

A new world is born

The 29th February, 2024 will be the 17th 'Golden Day'. The first one was celebrated on 29th February, 1960. An English visitor, Dick Batstone, described how the dominant colour in the Ashram compound that day was gold: Mother was dressed in gold, she stood on a gold silk cloth, her balcony was hung with golden embroidered satin, and even the flowers in the courtyard were gold. And he continued:

At about half past nine, a deeper stillness seemed to descend, and most people went into meditation. Then, at ten, the music (Mother playing the organ) began. it was strong and unfaltering, and seemed timeless, neither of the East nor of the West...Closing my eyes I seemed to see leaping flames and, opening them, the tree also seemed to be full of tongues of light, everything bright, clear, firm and full of creative energy....Later I heard that someone had had a vision of Krishna playing on his flute, and the Mother had said it was a true vision. Krishna was there.

That afternoon, Mother distributed golden medallions to everyone who filed past her. The golden medallion had, on one side, a lotus flower, and, on the other, Mother's symbol, with the dates 29.2.56 and 29.2.60. There was also a card describing in English and French the event that had taken place on Wednesday, 29th February, 1956 during the common meditation.

The next day a notice appeared on the Ashram notice board. Headed 'The Golden Day', it announced that 'Henceforth the 29th February will be the day of the Lord'.

But what was the 'event' that had taken place in the Playground on 29th February, 1956, and which future Golden Days would commemorate?

Mother described it as follows:

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 movement 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.

Mother was later to explain that this was not a 'descent', which would be simply for an individual consciousness, but a 'manifestation', which meant the consequences of the 'rushing down' of the supramental Force would be felt worldwide. In fact, one month later, Mother clarified

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.

In April, 1956, she reiterated.

The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.

It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it.

Three months later, she clarified further for the students of the Ashram:

What has happened, the really new thing, is that a new world is born, born, born. It is not the old one transforming itself; it is a new world which is born. And we are right in the midst of this period of transition where the two are entangled—where the other still persists all-powerful and entirely dominating the ordinary consciousness, but where the new one is quietly slipping in, still very modest, unnoticed—unnoticed to the extent that outwardly it doesn't disturb anything very much, for the time being, and that in the consciousness of most people it is even altogether imperceptible.

The old world, she explained, was an age of the gods, and consequently the age of religions. However, now, all these old things seem so old, so out-of-date, so arbitrary—such a travesty of the real truth. In the (new) supramental creation there will no longer be any religions. The whole life will be the expression, the flowering into forms of the divine Unity manifesting in the world. And there will no longer be what men now call gods.

And she invited the students to join her in 'the great adventure' where



The Mother giving Terrace Darshan on the Golden Day of 29.2.1964

It is not a question of repeating spiritually what others have done before us, for our adventure begins beyond that. It is a question of a new creation, entirely new, with all the unforeseen events, the risks, the hazards it entails—a real adventure, whose goal is certain victory, but the road to which is unknown and must be traced out step by step in the unexplored. Something that has never been in this present universe and that will never be again in the same way. If that interests you...well, let us embark.

A few years later, on 3rd February, 1959, she had an experience that showed her that the supramental world already existed in a permanent way, and that she was there permanently in a supramental body. *I went strolling there in a concrete way – as concretely as I used to go strolling in Paris in times past – in a world that EXISTS IN ITSELF, beyond all subjectivity...I now know that for the two worlds to join in a constant and conscious relationship what is missing is an intermediate zone between the existing physical world and the supramental world as it exists. This zone has yet to be built, both in the individual consciousness and in the objective world, and it is being built.*

Regarding this, in the first hours of 1st January 1969 Mother had the experience of what she later identified as the consciousness of the 'Overman', an intermediary species. Later, she explained that *The change from the human into the supramental being is being achieved ... through the overman. It may be that there will be some overmen – there are some – who will make the transition possible.*

However, in spite of the fact that she had said that this new Force was, as yet, "very young, very weak", many people wanted to know how it was manifesting in the world, and how it would change their lives. To the students she explained that

Those who are ready within, who are open and in touch with the higher forces, those who have had a more or less direct personal contact with the Supramental Light and Consciousness, are capable of feeling the difference in the earth atmosphere.

Later, questioned further about how they could tell if someone was in touch with the supramental, she said there are two 'irrefutable signs'

1. a perfect and constant equality,
2. an absolute certainty in the knowledge.

To be perfect, the equality must be invariable and spontaneous, effortless, towards all circumstances, all happenings, all contacts, material or psychological, irrespective of their character and impact.

The absolute and indisputable certainty of an infallible knowledge through identity.

Asked how mankind as a whole can benefit (although she disliked this term), she replied

NOW MAN CAN COLLABORATE. That is, he can lend himself to the process, with good will, with aspiration, and help to his utmost. Which is why I said it (the divinisation of life on Earth) will go faster. I hope it will go MUCH faster. But even if it does go much faster, it will still take some time! [Caps in original transcription, eds]

Georges van Vrekhem in his book, *Preparing for the Miraculous*, claimed that the effects of the 1956 Manifestation could also be seen in other ways. He pointed to the phenomenon called "the Sixties": the decade of the New Age movement, the student revolts of '68, and the Velvet Revolution of the same year in Prague,

as well as the technological acceleration resulting in the global spread of television, the space technology of Sputnik, Apollo 11 and the nuclear rockets, the computer, and an increasing miniaturization of things technological. It was also the time when the desegregation movement in the US gave equal rights to all. *"The common impulse behind all these phenomena was the need of 'unity for the human race by an inner oneness,' without which, according to Sri Aurobindo, the new world would not be possible."*

In fact, Mother was very explicit when asked what lay behind the students' protests in Paris in May, 1968.

It's clearly the future which is awakening and trying to drive away the past...it's the higher power COMPELLING people to do what they must do... It's clearly (not in the detail of it, but in the direction of the movement), clearly a will to have done with the past and to open the door to the future. It's like a sort of revulsion with stagnation. That's it. A thirst for something which is ahead and appears more luminous, better. And indeed there IS something – it's not just imagination: there IS something. That's the beauty of it, it's that there is something. There IS a Response. There IS a Force that wants... to express itself.

However, she deprecated the violence; as soon as one indulges in violence, it's the return to the past.

Yet, if a new world is being ushered in, why is there still so much violence, why are there so many upheavals everywhere?

In 1919, in *The Ideal of Human Unity* Sri Aurobindo explained that *each positive evolutionary movement induces inevitably an enormous force [of resistance] commensurable with the magnitude of the thing that has to be done. But always these resistances turn out to have assisted by the resistance much more than they have impeded the intention of the great Creatrix and her Mover.*

Much later, Mother was asked that if the present chaos and calamities were the birth pangs of a new creation, as Sri Aurobindo had said, how long would they continue?

They will continue, she said, *until the world is ready and willing to receive the new creation; the consciousness of this new creation is already at work upon earth since the beginning of this year. If instead of resisting, people were collaborating, it would be quicker. But stupidity and ignorance are very obstinate!*

And she explained that *What is happening now is something that never happened before, and therefore nobody understands it. There is like a golden Force which presses on the [material] world, which has no material consistency but nevertheless seems terribly heavy and which presses on Matter. And the apparent result is as if catastrophes were inevitable. But together with this impression of inevitable catastrophes there are solutions to the situation, events which seem to be utterly miraculous. ... It is no longer like it was: this really is a new world...*

She also warned, in one of her last messages, that *"Before dying falsehood rises in full swing."*

As for the doubters who see only the present chaos, she emphasised, *"The advent of a new world is an ineluctable fact and whatever name is given to it, its victory is certain."*

How, then, does one open oneself to participation in this new creation?

Mother gave some clues:

Be receptive and be plastic.

The Truth-Consciousness can manifest only in those who are rid of the ego.

It is indispensable that each one finds his psychic and unites with it definitively. It is through the psychic that the supramental will manifest itself.

In this context, it is worth remembering what Mother wrote in 'To Be a True Aurovilian'.

The first necessity is the inner discovery to find out what one really is behind the social, moral, cultural racial, hereditary appearances. At the centre there is a being free, vast, aware, all-knowing, who awaits our discovery and must become the effective centre of our being and our life in Auroville.

The coming Golden Day is a reminder that the world, according to Mother, has ineluctably changed. It provides yet another opportunity to refocus ourselves on the new rather than on the last desperate flailings of the old.

Alan

The tree felling continues extensively

On the 4th January, many people were shocked to see many Service trees (*Peltophorum pterocarpum/Copper Pod tree*) being felled on the Crown between the Solar Kitchen and Mahalakshmi Home. Some hours later, the Auroville Town Development Council constituted by the Governing Board (FO-ATDC) informed residents that trees on the Crown Right of Way were being cleared “so that the infrastructure cables and pipes along the Crown can be implemented”. In fact, the tree cutting in recent days went well beyond this stretch of the Crown. Trees were also cut between Kalabhummi and Transition, in the Centre Field area, Transition, Revelation, Youth Centre, Bliss, Aurovelo and Anitya, and the Southern Service Node was cleared of vegetation by JCBs. Since the Supreme Court of India stayed the order of the National Green Tribunal Southern Zonal Bench (NGT), which had directed the Auroville Foundation to prepare a proper township plan and obtain environmental clearance for the plan and till then, except for the Crown Road, not to proceed with further construction in the project area, more than 3,000 trees have been cut to begin clearing the Right of Way not only for the Crown, but also for the radials and the Outer Ring Road.

