for a Noh theatre performance, but the beginning of a three-week voice awareness training workshop by the American-born John Munsey, who currently lives in Holland.

What brought John, who prefers to be called Orfeas, to offer this workshop to Aurovilians?

"I was born in Houston, Texas, but when I was six years old we moved to California. There I went to the Academy for young actors and as a result I acted in a few films. There I've learned to live under imaginary circumstances. After all, acting is always a 'make-believe world'. Back in Texas I joined the high school theatre and choir. When I had to choose what to study in college, theatre or music, I chose the latter because I realized that music influences people's mood.

I went to an excellent music college, Oberlin, and took up piano and singing. It was the time of the hippies and many students were dropping out. For me music was so fascinating and I had so much to discover, that I was 'dropping in'.

Sound is vibration, energy, matter, and ultimately the raison d'être of existence. Mystics and musicians, especially those of India, have always been aware of this. But recently, interested Aurovilians were led to explore the connection between sound and breath and body in a series of workshops independently offered by two European musicians, Letizia and Orfeas, who had extensive training in Indian classical music.



Orfeas: bringing out the best...

After I got my degree, I joined a music college in Germany which did not suit me. But there I met a Dutch singer who introduced me to musicians in Holland who were performing medieval music. I moved to Holland and became a music professor at one of the Conservatories. After a few years, I was introduced to hatha yoga and I was interested

to find that the breathing techniques were quite similar to those used for singing. I followed a training course to become a yoga teacher. I also learned about Hindunism and decided that it was time for me to visit India. In Poona I heard Indian vocal music for the first time.

When I came back to the Conservatory I tried to introduce meditation in my classes as a way to internalize music, but this was impossible. I left the Conservatory and became a free-lance musician, giving private classes and singing workshops. For nine years I went to India each winter for one or two months to study "Dhrupad" music with the Dagar brothers, a musical family from Delhi. In their way of singing I found similarities with early European music.

They taught me to sing for the Divine. After they passed away I kept coming to India, but as a tourist. Last year I came to Pondicherry and to Auroville to visit my friend Michael Spector. He introduced me to people from Verite and then the

idea was born to give a gift to Auroville—I have no money, but I could offer this vocal awareness workshop. And I am extremely happy with the positive response from the participants."

When one thinks of a vocal training workshop one imagines strenuous singing exercises. But with Orfeas it is just the opposite. In the first class he let everyone unwind with silly games like the one described above. "I dislike the way of teaching in which the teacher makes the students small. My way of teaching is to emphasize the strong points of the students and bring the rest up to that level. For me it is important to bring the best out of someone, whether it is a beautiful voice without breathing technique, a soft voice with a lot of stamina, or a beautiful timbre without strength." In a playful way he lets his students feel the way the breath moves into their bodies or, by looking into a little mirror, the participants see how the various muscles are moving during the singing of different vowels.

At the end of each technical session he teaches a new song.

"My personal aspiration is to become genuinely a singer of the Sacred, producing a sound which contains the Divine; when I can achieve that, then the audience remains silent at the conclusion of the concert."

Tineke

Sound basics

Letizia, an Italian lady closely connected with Auroville, came to explore the connection between sound and body because of the work of the internationally renowned obstetrician and author, Dr. Frederick Leboyer. Dr. Leboyer discovered that learning classical Indian singing can help a pregnant woman to effectively use her breathing during labour contractions. Indeed, during her first visit to Auroville, Letizia, who has extensively helped Dr. Leboyer in his research, worked solely with pregnant women. But further experimentation with Indian vocal music led her and Dr. Leboyer to discover that sound or frequency forms the very basis of a human being and holds the clue to problems of existence.

"We all have a certain main frequency with which we speak—the tone of our ordinary speech; and this of course varies, depending upon our state of mind and emotions. This main frequency of a person is called the ground tone, and humanity is essentially a concert, or rather a cacophony of ground tones that are trying to harmonise. Harmonisation is no small problem because, as in music, there are some tones which are in synchronization but others that just do not harmonise. And this lack of synchronization results in tension and fights. Even unconsciously we reject the some voices while accepting others," explains Letizia who has been working in this field of music for over ten years.

The workshops offered by Letizia were attended by about 15 people of all ages and included physical exercises designed to help open up the emotional and physical centres of the body and to trigger the experience of the effect sounds have on the body. The participants were also introduced to the basics of Indian singing. "In Indian singing," says Letizia, "there is no straining of the voice while singing. The breath for the singing comes from the depths of the abdomen, and there is a natural flow of energy. One does not feel exhausted because a cycle of energy is set up: energy is used to produce a sound, and the sound gives the energy back to the body."