The RA Working Committee wrote a letter to the Chairman and members of the Governing Board, as well as to the Chairperson and members of the International Advisory Council, urgently bringing to their notice the “unfortunate and unnecessary cutting of Service Trees” on the Crown.

In this letter, they clarified that “The Service Trees were planted in the year 2002 by Aurofuture, the planning office of Roger Anger, the Chief Architect of Auroville, and in accordance with the indications in the Master Plan. The plantation and the alignment were decided in anticipation of the construction of the Crown Road so that it could already be shaded with avenue trees at the time of its construction.

“The European Commission, recognizing that this was an innovative way of planning, contributed to the cost of their plantation with a partial grant-in-aid through the Asia Urbs project, IND-015. The road in this area has already been completed and the street lights and other infrastructure has already been installed so why is it necessary to cut these trees that provide shade and beautify the area, and have been funded by a specified grant from the EC?

We respectfully request that this operation of tree cutting along the existing built portions of the Crown Road is halted and reconsidered in view of the above considerations.”

The Chairman and Secretary of Auroville

International echoed this request in a letter to the Governing Board in which they expressed “shock and dismay” at the “unjustified massive tree felling in Auroville on a built section of the Crown Road between the Solar Kitchen and Mahalakshmi Home in the centre of the city”, noting that “Auroville’s good international reputation, which has been built up over decades and is based in particular on its unique achievements in the restoration and reforestation of a formerly barren stretch of land, is being damaged to the utmost by this act of violence against nature. These actions are particularly incomprehensible at a time when green city centres are seen as one of the most effective countermeasures against the overheating and drying out of

work towards developing plans that avoid unnecessarily harsh interventions in Auroville’s natural environment.”

Two members of the Auroville International Advisory Council, the third Authority of the Auroville Foundation, also registered strong protests [see box].

On 5th January, an article on the issue appeared in *The Hindu* newspaper. It reported that resumption of tree felling for the Crown Road project had triggered another round of protests by “a section of residents who alleged that the process is being undertaken in an arbitrary and unsafe manner”.

It also quoted a spokesperson for the Auroville Foundation who dismissed the charges as unfounded,

thorough mapping and clear markings for facilitating the Crown right-of-way”.

The spokesperson was also reported to have said that the objectors were ignoring proportion and perspective as hardly 0.16 % of the total number of trees in the township would be affected – for which compensatory forestry was ongoing – and when the city plan itself had clearly marked green belts and corridors.

“Only trees that were planted in the Right of Way, either for timber or by residents as a means of obstructing city development, are the ones being cut.”

In a subsequent *The Hindu* article, headlined ‘Tree clearing for Auroville’s Crown Road sparks claims, counter claims’, a Foundation spokesperson explained that “the Crown was never a forest area, right from the time of the 1969 study carried out and approved by the Mother. A majority of trees that need to be felled...are self propagating Work or neem trees.

“The rare ones should never have been planted there, and certainly did not have the accord of the chief architect of Auroville, whose sketches of the Crown show that it was a plaza and urban corridor, not an avenue flanked by trees on both sides. The ongoing work to prepare the infrastructure to serve the needs of an estimated 50,000 people was being carried out in a coordinated fashion with CPWD with Town Development Council inputs.”

On the claims of damage to offshoots of the Service Tree, the Foundation stated that these saplings were planted in Pitchandikulam forest. If newer generation seeds had been planted somewhere, they had not been documented.

The Foundation made other statements in their press release which were not included, or referred to only in passing, in *The Hindu* articles. These included that Auroville is being implemented as per its approved Master Plan as provided for in the Auroville Foundation Act; that only “a few residents of Auroville have raised hue and cry that trees are indiscriminately felled”; that the trees that were planted with the knowledge that they would need to be cut are mainly of aggressive-invasive species, such as the Work tree *Acacia auriculiformis*; and that surveyors have marked these project sites and the felling is being undertaken in a coordinated fashion.

The press release concludes, “It may be appreciated that Auroville was planned to be a city for 50,000 people from its very inception and hence needs infrastructure to be developed to make it a vibrant city as dreamt by the Mother – the founder of the (sic) Auroville”.

In response, the RA Working Committee and ‘Other Concerned Residents’ wrote a letter to the Governing Board and International Advisory Council making what they stated to be a point by point rebuttal of these claims. Among other things, it noted that objections to what was happening were not being made by a few residents but by a vast array of people both inside and outside Auroville, including from six neighbouring villages; that no unconditional or absolute permission to fell trees indiscriminately had been given by the latest court order; that the surveys have been unprofessional and haphazard and the cleared areas were not accurately pre-marked, and this, along with the haste in which the operation is being implemented, is causing inaccurate and unnecessary clearing; that almost 100 different rare indigenous and other rare tree species have been cut in different areas of Auroville; that the location of the roads along which the trees are being cut is not mentioned in the Master Plan 2025; and that Auroville is not being implemented as per its approved Master Plan because multiple deviations, changes and errors regarding this Plan have been documented so far.

It concludes, “The plans currently being implemented for the laying of infrastructure are extremely detrimental for a city that is under development as they require roadsides and sidewalks to be dug up each time a repair or new connection is required. There are simpler, and more sustainable and cost effective, methods that are available and were proposed for roads and other development but these proposals were ignored.... Mother stated that Auroville should be the city the earth needs. Objections from residents are because developing a sustainable city is the call of the moment and how Auroville does things is as or more important than what is done. Roger Anger stated Auroville should be built by Aurovilians, this sub contracting out of the work is seen as diminishing the care, quality and consciousness in the creation of the material aspect of the city.”

PHOTO: MARCO SAROLDI



Felled Service Trees on a section of the recently completed Crown Road

cities and their surroundings as a result of climate change.

“It is especially painful to learn about this situation as the trees that are now falling victim to the chainsaws were all offsprings of the one big Service Tree standing at a sacred place, the Samadhi of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo in the Pondicherry Ashram, as they were planted with seeds from this very tree.”

They concluded, “We believe that this is one action too far against which all Aurovilians, friends of Auroville and also Ecology’s and Nature’s friends must speak out. That’s why we urge you to put a stop to any further useless tree felling and to

ed, saying that the entire operation was being carried out under the supervision of designated teams, in compliance with law, and with reverence for the Master Plan. The spokesperson also explained that as the Auroville Foundation had obtained a stay in the Supreme Court on the order of the NGT, “there is no bar on implementing development of projects as per the Auroville Master Plan”.

“In response to a question,” the article continued, “a Foundation official said that by no stretch could it be claimed that the interim stay was being used as a *carte blanche* to indiscriminately bring down trees. On the contrary, the operation is being undertaken based on a proper CPWD survey,

Statement issued by two members of the Auroville International Advisory Council

This statement is issued in response to the indiscriminate feeling of numerous trees apparently for road construction, currently taking place in Auroville. 4th January 2024

We would like to record our strong disapproval of the current felling of trees in Auroville, including the one close to the Auroville Library and Solar Kitchen today, for the following reasons:

1. The current plan of a Crown road, a ring road and 12 radial roads, is an invention which violates the Master Plan 2001. The Master Plan nowhere demands that the Crown Road or the Outer Ring Road should be perfect circles; it also nowhere prescribes a number of radial roads, now arbitrarily fixed at 12, without a proper traffic circulation plan. It only provides a broad framework and insists that “it will neither be traditional, nor static and rigid.” After a gap of over two decades the first task should have been to revisit the Master Plan, instead of falsely claiming to follow it.

2. The Master Plan called for integrated planning. Over the years, several of Auroville’s urban planners, architects, water management and environmental experts produced plans (sometimes also DDPs), all of which were brushed aside by the current administration.

3. One such plan (there were others) was the one worked out by the Dreamweaving process, which the Auroville community at large supported. The Dreamweaving output was acknowledged by the Governing Board

but, again, ignored and brushed aside, allowing the administration to push on with its own unapproved plan.

4. The Master Plan 2001 gives central importance to environmental considerations. For instance, “There cannot be a complete freedom for individuals, groups of individuals or institutions to carry out developments without consideration for the surrounding environment. ... Development proposals will be considered only ... if effectively eco-friendly and environmentally appropriate ...” And most importantly: “Innovative models and techniques in the field of afforestation, land development, water conservation, rainwater harvesting, building technology, community participation, energy saving, etc. incorporated in the Master Plan would be integral to the township development and management.”

5. Incomprehensibly, the current administration has shown total contempt for this vision, in effect imposing on Auroville an unapproved plan which has seen no consultative process, in violation of the Auroville Foundation Act and the very spirit of Auroville (contrast with the Dreamweaving process, which saw widespread consultation over months). Its plans are clearly not “eco-friendly and environmentally appropriate”.

6. Examples of this woeful lack of vision sadly abound: the hugely wasteful concrete blocks used for road making, which will have severe consequences on water circulation; the unnecessary width of the planned roads (we are told that some of those widths have recently been much increased, with no rational justification); the untimely plans for an “Outer

Ring Road”, when the presence of numerous private lands and whole villages on its path restrict it to less than a third of a circle, making it an impossibility at this point of time; and the dogmatic, rigid unwillingness to deviate from perfect circles when even slight deviations could have helped save well-forested areas or precious water bodies.

Based on our direct observations of the ground situation and discussions with many stakeholders, our conclusion is that the current frenzy of massive tree-cutting is wholly unjustifiable. It is a cruel act against Nature, when the need worldwide is not only to protect Nature but integrate it in our lives, in education, and in our cities.

The world over, new concepts of “green cities” of different kinds, based on such an integration, are being urgently pushed forward. This was precisely what Mother wanted Auroville to be: not an ordinary city of concrete, but one that would show the path to the future.

Regrettably, the current administration, unrestrained by the Governing Board, is showing instead a path to a destructive past.

We call for a halt to all tree cutting in Auroville and other works until the current plans are reviewed by genuine experts, modified to integrate environmental considerations at every step, and approved by the community just as the Dreamweaving process was.

Gabi Gillessen and Michel Danino
Members, Auroville International
Advisory Council

New Entry and Exit regulations

The Governing Board (GB) has approved new ‘Admission and Termination of Persons in the Register of Residents Regulations’, and published them in part III of the Gazette of India on January 4th, 2024. The new Regulations, which replace the Regulations of 2020, have been made without consultation with the Residents’ Assembly and hand power to the Secretary and the GB to determine who lives in Auroville.

The Entry Board and the newly-formed Exit Review Group, have been replaced by an “Admissions and Terminations Scrutinising Committee” (ATSC), consisting of five members, at least two of which are residents nominated by the GB, based on a call for nomination from the Residents Assembly. The three other members of the Committee, described as Non Resident members, are nominated by the Chairperson of the GB and shall be persons having knowledge and expertise in the field of administration. The task of the ATSC will be to scrutinise all applications for admission as volunteers, Newcomers or residents; decide each case on merit; and, after completing the process of consultation with the Residents’ Assembly, convey its decision to the Secretary. The ATSC will also verify applications related to visa matters and recommend to the Secretary an appropriate visa for an applicant and his or her descendants or wards.

In addition, the ATSC will scrutinise all complaints, information or reports received against a volunteer, a Newcomer or resident made by any resident or anyone, for violation of the Auroville Admission or Auroville Residence Criteria, and decide each case on merit, and, after completing due process of consultation with the Residents’ Assembly, convey its recommendations to the Secretary.

The Secretary has been given the power to either accept the decision of the Admissions and Terminations Scrutinising Committee or disagree, for reasons to be recorded in writing. The new Regulations also constitute an Appellate Committee of three members of the GB which will decide on appeals filed against the rejection of an application for admission, or against termination. Lastly, the new Regulations state that if the Central Government has reasons to believe that any volunteer, Newcomer, resident or any other person in Auroville, is a threat to national security or possible offender under any Act administered in India, it shall communicate the need for removal of such person or necessary action to the GB through the Secretary, and the GB shall immediately cause such communication to be put in action with immediate effect.

On January 9th, the Working Committee supported by the Auroville Foundation (AVFO-WCom) circulated the call of the AVFO for self-nominations to be members in the ATSC. On January 15th, the Auroville Foundation Office locked the office of the Entry Board without any prior information. This lock-out comes nearly 1.5 years after the Entry Board and Service were suddenly locked out of their Google Workspaces.

New Entry and Exit regulations: responses

In response to the publication of the new Regulations, the RA-WCom initiated an Emergency Residents’ Assembly Decision-making process. The residents were asked to pass a resolution that the new Regulations are an overreach by the GB and usurp the powers given to the Residents’ Assembly as per the Foundation Act, and that the Residents’ Assembly asserts its right to carry out its functions as detailed in the Auroville Foundation Act. The resolution was accepted; 710 valid votes were submitted online and in-person with 701 people voting in favour, 4 people against, and 5 ‘don’t know’.

In two separate affidavits to the Madras High Court by the RA-WCom and an Auroville resident, the Court was petitioned to grant an order of interim stay restraining the AVFO from giving effect to the new Regulations, and declare the new Regulations *ultra vires* of the Auroville Foundation Act.

Auroville Foundation (Framework for Selection of Working Committee) Regulations, 2024.

On January 12th, 2024, the GB published the Auroville Foundation (Framework for Selection of Working Committee) Regulations, 2024, in part III of the Gazette of India. The Regulations were made without consulting the Residents’ Assembly.

The Regulations specify that the GB shall constitute a Selection Process Committee (SPC) and appoint its five members after a call for nominations from the Residents Assembly and from the nominations thus received. To become a SPC member one must have expertise in the field of administration.

The SPC has two functions: (1) to review the existing selection process and (2) to conduct the selection of the Working Committee members.

In the process of reviewing the existing selection process, the SPC has to ensure that the Mother’s guidelines for organisers in Auroville are respected; these have been specified in an appendix to the Regulations. The SPC will publish its reviewed selection process proposal and ask for feedback from the residents who have fourteen days time to submit it. The SPC shall consider the comments received from the residents and upload the same on the Auroville Foundation website, along with its responses. The SPC shall then finalise the selection process method and submit it to the Residents Assembly and the GB. After approval of the GB the document shall be uploaded on the website of Auroville Foundation and come into effect.

The second function of the SPC is to conduct the selection process of Working Committee members. The Regulations specify the qualifications to become a member of the Working Committee which are: to have been a resident for a minimum period of five consecutive years; to comply with the laws of the land, the Auroville Foundation Act, the Rules of the Auroville Foundation, and the various Regulations and standing orders issued by the Governing Board; and to be available full-time as a member. Though the regulations specify that a member can only serve in

the Working Committee for one term and may re-apply after a lapse of next one term, the term of office itself has not been specified in the Regulations.

On January 17th, the AVFO called for self-nominations for SPC membership.

Responses to the Framework for Selection of Working Committee Regulations

As the Framework for Selection of Working Committee Regulations appear to be in contravention of the Auroville Foundation Act which states in section 19.2 that “The manner of choosing the members of the Working Committee and their term of office shall be such as may be decided by the Residents Assembly”, concerned residents have collected signatures on a petition requesting the Residents’ Assembly Service (RAS) to open an Emergency Residents’ Assembly Decision (E-RAD) “regarding the Governing Board’s questionable attempt to interfere with the selection process of WCom members.”

The RA-WCom has petitioned the Madras High Court to stay the Auroville Foundation (Framework for Selection of Working Committee) Regulations, 2024, and declare that the Auroville Foundation (Framework for Selection of Working Committee) Regulations, 2024, is *ultra vires* the Auroville Foundation Act, 1988.

Minutes Governing Board meetings 2023 published

More than two months after the Central Information Commissioner, an appeal authority under the Right to Information Act, reprimanded the Public Information Officer of the Auroville Foundation for not responding to Right for Information requests and not publishing the minutes of meetings of the Governing Board, the AVFO has published on its website the minutes of the GB’s 63rd, 64th and 65th meetings, held on February 16th, August 9th and December 12th 2023 respectively. The agendas for these meetings were not shared with the Residents’ Assembly; the GB has also not sought the advice of the Residents’ Assembly on topics relating to the residents of Auroville, as stated in the Auroville Foundation Act. We publish here some of the important decisions taken by the Board. To read the full minutes visit <https://aurovillefoundation.org.in/publications/governing-board-meeting-minutes/>

63rd GB meeting. Excerpts.

In its 63rd meeting the GB approved the project proposal submitted by the EdCIL (India) Limited for the construction of **1,000-bed student hostel** in two phases at Auroville. The Board approved the Auroville Foundation to sign the MoU with EdCIL (India) Limited as per Gol norms. The project cost would be Rs.82 .20 crore (approximately) for Phase 1.

The GB also approved the **construction of a town hall** in Auroville with the approximate budget of Rs. 50 crore. This new town hall, as one of the most prominent public buildings, will be placed on the north-south axis of the Matrimandir within the administrative area of Auroville.

The Board further approved the **Start-up Entrepreneurship project** with the approximate budget of up to Rs. 50 lakhs; and the upgradation of the SAIIR quarters (built with a grant from the Government of India) with basic facilities at an estimated cost of Rs. 50 lakhs for 8 units.

The Board further welcomed the presentation of the Organisation and Governance Committee on the **need for defining rules, processes and regulations** for the functioning of the Residents Assembly and approved the action points proposed, e.g. Auroville Foundation Regulations 2023, Model Code of Conduct for the Units, Activities, Projects and Trusts operating under Auroville Foundation and proposed organisational reforms for Auroville including re-organisation of various working groups.

64th GB meeting. Excerpts.

In its 64th meeting the Board asked the Secretary, Auroville Foundation to take necessary steps to **streamline the housing allotment** and regulate the housing according to The Mother’s perception. The houses may be allotted to the Aurovilians based on the number of persons in their family.

The Board approved the HUDCO project for **housing development in Auroville**. The approximate budget is Rs. 132.1 crores. HUDCO has accepted to give the financial support of up to Rs. 100 crores as a **loan for manifesting (1) the Habitat (extension towards the east of the present Habitat), (2) the New Birth (North east comer of Residential Zone Sector 1); and (3) the Line of Progress (Residential zone Sector 3)**. Rs 32.1 crore will be borne by the Auroville Foundation as seed money, subject to the approval from the Integrated Finance Division, MoE, New Delhi. The total amount Rs. 132.1 crores is envisaged to be refunded with nominal interest to be mutually agreed upon by the future residents of Auroville through their monthly maintenance scheme.

The Board also approved the **CIRHU project**, to create an international forum where seekers from all nations will carry out multi-disciplinary research & experiments for the manifestation of an actual human unity, and for finding real solutions both to our planetary challenges and the future evolution of our species. The Board gave an in-principle approval for the approximate budget of Rs. 114 crores subject to the approval from the Integrated Finance Division, MoE, New Delhi.