"When we were singing together in Pitanga Hall," she continues, "I wished I could get all Aurovilians to sing together once or twice a week. Singing together in unison, as most people would tell you, brings happiness. But more importantly, by joining together to produce one tone, the emotionally neutral tone, we generate harmony for we produce the cosmic tone that harmonizes with all other tones. We essentially experience oneness—to be one in many or many in One." "I really feel that such an exercise would go a long way in creating harmony and unity in Auroville. Sound has an incredible power and mystery to it."

Tineke and Bindu

Medicinal Plant Conference

About 60 traditional practitioners of herbal medicine gathered for a three-day conference on medicinal plants at Marakkanam, Tamil Nadu, last December. The conference was organized by Loganathan, Arumugam, and Joss of Pitchandikulam community. Pitchandikulam, which has been a large afforestation project from the early years onwards, has now been made into a medicinal plant conservation park and is one of the ex-situ sites of the Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT), a non-governmental organisation committed to the conservation and sustainable utilisation of medicinal plants, and the revitalisation of India's medical heritage. The conference was designed to

document and disseminate knowledge about traditional medicinal plants, giving particular importance to primary health care. Participants were also taken on a field trip to the indigenous forest of Marakkanam where they identified plants traditionally used for medicine. During the conference, discussions focussed around the preparation of remedies for common diseases such as worms, fever, cough, cold and dysentery. The conference also included exhibitions of medicinal plants in which school children from Marakkanam participated. A theatrical programme dealing with the themes of conservation of medicinal

plants and local health traditions had been prepared by a local drama group.

Such conferences gain in significance when one realizes that the prevalent usage of medicinal plant resources is highly unsustainable. Due to deforestation, the indiscriminate collection of wild medicinal plants by pharmaceutical industries, and other factors, there is a real danger of extinction of many medicinal plant species. In this area, for instance, in a 200 km stretch of coastline only 405 hectares of the tropical, dry evergreen forest remain. This forest type contains at least 400 indigenous species that have medicinal properties. The few remaining forested areas are under

constant threat and genetic resources continue to be depleted. And along with the threat to the remaining indigenous forest we are faced with the threat of losing the knowledge and techniques of the often elderly, traditional practitioners. In fact this knowledge is being lost at an even faster rate than the species. Local practitioners use over 7,000 species of plants to treat a wide range of common and complex ailments, and Pitchandikulam, as well as Shakti, are working to create awareness and to actively promote the growth and use of locally available medicinal plants among rural people.

Bindu



Weather

The monsoon has been a disappointment. Except for some showers in October, there has been virtually no rainfall since early November last year. Government officials record that rainfall in Tamil Nadu during the monsoon period was 46% less than average. It is extremely dry for the time of year.

New Solar Lamps

One hundred Micro Solar Lighting Systems named "Solux II" were imported from Germany by CARE (Computer Aided Research and Engineering) which is a unit of the Centre for Scientific Research. CARE wants to explore the market for Solux II and see if it could be manufactured in India using indigenous parts, and sold at a reasonable cost.

Solux II provides a safe, bright light in a compact unit that should last for many years. A small solar photovoltaic panel connects to a compact fluorescent light to charge the built-in battery, assembled together in a sturdy case with a carrying handle. A portable radio is also included and connects into the lantern for its power source. The design has been rated, after comparative testing, above other similar products that have recently come on the market.

This independent solar lighting system is promoted by ARTEFACT, a German NGO. The Ludwig Bölkow Foundation sponsored the research.



Testing Solux II at CSR

Photo Bill

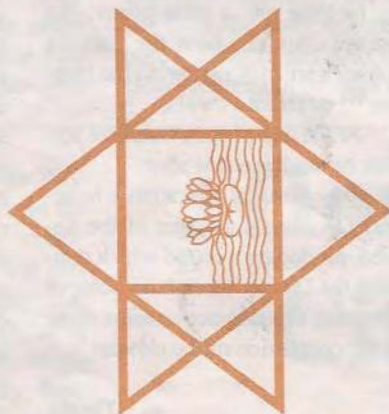
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IN THIS ISSUE: THE GOLDEN DAY; RELATIONS WITH THE VILLAGES;
INTERNAL REORGANIZATION; HOUSING

Number Eighty-Five
February 1996

Vahula exhibits

Vahula, the Sri Lankan artist whose sketches you have seen in *Auroville Today*, is exhibiting a fresh, joyful series of his work in Pitanga Hall. Besides his pencil portraits and pen and ink sketches of children and women, Vahula has taken up colour and, using felt tip pens, has created drawings which are much more abstract than anything else we have seen from him before. The curve of a woman's hip as she holds the kuja (clay jar) is a sensual line that imitates the line of the vessel. The colours are strong—lots of orange, purple, yellow and blues. There are also three abstract studies of women which resemble Odilon Redon's fantastical, floating forms. Vahula's student, Shivakumar, is also exhibiting his latest work—landscapes in oil which catch the interplay of sun and shadow on forest paths. There are even two pointillist landscapes, done with felt tip pen, which shimmer in the light. It is the next step for both student and teacher—perhaps a bit imitative, but for young artists, a necessary step. What's next?