The Board also approved the setting up of an **experiential Sri Aurobindo Virtual Museum** under the YEM scheme of the Ministry of Culture and suggested to identify various experts, stal-

warts, poets and orators for collecting ideas for the implementation The Board gave an in-principle approval for the approximate budget of Rs. 12 crores subject to the approval from the Ministry of Culture, New Delhi.

Further, the Board suggested preparing a detailed proposal with financial estimates for setting up an **Institute for Integral Medical Education in Auroville** synthesizing the Indian system of Medicine with allopathy system by collaborating with Institutes of National Importance (INIs) such as ITRA and JIPMER respectively.

The Board approved **exchanging 27.17 acres of Auroville land** for 34.48 acres of privately owned land within the city area. Further, the Board approved exchanging 28.56 acres of Auroville land for 27.91 acres of government poramboke land. Lastly, the Board approved to hand over 1.73 acres of Auroville land to the Panchayat Department of State Government as gift, so as to make a **VIP Road**. The State Government has agreed to make this road.

65th GB meeting. Excerpts.

The Board in-principle approved the construction of a **boundary wall around the inner circle of the outer ring road**. As the costs of erecting a barbed wire fencing are cheaper to the tune of about 50% to the cost for prefabricated cement structure, the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) submitted a revised quotation for Rs.18.69 crores. The GB approved the work as per the revised estimates of the CPWD.

The Board approved starting an **Atal Community Innovation Centre** in Auroville with a matching contribution of Rs.2.5 Crore. [The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog is a Government of India’s flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country and was set up in 2016, eds].

The Board has noted the **MoU signed between IIT, Madras and the Auroville Foundation** and approved the allocation of 105 acres of land for the said proposal. [no details on the MoU were included in the minutes, eds.]

The Board approved the **Donation Channeling Process** framed by the GB-FAMC which provides for an online portal for registration of projects for which donations are to be raised, regarding processes involved in disbursement of donated funds to the projects, furnishing quarterly reports to the donors and checks to monitor the projects continuously. The Board also formed a committee to monitor the donation channeling processes.

The Board approved the **loan proposal of the GB-FAMC to provide support to existing units and startups of Auroville** by providing loans from the capital available with Auroville which are at present in fixed deposits with banks. The loans will be processed by a Loan Management Team and on its recommendation, loans will be approved by a Loan Approval Team.

The Board approved seeking **extension of time for implementation of the Auroville Master Plan (Perspective 2025), until 2035**.

The Board approved to **create three posts at Deputy Secretary** level to (i) handle security related matters; (ii) accounts & audit related matters and for (iii) general administration of the Office of the Foundation. This will provide sufficient time for the Secretary to concentrate on policy issues and development of Auroville as per the Master Plan to make it a vibrant city with the spiritual and economic wellbeing of all the residents.

The Board approved engaging a retired Delhi Development Authority Officer for an initial period of six months to frame, finalise and notify **Green Space Regulations** to ensure proper management and development of the green belt.

The Board gave its in-principle approval for the **draft “Auroville Universal Township Area, Green Belt Area and constitution of Town Development Council Regulations”** which aim at controlling non-conforming/unplanned developments in Auroville Township area and Green Belt Area so that development is regulated only in terms of Master Plan (Perspective 2025). Regulations will encourage the general and ‘green development’, which shall be characterized by prescribed Zoning & Development promotion Regulations including Maximum Ground Coverage, permissible land use, and use activities to foster sustainable development & green living, and to combat the threat of intensive non-conforming unauthorized developments in and around the universal town and envisaged Green Belt around the universal township area.

City Services Contribution waivers cancelled

The GB appointed Funds and Assets Management Committee (GB-FAMC) has cancelled all city services contribution waivers approved of by former BCCs or FAMCs for individuals, services and units before March 2023. City Service contributions are contributions each unit or service pays for each Auroville resident working for that unit, and which self-supporting residents pay by themselves. It presently amounts to Rs 3,800 / month. The GB-FAMC has stated that its decision “will come into effect immediately and apply to the contributions due for Financial Year 2023-2024 onwards”, e.g. retroactively from April 2023 onwards. Services and units seeking waivers will need to apply before the beginning of the financial year to the GB-FAMC and its subgroup, the Budget Coordination Committee which will decide on a case by case basis. Individuals may apply at any time during the year. Waivers will only be given for a one year period and will need to be re-applied yearly.

8th Auroville Film Festival

As befits chroniclers of our real lives, the organisers of the 8th Auroville Film Festival acknowledged in their address on the essence of the festival, the unique times Auroville is experiencing: ‘In the midst of the challenges we currently face, the Auroville Film Festival 2024 stands not as a conventional celebration but as a contemplative and reflective gathering. We come together not to celebrate in the traditional sense, but to engage in a collective introspection, exploring through cinema the deeper meanings of what Auroville stands for, especially in turbulent times’. Further they noted that ‘this gathering, which we call a ‘festival’ in the broadest sense, is an opportunity to pause and look within, to question and understand. It’s a platform for us to explore what human unity truly means amid global unrest and violence. It’s a time to reaffirm our commitment to the ideals of Auroville and to actively engage in dialogues that challenge and inspire us’.

There were four different film categories: films by residents of Auroville and the bio-region; films about Auroville and the bio-region; films by students of Auroville and the bio-region; and international films that develop the theme of human unity. In total the festival featured 22 films by Aurovilians, a film about Auroville, a film by an Auroville student, and 15 films tackling themes related to human unity locally and from all over the world.

For film connoisseurs, regular highlights were the filmmaker panel discussions allowing listeners to gain a deeper understanding of the art



ALL PHOTOS: MARCO SAROLDI



and science as well as reality of film making. Kino Kaberet returned, allowing anyone the chance to write, shoot, edit, and upload a film within 48 hours.

A daily blog by two of the organisers, Daniel and Gautam, as well as daily photos by Marco Saroldi and Fred Duchamp allowed readers worldwide as well as local to see more of the festival as well as to receive more detailed film and panel discussion reviews.

Daniel started the first day’s blog with this entry, giving a taste of the wider festival aspect.

It is January 22nd, and the blowing of a conch marks the start of the 8th Auroville Film Festival at the Town Hall campus. The audience is treated to a concert by the Saragam drummers, a martial arts show by Kshetra Kalari demonstrating the use of swords, daggers, a spear and other weapons, and a fire baton performance by Aurovilian Monica. Soon, dinner is served to the music of The Trio Jazztified, a band of Auroville musicians.

Every night at 6pm there was live music from Auroville bands and accompanying dinners before the 7.30 film starts. The films were split between two venues, inside Cinema Paradiso, and outside the Town Hall facing the lit Matrimandir on a makeshift screen. For a week it became a social hub for some of the community, film buffs, music fans and those taking the opportunity to watch high quality films.

It wasn’t just for locals, there was also the chance for an international audience to view the films too, (with rights restrictions on some international films), allowing the message of human unity and Auroville’s aspirations to reach a wider audience.

Peter Lloyd

For more information: <https://filmfestival.auroville.org/>



Different worlds

One thing is evident at present: there is a complete breakdown in communication between those who favour the present developments and those who, for various reasons and to varying degrees, oppose it.

One narrative is that the people opposing the present developments are the ‘foresters’, but this is a totally inaccurate generalisation. In fact, I need to stress from the outset that there never was, and isn’t today, an ‘anti-city’ movement among those who work on the land and plant trees. In fact, a number of the early pioneers were drawn to Auroville by the prospect of helping create the ‘city of the future’, for they had seen images of the Galaxy and brief descriptions of the future city in various magazines as well as in UNESCO’s newsletter.

But that city took a long time to take shape. On the other hand, the priority for those early Aurovilians was digging wells, planting trees and healing the land so that, gradually, the city for them became more of an abstraction – something which lay in the distant future. Meanwhile, as they worked the land, they absorbed its rhythms, its seasons, smells and textures, along with its innate ‘wisdom’.

This did not mean that planning the city was put on the backburner. Already, in the early days, an Auroville planning office had been set up by Roger in Pondicherry, and both here and in Paris people continued to work on planning the future city. But a planning office was a very different environment from that experienced by those working on and learning from the land and, over time, this made mutual understanding increasingly difficult because, in a sense, those landworkers and planners inhabited different worlds.

But how different those worlds were, and still might be, didn’t strike me until I read a book by the psychiatrist and neuroscientist researcher, Iain McGilchrist. For in *The Master and his Emissary* he identifies how the two hemispheres of the brain, while interconnected, have different ways of apprehending and dealing with reality. In fact, as he puts it, “The two hemispheres represent different worlds.”

“If one had to encapsulate the principal differences in the experience mediated by the two hemispheres, their two modes of being, one could put it like this. The world of the left hemisphere, dependent on denotative language and abstraction, yields clarity and power to manipulate things that are known, fixed, static, isolated, decontextualised, explicit, disembodied, general in nature, but ultimately lifeless. The right hemisphere, by contrast, yields a world of individual, changing, evolving, interconnected, implicit, incarnate, living beings within the context of the lived world, but in the nature of things never fully graspable, always imperfectly known – and to this world it exists in a relationship of care.”

McGilchrist emphasises that almost everything that we do involves both hemispheres. But the way they ‘attend’ to the world is very different. The right hemisphere has an intuitive sense of the whole, but it requires the left hemisphere to determine what comes into being, what can be used. The left hemisphere does this by applying linear, sequential analysis. This forces what is implicit into explicitness, and this brings clarity. However, in doing so, the sense of the whole is lost. Therefore the rational workings of the left hemisphere need to be returned to the intuitive wisdom of the right hemisphere for a healthy balance to be re-established and for wise action to result.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case and, at times, one hemisphere may come to dominate the other. This is generally the left, because while the right hemisphere retains an awareness of the whole, the left has no understanding of this and believes it can manage everything on its own. And thus the ‘emissary’, the left brain, supplants the ‘master’, the right. In individuals this can lead to various forms of psychosis. In societies, McGilchrist observes, it can lead, among other things, to “an increasing bureaucracy, totalitarianism and an emphasis on the mechanistic”.

For the left hemisphere seeks control, and its preference is “for what is clear and certain over what is ambiguous or undecided... for what is single, fixed, static and systematised, over what is multiple, fluid, moving and contingent” and its tendency is “towards abstraction, coupled with a downgrading of the realm of the physical”. “Its guiding principle is division, for manipulation and use require clarity and fixity, and clarity and fixity require separation and division...It is the hemisphere of ‘either/or’.”

The right hemisphere sees nothing in the abstract, but always appreciates things in their context, it is interested in the personal. By contrast, the left hemisphere has more affinity for the abstract or impersonal. In fact, as McGilchrist observes, people whose right hemisphere has been severely damaged, are “unconcerned about others and their feelings”.

McGilchrist’s description of the hemispheres and their relationship is based upon his and others’ extensive neurological research. But it is inevitably limited and doesn’t map easily on to the spiritual experiences and evolutionary vision of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. For example, he has no understanding of the planes of being, of the psychic, or of how higher levels of consciousness change one’s perception of the self and the world.

But two things strike me as possibly having some validity, particularly in reference to what is happening in Auroville today. Firstly, there is the issue of the difficulty of communication between certain sections of the community. McGilchrist believes that the left hemisphere can be seen to represent ‘mechanism’ and the right hemisphere ‘nature’. In this context, I would hazard the generalisation that planners, because their work inevitably involves a high degree of abstraction, are more left-hemisphere oriented while those who work on and with the land are more right-hemisphere influenced. This already makes mutual understanding and, therefore, communication, difficult.

As Wordsworth put it

*Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things
We murder to dissect.*

What makes communication even more difficult is that, according to McGilchrist, each hemisphere uses and understands language differently. The language of the left hemisphere is factual, analytical, while that of the right is more allusive, allegorical, less precise. And this, when the right hemisphere tries to communicate, puts it at a disadvantage in contrast to the left’s ability to convey its point of view.

The other possible insight which the book possibly provides also concerns planning. For if McGilchrist is correct in seeing the need for the analytical left hemisphere to return its findings to the

right in order that they be grounded, embodied, in the real world, then, if this doesn’t happen, there is a real danger that in planning, abstract concepts will be imposed upon the living landscape as well as upon the people inhabiting it.

Great planners – and I would instance B.V. Doshi here – never allow their plans to lose touch with the people and the environment which they are dealing with. I also believe that Roger’s Galaxy plan has a great deal of ‘right brain’ creativity, evidenced in its emphasis upon flow, permeability and the blending of natural elements with built structures. The problem, it seems to me, comes when the plan, the gestalt, is translated into a simplified form to aid construction, because then there is a very real danger that the spirit of the whole will be lost and the project become one that simply engages engineers and contractors: in McGilchrist’s terms, it becomes a ‘left hemisphere’ project.

I think there is a danger that this is happening to the Galaxy at present. What makes it even more critical is that the right hemisphere lacks the language to fully express, communicate, its experience and wisdom so that this can be incorporated into the planning process. Either it is forced into adopting the language of the left hemisphere (like explaining the ‘logic’ of planting trees), which is entirely unsuited to dealing with embodied experience, or it remains silent and gifts the stage to the planners.

(Of course, I am over-simplifying the situation here. Nobody in Auroville inhabits just one category. Some of those involved in planning have been very environmentally-sensitive, while landworkers have been active in planning the future city. Nevertheless, I think the larger point about planning and working on the land representing very different ‘worlds’ has some validity.)

What can we do? Firstly, I don’t think simply adding ‘hard core’ environmentalists to our town planning team is a way to achieving greater wholeness, even if there would be a willingness for this to happen. In fact, believing that simply putting two parts together will automatically create a whole is actually a left hemisphere way of thinking. If anything, this might exacerbate the differences unless each orientation makes a genuine attempt to understand – and even tries to embody – where the others are coming from.

But, as a beginning, perhaps we could try to drop those left brain either/or oppositions, simplistic narratives and labels (‘anti-city’ versus ‘dogmatists’ etc.) which obscure our ability to better understand each other’s point of view, for they cause us to see our fellow Aurovilians as no more than one-dimensional representatives of narrow perspectives and encase us in our own sense of ‘rightness’.

We might also bear in mind what Mother expressed so succinctly in 1966: *As long as you are for some and against others, you are necessarily outside the Truth. You should constantly keep goodwill and love in your heart and let them pour out on all with tranquility and equality.*

Finally, I don’t believe that the breakdown in understanding and communication between different sections of the community – which, incidentally, encompasses far more than just planning issues – is the only challenge facing Auroville at present. Far from it. But I believe it is one of the most fundamental, because when one part of the collective cannot deeply comprehend another, it destroys the fabric of community.

Alan

NEWS IN BRIEF

continued from page 3

New housing policy

The FAMC and Housing Service have announced a new housing policy, which has been endorsed by the Governing Board. Some of the key points include: An Auroville House User cannot be the user of more than one housing asset at a time; residential buildings shall be used only for residential use and cannot be converted into guest houses, homestays, offices or any other use; residential buildings cannot be used for any activities involving personal gain (e.g. renting or leasing of the residential building or parts thereof, use as an office for non-Auroville activities); an Auroville house user who wishes to leave Auroville for a period longer than one month, due to which the house or apartment in which the house will be unoccupied, must intimate the Housing Service so that a temporary house sitter can be accommodated during the absence of the Auroville resident; in case an Auroville house user leaves Auroville permanently, the house or apartment will be re-allocated by the Housing Service in accordance with the provisions of this policy; inheritance rights do not apply to Auroville properties since all properties are legally owned by Auroville Foundation, and not by persons who are using these properties.

New donation channeling process

The establishment of the Donation Channeling Group (DCG) was approved by the Governing Board in their 65th meeting held on 12th Dec 2023. The DCG team will roll out the donation channeling process from 1st April 2024, the start of the new financial year. In preparation for this, all units/projects presently receiving donations (domestic, either

from Auroville units or other Indian sources; or foreign sources) and those new projects / units which intend to receive them, are to immediately start to fill up a “Project Registration Form” (PRF) and this needs to be completed latest by 15th Feb ‘24. Only those units who register themselves with the DCG will be able to receive donations through Unity Fund or via the donation portals. For larger donations, funds will be released to projects in tranches. For every request for withdrawal of funds from the Unity Fund, a “Funds Release Form” (FRF) needs to be filled in. All statutory rules and regulations and guidelines will have to be followed by the Projects / Units, including the maintenance of separate accounts for Foreign Donations. A letter of acknowledgement is to go to the donor for every donation with a copy to the DCG. A quarterly report will have to be sent to all donors with a copy to the DCG.

Closures at Visitors Centre

The Kiosk Cafe (as well as the Dosa Corner space (Cafeteria upstairs) have been ordered to close by the Visitors Centre executives, in consultation with the Assistant Secretary. Reasons were not given and the future use of both these places remains unknown. The dosa service will continue to be available every evening -except Monday- downstairs in the Cafeteria. However, the five employees of the kiosk Cafe face losing their jobs.

Auroville Safety and Security

On 19 January 2024, five of the six Aurovilian members of the Auroville Safety & Security Team (AVSST) received an email from the Budget Coordination Group (BCC) informing them that "BCC & FAMC are unable to support maintenance on your current positions. Your maintenance will be rearranged

according to the attached policy document". No grounds on which this decision was made by the BCC and GB FAMC were provided. Another Aurovilian AVSST member did not receive any email from BCC, although from another BCC communication thread BCC it was clear they would be affected in the same manner. Due to this decision, AVSST has to unfortunately announce that it will no longer be able to serve the community on an emergency basis from 1st February 2024 onward and its 24/7 emergency number (9443090107) will not be available until further notice.

Earthbound pottery festival

The inaugural edition of the Earthbound Pottery Festival – a convergence of artistic expression and cultural celebration – took place over three days at the Alliance Francaise in mid January. The festival was an immersive experience, showcasing work from Auroville and Pondicherry potters, and included demonstrations, film screenings, live performances and thought-provoking discussions. According to the organisers, the purpose was to present studio pottery in a fresh and dynamic light. It was also to have fun: the festival was launched with a Mad Hatter’s Tea Party at which everybody was invited to turn up in fancy dress.

Pongal celebrations

The three-day Pongal festivities began with a colourful celebration at Alankuppam on Monday, January 15, 2024. This was organised by the Mohanam Village Heritage Centre, who put on this festival every year to introduce the traditional practices of the Tamil population living in the villages surrounding Auroville to those unfamiliar with these cus-

toms. There were traditional games, like llavattakal Thooguthal and Silambam, as well as hatha yoga. A seminar on Tamil connections to Asia and the World and a flute concert were also part of the programme.