Golden Day Meditation

When I was younger I had a lot of difficulty with $2+2=4$. Not because of the mathematics—although it was never my strongest subject—but because I distrusted, even hated, the fixity of it all. Why couldn't $2+2=5$, or 49? Somehow I knew, I absolutely knew, that they were also possibilities, coexisting but invisible, as true in their own way as the familiar cold logic of that equation.

Some time later I read a fairy tale—or was it a mind game?—about a place called Flatland. I can't remember the details, except that everything and everyone in Flatland was two-dimensional. One day, one of the inhabitants found himself in a three-dimensional world. At first he couldn't understand anything because all the reference points had changed—he was suffering, poor thing, from what modern psychologists call 'cognitive dissonance'—but gradually he began to understand that he'd penetrated into another dimension, a dimension which changed everything.

Aha! I thought. This is what I've been looking for. $2+2$ may = 4 in Flatland, but add a dimension (or a parallel universe) and you may end up with 49, or something as completely different from a boring old circle as a sphere.

Much later again I read Mother talking about the 'other side', yet another 'dimension' or 'space' where all is harmony and truth, where that which stutters and grates in ordinary life finds its graceful alignment. Mother emphasised that the 'other side' is not distant; rather it is close, as close as... And here, it seems, she would abandon words and use a familiar gesture, a very slight turn of the hand...

I was excited, very excited, by the sense of the closeness, almost the brush of that other dimension. But, try as I might, I couldn't get through to that place which I had known about, it suddenly seemed, for a long, long time. And so, gradually, the sense of separation began to harden again until the boundary of my Flatland was once more drawn in indelible ink.

It was some time afterwards that I read Mother's recreation of that wonderful moment during the collective Ashram meditation of 29th February, 1956:

I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe, and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine. As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single moment of consciousness, that 'THE TIME HAS COME', and lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow, one single blow on the door and the door was shattered to pieces.

Then the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow.

I don't know how I received this at the time—I probably went completely blank—but later, much later, after reading Mother's description of the supramental descent quoted in various books and pamphlets, I began to realize that something astonishing had happened. For not only was Mother describing one of the great occult moments, turning-points, in the history of the Earth, but she was making the knowledge of it available to everyone, not just to an inner core of initiates. It was 'out there', available for anyone to pick up, interpret, misread, in their own way.

Why am I so... moved (how poor words are!) by all of this? I'm still working it out. But it's something to do with the sense that suddenly, irrevocably, magnificently, everything has changed, that the old mathematics of existence, with its fixed terms and finite, invariable solutions is obsolete. That the old divisions, categories, which I had used to carve up the world—esoteric versus exoteric, initiated versus uninitiated, mundane versus spiritual, 'good' versus 'bad' etc. etc.—have collapsed so that, in some inexplicable way, the smell of toast, a cut on my foot, light on a granite pillar and Mother's description of the 'Golden Day' coexist as one whole within which, I sense, something...extraordinary (again, those words!) is happening. And that maybe, maybe, because everything is 'out there' now (as on some cosmic Internet), everything may be closer to finding, or revealing, through the pressure and intermingling of the 'uninterrupted' Supramental Force, its true place and power. And perhaps I'm wrong, but I think we're all going to be astounded by the connections and relationships revealed when we manage to connect up to that particular worldwide web... Alan

Subscription rates

To cover our costs, the suggested new subscription rates for 12 issues of *Auroville Today* are the following: for India Rs 250; for other countries Rs 1250. Can \$ 51, FF 195, DM 56, It. Lira 61,000, D.Gl. 63, US \$ 38, UK £25. This includes the postage by airmail. Please send your contribution (or your supporting contribution of double the amount) either to the Auroville International centre in your country (add 10% for admin. and bank charges) or directly to Auroville Today, CSR Office, Auroville 605101. Cheques should be made payable to Auroville Fund, specifying: 'Contribution for Auroville Today'. You will receive the issues directly from Auroville. Personal cheques are preferred to bank cheques. Please do not send postal money orders. Subscribers will receive a reminder when their subscription is about to expire.

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