Shaktikumbh 2024

The Unity Pavilion and Shaktikumbh 2024 organising team are inviting the community to participate in what they describe as “a unique nine day spiritual and experiential immersion based on the philosophical significance of numbers in an integrated Indian context” between 21–29 February in the Unity Pavilion. “To the intuitive seekers of Brahman, the numbers offer many opportunities to meditate upon and realize the hidden symbolism, and its archetypal power, its shakti.” The occasion, say the organisers, is inspired by the five dreams of Sri Aurobindo and intended to “revitalise Bharata Shakti and support the regenerative renaissance of Mother India.” The spiritual force of India is gathered and celebrated every four years with the Kumbh Mela. However, for social, religious and historical reasons, most traditions and lineages to date have been represented by male practitioners. It is envisioned now to build a gathering of female spiritual practitioners, across the subcontinent’s many religious traditions, who can uphold and revitalise the Feminine Principle within, for regenerating, healing and leading our communities, our country, our world. This Shaktikumbh will feature yoga, meditation, dance, art, theater and much more in the service of a transformational journey over nine days. Those who wish to know more or to register can write to shaktikumbhinfo@gmail.com or visit <https://www.shaktikumbh.org/register-for-shakti-kumbh-2024/>

Making eye care available for all

Aurosugan was born in Auroville. After completing an MBA in hospital administration, he worked at the Aravind Eye Hospital for many years. Recently he returned to Auroville and set up a primary eye centre here with ambitious plans to eliminate blindness in Auroville and the bioregion. Here he speaks about his journey.

I was very blessed to be born in Auroville. My mother was working in the crèche when she got labour pains and I was delivered at the Health Centre. So even in those days there was quite a good health structure in Auroville. In fact, my name, Aurosugan, means ‘good health’: it was given me by a devotee of The Mother who was visiting the Health Centre at that time.

My young days were spent in Fertile Windmill and were unforgettable. I lived with my grandfather, Perumal, who was the watchman. He was not educated but he was expert in many things. He played music and he built the house where we lived. Life was very simple. We didn’t have electricity; our only source of light was kerosene lights. My grandfather did not have much money to buy lanterns, so he was upcycling long ago before it became fashionable. He used to take my medicine syrup bottles, clean them, make a hole in the cover, put a thread through it, fill them with kerosene and light them.

I helped him water the trees in Fertile Windmill. There was only one tap in the whole community, so we had to go there to fetch water. I remember how careful my grandfather was about preserving water. In fact, he designed a bio toilet which didn’t need water.

For ten years I lived like that. I didn’t feel deprived because everybody around was living like that: I thought the whole world was like that. However, my mother was not happy for me to be there, so after ten years we moved to Kottakarai Farm. But the memory of those years has always stayed with me, and it fostered my interest in sustainability.

I was fortunate to have my early schooling in the Kindergarten and Transition School. Later, I went to Udavi School. I did my higher secondary education in Pondy.

I did well in my exams. However, as I was the first person in my family to be educated, there was not much understanding about what the further options were. I actually wanted to become a doctor, but that didn’t work out due to financial constraints. But I wanted to do something in the healthcare field. At that point microbiology was really new and interested me as it combined science and health.

for a fellowship in hospital management at the Aravind Eye Hospital in Madurai. It looked like it was decided by Her Grace that this should be my place for service and the practice of karma yoga.

The Aravind experience

For the first five years I worked in administration, learning new skills. During this time, for nine months I was part of a team of doctors and nurses from Aravind who travelled to less developed countries, like Africa, to increase the skill set of their doctors and the efficiency of people working in eye care. I worked in a small hospital in Abuja, Nigeria and an outreach centre, and my job was to train people in administration and quality control.

Africa was an eye-opener for me in terms of the demand for eye care. Till then I had been working in the Aravind hospital, not in the community. But when I went into villages in Africa I was totally shocked. Hundreds of people would come to us and I could see immediately that most of them were blind, with white cataracts on their eyes. This is when I realised that things are different when you don’t have a hospital facility in easy reach or one which people can afford. How to solve that? I realised there was a need for outreach, to go to the villages with eye care teams. So we worked very hard, day and night, to train the African teams to do outreach and not leave out anybody in the wider community who needed their help.

This message, the need for outreach in healthcare, struck me very strongly from my African experience. It gave me a different perspective, the community perspective. This is actually the community model which I want to apply now in Auroville for the bioregion.

Environmental Sustainability

Around 2016, when the sustainable development goals were getting kickstarted, a guest from America who was doing a project on sustainable waste management came to Aravind, and I was tasked to support her project work. I was immediately attracted by her work: it must have been in my genes from my childhood in Auroville that one has to be sustainable.

However, I had not done any academics in

water system, designed by Auroville’s Centre for Scientific Research. I worked on using this water more effectively, monitoring the ground water table and generating data to reduce the water usage.

We made a booklet on sustainable practices in healthcare, and all this got a lot of attention, not just locally but also globally. I conducted a first-of-its-kind conference on environmental sustainability in eyecare and published and presented papers at other conferences. The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness took up this initiative and started a core working group on climate change, and I represented Aravind on this global sustainability group.

I have also received a number of awards for my work, and it was a proud moment when I was selected as an ‘International Eye Health Hero’ in 2019 to be one among three global young leaders invited to interact with Queen Elizabeth online on World Sight Day in 2020.

Covid in Auroville

After twelve years at Aravind I returned to Auroville. I’d always planned to do this but it took me that long because I had to repay the education loan I had taken for my postgraduate study. Every New Year I used sit under the Matrimandir Banyan tree and reflect on what I had done and needed to do next. In January 2021 I decided to come back and give my service to Auroville and see how my experience could benefit the community. I wanted to repay what it had given to me. I also wanted to spend more time with my wife and children (at Aravind I was working long hours, processing 3,000 patients a day). My bosses in Aravind were surprised and shocked that I wanted to leave when I was at the peak of my career there, but when I told them I needed to return to Auroville they agreed, because they also wanted to keep supporting Auroville, for which they had great goodwill.

I began by working at Santé Integral Health Centre because they needed somebody specialised in administration to take care of the coordination work. After a few months, when the very serious second wave of Covid struck Auroville, I coordinated the management of the response. Among other things, we had to coordinate all the healthcare bodies within Auroville and outside. This was very challenging. People were calling me day and night to enquire about symptoms, or to enquire about the health of friends, or to tell me about people who were not observing quarantine.

It was great that many people came forward to help, but it was very tough for me because whenever I made communications about Covid or government guidelines we would get strong reactions. For example, when I communicated regarding the need for vaccination, I would immediately get people telling me, there’s no need, and why was I spreading such misinformation? If people had a different opinion, I respected that. But as a health provider I had to think of the whole community, so eventually we made the difficult decision to post the names of those who were Covid-positive so that their friends and neighbours would know.

However, some people were not even informing us they had the virus. I had to call them on the phone and say we had heard you were not well, but they would say they were totally fine. Only when they got much worse would they ask for our help. But the problem was not just with some of the patients; it was also with the health providers. Each centre had its own way of working, which was helpful, but they were not working together. This is why I thought I had one of the toughest jobs in Auroville at that time, because it was all about collaboration, about bringing people together. *[For more on Aurosugan’s work during Covid, see Auroville Today # 386, September 2021]*

Covid taught everybody in the world a lesson: even the health systems of big countries were under severe strain and sometimes broke down. It taught me that in Auroville we do not have an efficient healthcare system. We provide primary care but we don’t really have a place where people can stay as in-patients, we lack skilled people, our health facilities close around five o’clock, and you don’t know who to call beyond that. Also, we do not have collaboration with local hospitals like PIMS, which would really have helped us cope with Covid. And the coordination problem between the different health providers in Auroville remains unsolved.

All this means that we are still not better prepared to deal not only with epidemics but also with other health emergencies. We don’t have a proper response system, which means that in any emergency we will still be firefighting again. I shared



some of my suggestions for improvements with the Santé team and working groups but I’ve no idea if they are being implemented because, soon after, I had to step down from healthcare coordination.

The Aurokiya project

But what to do next? When I came back to Auroville, I was not really planning to focus on eye care. But since I needed to sustain myself and was passionate about healthcare, I decided to do what I knew best, particularly because there was a big eye problem in Auroville due to people’s increased use of digital devices during Covid. At that time, there were no eye care facilities in Auroville, so I decided to open one up, and Aravind was happy to give support. I set as my goal the elimination of blindness in Auroville and the bioregion. This is when I thought of my African experience and how it taught me the need to reach everybody in the community, not just by providing a centre but also by going out into the villages, workplaces and schools to identify and treat problems early. Starting up a comprehensive eye care facility is not easy as the equipment is very costly. However, what I learnt from Aravind is that when one’s goal is good, the necessary support will follow.

In fact, I received financial support from the Foundation for World Education to set up a small primary eye care centre in Auroville called Aurokiya, meaning ‘good health’. I started with just a primary eye centre, with an optical shop and some basic testing equipment. At our current location in Arka, this is primarily supporting Aurovilians. I have been doing some outreach work from here but plan to expand my work more into the bioregion’s villages, with support from AVI USA and other supporters.

My plan is to reach the community through some kind of mobile van, go to the schools, the villages, the workplaces, do simple testing and provide at least provide 70% of the care the people need at their doorstep. For the remaining 30% they may need to go to hospital. We will provide free treatment as well as follow-up care because we will keep track each patient.

I’m always learning. Recently I met a guest who said I was doing a wonderful job but I could work more holistically to address the problem of eye care. He explained I should not just be concentrating on treating eye problems, but also on preventing such problems happening in the first place. This can be done by teaching ‘eye yoga’, simple exercises to relax and strengthen the eyes. The three mantras are ‘blink, breathe and believe’, and we have been actively working with schoolchildren on this.

I am far from achieved everything I want to do yet, and setting up Aurokiya has had its ups and downs. What does success mean for me? I want people to tell me that I have made changes and done a great job, and that if I hadn’t been here this would not have been possible. If this happens, I feel I will have fulfilled my full potential.

I believe that by doing something good you can grow, and if people see you are going doing a good job, you will always get support. And I’m sure Mother will always shower her blessings.

In conversation with Alan

For more information on Aurosugan’s eye care project, contact aurokiya@gmail.com or aurokiya@auroville.org.in



Aurosugan being interviewed in Tanzania in 2019 after being selected as the Eye Health Hero by the International Agency for Prevention of Blindness(IAPB) for his work on sustainability in eye care.

As I had top marks, I got a free scholarship to a government school in Pondicherry to study it.

My teacher there saw that I was better in administration than the laboratory work so she suggested that afterwards I should take an MBA in Healthcare Administration.

I did this in Madurai, where I also received a diploma in the Sociology of Health. During my MBA, one of the course projects I did was at the Aravind Eye Hospital. There I saw big pictures of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother; it was the first time I had seen such big pictures of them in years outside Auroville and Ashram, so I already felt a connection with the place. But I didn’t apply for a job there then, or search anywhere else. Instead, I wanted to return to Auroville.

I came back to work at the Health Centre where I was born, and started volunteering there with Albert. He told me I was overqualified for the administration job, but I said I just wanted to get some experience. After a few months, he suggested I could get a job with the Sri Aurobindo Society because they were doing healthcare projects in the rural villages. They recommended I should apply

environmental sustainability: in administration you are only trained in financial sustainability. But I learnt that sustainability had to include not only the financial, but also the social and environmental aspects.

At the hospital we were already covering social sustainability because we were serving so many people. But environmentally? It was then that I realised how much waste our healthcare was generating.

So then I started doing a lot of research into the topic. I studied not only waste management, but also water usage and the energy aspect of sustainability. When I started making small changes, like reducing and segregating the hospital waste, reducing water consumption and reducing patient travel, the higher management became interested because sustainable practices in healthcare were a very new concept at that time.

I had all these ideas about what I wanted to do. These included making a much greater use of solar energy. When I began work, our solar capacity in Aravind was just 10% of what we needed, but now it is 60%. We already had a decentralised waste-

Awaiting the Unifying Symbol - an interview with Siegrun

Auroville Today: Siegrun, what brought you to Auroville?

Siegrun: My love for India started with a book, 'Anjana' which I read aged 12. It spoke of the Indian legend of Savitri and I was fascinated. With a craving to understand more, at 18 I started to read the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and joined a German-India society.

Then in 1968, I heard about Auroville, but it was too early for me. I had started my studies and work as a doctor. Later I had a patient who had a house in Stuttgart, and rented a floor to a young Indian couple. The father of the son, Arjun, was General Ashok Chatterjee, who is a long time Aurovilian. Unfortunately, Arjun died, and my friend insisted that I meet Ashok Chatterjee when he came to Germany. We spoke about Auroville and he invited me to visit. I came at the end of 2001, exactly on my birthday, which was on Diwali. I wanted to stay a few weeks and ended up staying three months. I realized that this was my place: it was full of energy and love. Love in the sense of the everlasting love of Savitri, the 'lovers everlasting yes'. I felt I was saying 'Yes' to life, to intentional community. I found Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* and read it in one go; days and nights, days and nights.

Later, I went to the Entry Service and was able to find an apartment being constructed in Arati. On the first night in Arati, with no electricity, I stepped on a big scorpion. I didn't know what to do. The pain stays for one or two days with the same intensity but I survived. It was my initiation into Auroville and I remembered a sentence of Jung. 'Was mich durchkreuzt macht mich zur ganzheit.' (roughly translated as: 'What crosses/challenges me takes me to wholeness'). When I stepped on the scorpion I could have thought this is not my place, but didn't.

How did you become interested in Jung?

I was born in 1942 during World War Two in Czechoslovakia. My family was deported at the end of the war and I was traumatised. At the age of 18 shortly before my German school leaving exams, I more or less collapsed. I felt everything was over. However, I had the good luck to be a patient of a Jungian therapist for a year. So I had an approach to Jung which opened the way for me. My studies continued, I stopped being so lost and a new world opened.

After graduating in medicine, I had first wanted to become a gynaecologist or eye doctor, but in the end I was too interested in Jung. I began work in a psychotherapeutic hospital clinic and in parallel studied Jungian psychology for about seven years. In that clinic I worked with other therapists who were Freudians, Adlerians, and we had a good exchange. Then I opened my own clinic and found my partner, who was also a Jungian.

The tool which helped me get out of trouble was Jung's mythology and his concept of active imagination, which I found so powerful. 'Active imagination' means imagining yourself into new situations and how you would respond. With Jung there is a lot of drawing but what is most important is rubbing out and starting again.

You can go into a situation and using active imagination or dreams, you can change the situation and be in exchange with what comes up. It's a big danger, when your persona says, 'I am a person who...'. Be someone with opposites as Conrad Meyer said "*ich bin kein ausgeklügelt Buch, Ich bin ein Mensch mit seinem Widerspruch.*" (I am not a sophisticated book, I am a person with his contradictions).

Recently I imagined I met someone who had said "I have more power than you". I worked with this and in my imagination I responded that "I have a power, but the power of love, of receptivity, the power of friends and I would not like to change with you." It was an act of imagination, that just came to me. That helped me to feel the reality of where my power is.



Siegrun

Jung introduced the Transcendent Function, a concept where difficulties are polarised till a solution or symbol emerges which transcends and unites the opposites. Do you see the Transcendent Function working in Auroville in this time of crisis as a way of integrating opposites?

The Transcendent Function is a psychic dynamic, if you want to transcend something you have to bring the opposites together. It can change everything, it is a transforming power and can be activated by sandplay, dreamwork, active imagination and other techniques which brings you to a different and wider levels of consciousness. In the end, archetypal opposites can belong together. There is never a one-sided archetype. The devil is an archetype but in the end he's a part of our godly strength and takes this form to develop ourselves.

We have a creative power in us to find something new. To find the unifying symbol, by, for instance, creative writing, we should just begin and let something new come up, because, in the end, something you didn't know before emerges. Meanwhile, you need to accept the polarities. One should not exclude the other.

Jung talked about teleology, the sense that events have a meaningful direction.

When we have a crisis, an illness, it's not because something went

wrong, but because it's a wake-up call to see it on a different level, to not be too identified with what you think it is. It's the same with Auroville. When the crisis started, I worked with the *i-ching*, which for the Jungians, is the Bible. My throw came to '*Umwälzung*' translated as 'radical change'. You can't and should not avoid the change and need to accept it.

I wouldn't say our conflict happened because we made mistakes, because we always make mistakes. It's the learning process which is important.

I ask everybody who comes to me: What is your part in this story and conflict? Why did you come here and what can you contribute? We need to find a way to bring opposites together and to have a motivation to change, both on the inside and outside.

Therapy is a way of opening up to the 'Self', not the enlarged self, but what Jung called the 'opus contra naturam'. You have to open up, feel that Self attracting you like a magnet, and this is easier if you can give up your previous identities. For me, the magnet now is Sri Aurobindo, to open up and feel this force of Sri Aurobindo's supramental consciousness. When I came here and knew more about Sri Aurobindo, I could see that this path was the next step beyond Jung.

What would Jung advise us to do as a community?

To do the next step and not think you have to reach a goal. Sri Aurobindo says there is no end. The goal is to be in the process of yoga. With Auroville there is always a beyond. The divine is creative. As a therapist you should be capable of motivating the client to take the next step by working on their polarities.

Also with the working groups, I would ask, what is our next step? Unity is far away. What can and can't be integrated? Where do we need to make sacrifices and where do we need to say 'no'?

Many people here won't speak to others on different sides. But I don't want to say 'you are bad and I am good.' If I say something about a person, I say more about myself than about the person. We have to integrate, to have acceptance, without condoning. Nothing has to be rejected, all has to be raised to the level of divine consciousness, which is very difficult. People want to get rid of pain, but the next step after that, to bring it to the spiritual level, is hard.

Can we find a new answer to what kind of identity we have now in Auroville? If we give up our identity, something bigger can come. I felt something special with the Matrimandir and did duty there from my arrival. And just now on my birthday, I was told we have enough people, so I should stop working there after 20 years. That felt very uncomfortable, but then I read a quote from Sri Aurobindo 'Fear not to be nothing that thou mayst be all'.

Auroville lies in my heart, but I would like that it doesn't go kaput but gets to another level. It doesn't work that only one side ends up winning.

At the moment, I think the individual work or work in small groups is the way to go. Talk with each other, and create something that is beyond this conflict. Go into your dreams and change the situation there.

The goal here is to be in the process. Mother said 'once the city is built then it will be like any other city,' so it's how we build the city. We should do it in a different way from the rest of the world, with more consciousness, truthfulness and love.

I wait for a unifying symbol – this comes from Jung – but I have not yet seen it with my patients or in their dreams – we are still in the middle of the mud. But I believe it will come.

In conversation with Peter Lloyd

REFLECTION

Returning to Plan "A"

Amid the chaos of the crashing of Auroville's facades, one can sense now, silently being born, but already immensely powerful, the re-emergence of Auroville's orientation towards its true goal: a fundamental change of consciousness, the growth of a real, deep, unifying link between its residents, and another way of being.

Everything we have tried to build, or almost everything, is collapsing, or being distorted out of recognition by our current encounter with World Forces.

Up till now, Auroville engaged the world a bit remotely, through outreach, through projects put into action on the world stage, but now the world has entered the very fabric of Auroville in full force and we meet its presence and actions on a daily, even minute to minute, basis.

But there is a growing glow deep inside, a glow which tells us that even though our old external stage is being reduced to rubble, that even while our surface conventions are basically being cast aside, this apparent destruction has behind it the secret intention of the Time Spirit. That the Time Spirit is forcing us along a path, not of our choosing, but a path that offers us an opportunity, once again, of growing towards the true Auroville, to take more rapidly a next step in its evolution.

Basically, we are being returned to the red desert of the 60s and 70s.

This is a new kind of desert, but also like that in the 70s the only tangible support is our Need, our thirst for the true Auroville to grow, and to manifest.

Now, a different kind of desert is being introduced, the desert of the external world, which is totally preoccupied with the outward scene.

So, for some time to come, there will be two faces of

Auroville: the outward, public, visible structure now being forcibly built, and then nestled deeply inside it, a growing Auroville family welded together by its urgent need to realise the true goals set out for us by the Mother.

It is as if the Time Spirit has declared that she now has no time to waste. No time for the Auroville of the 2000s to quietly grow as a green ecologically oriented community, no time even for Auroville to manifest itself as a perfected galaxy.

The world needs the emergence of the true Auroville spirit. The emergence of a deep binding unity between peoples from all corners of the planet, between man and man. And the emergence of powers of knowledge and action which we cannot now even understand or dream of.

So, personally, seeing the chaos all around, living in it, feeling it, suffering from it, I begin to settle into the hope of an immense emergence.

Auroville is being returned by the Time Spirit, forcibly, to plan "A".

The growth and manifestation of its true consciousness. No time now for meandering bypaths and a long hesitating evolution.

Will the Time Spirit be able to pull it off? Perhaps it does not depend totally on us... (hopefully not!) but we surely have to pay attention and do what we can. We can only try to remain centred deeply in our belief in Auroville's true emergence, in the faith that even though we seem to be being swept away on the wings of the wind, there is indeed a deeper purpose being worked out.

And perhaps, eventually, with a quiet smile, we will be able to enjoy the ride.

John Harper

(First posted on Auronet)

PASSINGS

Tatiana Tolochkova

Pitanga's much loved hatha yoga teacher Tatiana Tolochkova left her body in JIPMER in the first hours of the New Year. She was 54 years old.

Tatiana first came to India in 2003, studying Iyengar Yoga in Pune. She continued to come to India each year to deepen her practice and work through the various levels of certification of yoga asanas. During a chance visit Auroville in 2004, accompanying other Russian yoga practitioner friends, she felt the call to come to Auroville. She made the step in 2007, along with her teenage son, and ever since has been giving yoga classes at Pitanga.

Tatiana's remains were cremated on January 6th at the Auroville cremation grounds.

An article about Tatiana and her work was published in issue the November 2011 issue(# 268) of Auroville Today.



Franca Crocetti

Franca Crocetti from Auromodèle passed away in PIMS hospital on January 8th. Her son Padmanabhan was at her side. She was 86 years old and had been admitted with a respiratory disorder.

Franca visited Auroville for the first time in 1979 and joined for good in 1983. She was a senior school principal in Italy and got actively involved in Auroville's outreach education and made donations to purchase land for this purpose. Another of her activities was setting up the Seniors Helping Seniors (SHS) group to address the growing concerns and changing needs of the elders in the community.

Franca's body was buried on January 10th at the Auroville burial ground.



Celebrating the Poetry and Beauty of Life

A ceramics art exhibition by Priya Sundaravalli

Priya's fifth pottery exhibition, set against the backdrop of the gallery space at Pitanga, was a breathtaking confluence of artistic skill and poetic sensitivity.

Upon entering the exhibition, one was immediately struck by the visual poetry of the creations, but because most of the work is either relatively small in size and intricately detailed, or elegantly understated, at first none of the pieces really spring to one's attention. Rather, they all come alive together, in a subtle and harmonious way, much like a field of flowers sings its own song and showcases its unique collective hue.

It then took more attentive observation to notice that the central pond and its little garden was sprinkled with dozens of pieces. Some were floating like leaves on the pond, some were partially hidden among the greenery, only emerging from it as though they too had sprung out from the nature that surrounded them.



"The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor."

Each piece, a testament to her inspiration from the beauty of life and nature's wilderness, resonated with a unique vibrancy. The diversity in her work – from the gentle undulations of a vase to the intricate textures on a bowl – reflected her quest to embody life's abundance, generosity, and hope.

Priya's skill in hand-building techniques was evident in every curve and contour. The use of stoneware clay, treated with an array of slips, glazes, stains, enamels, and gold luster, resulted in a stunning array of effects. The pieces ranged from earthy and organic to elegantly lustrous, each carrying a piece of the artist's depth and richness of honing all her artistic experiences.

Texture and rhythm were central themes. The surfaces of her pottery beckoned to be touched, each texture telling a story of spontaneity and serendipity, mimicking nature, then juxtaposing it with shimmery details.

One piece particularly struck me, it showed a moonlit path. I felt that it told a story and later came to know that it was indeed illustrating an entire story, inspired by this line of poetry by Alfred Noyes: 'The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor'.

The artist in her statement said the intention was to pursue the unity of opposites. Asymmetry married with balance, chaos intertwined with harmony, and imperfection met with an acute attention to detail. This duality was not



The central pond with ceramic art pieces

just a visual experience but a philosophical exploration, prompting the viewers to ponder the complexities and dualities inherent in life itself, bringing them all together into a beautiful whole.

Another captivating aspect of Priya's work was her use of multiple firings. This technique added layers of depth and richness, with the interplay of light and shadow and glazing techniques bringing each piece to life. The transformation of the clay through the fire seemed to mirror the transformative journey of life, echo-

ing the artist's deep engagement with the process of creation and existence.

In a manner reminiscent of strolling through a field of flowers, each blossom individually observed, one departed from the exhibition, carrying with one a subtle trace of the delicately orchestrated poetry and fragrance that lingered throughout, a subtle scent of hope, to keep and cherish, as the artist had intended.

Chandra

Endless Game

Play as a human need

Heavy earth and lighter sky
Golden birds or broken planes
Icarus never died

Dominique Jacques posed questions and changed the rules in her recent exhibition 'Endless Game'. We're used to visiting a gallery to see an art work with a little caption and then we are left to appraise it. Whilst this was a part of Dominique's work, there were unexpected additional dimensions.

'Amulet' for instance had 103 poetic lines (a few interspersing this review) which were beautifully written to accompany 103

pieces of art that were gifts for anyone who could recite some of the poetic lines. As I mused over which poetic lines best caught my mood, two little girls turned up in the gallery to pick up their piece, each a small work of art that Dominique had picked up in nature and then added to.

Please don't disturb the trees dreaming
Don't wake up the divine beings
Busy with immortality.

There was also a basketball hoop with four basketballs in mid-air, titled 'Kurukshetra', which was based on an Angkor Wat bas relief depicting the famous battle.

There were three archery themed pieces with arrows in varying degrees of accuracy, from bull's eye to further out. What after all is perfection? it seemed to imply.

Some pieces were games in mid flow, like the one of crabs and oyster shells, but reversing the 'winner takes all culture' by creating a 'harmonious universe where the opposition is purely aesthetic.' Another game was titled 'Field of experience', retracing the human life journey which is 'Full of surprises, awareness, choices and opportunities for change.'

Some residents describe Auroville and our life here as a 'lila' (Sanskrit for 'play'). As Dominique writes in her introduction to the exhibition 'Are we just pawns during our passage on earth? Is the game rigged, or do we have the power to push back the limits and change the rules?' This mythic world is alluded to further. 'The game's space is also one of dreams, it's the realm of our imagination, of which we are still the lords, where we let in whatever enchants us most, where haunting memories sometimes visit us. Children, precarious magicians and relentless dreamers still have access to spaces to which we have lost the key'.



Field of Experience - mixed media on aluminium

Higher than the mountains
Deeper than the sea
A new child plays on the ground

Another technique Dominique used was deliberately unfocused shots, allowing something new 'to enter the field of sensation and perception', hinting at other possibilities.

These are not easy days for Auroville, but the exhibition gave a few clues as to possible ways of working with the current state of play (so to speak). Accompanying one image of a boy curled up, were the words: 'Like in an outsized comic strip, different children uncomfortable with their environment retreat into the dream world to escape the oppressive reality that surrounds them'. Whilst this could be interpreted as escapism, it could also hold the possibility of finding inner creative direction in the midst of turmoil.

The exhibition was a welcome indeed, allowing the unexpected and the new, and nudging us deeper into our inner creative and playful worlds. And there were signs of hope.

As Kali Yuga falls apart
Sowing its iron gears
A new age of light emerging

Peter Lloyd



Amulets and poems

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