

AUROVILLE TODAY

April 1990

Auroville - Kottakuppam 605104 - Tamil Nadu - India

Number Sixteen

This month's AUROVILLE TODAY has a strong international flavour: three Aurovilians describe their recent experiences in Moscow, Prague and Berlin, and we report on a visit of Tibetan dancers to Auroville. Among the welter of powerful images, two stand out — the Kremlin resounding to the chants of 'AUM', and the quiet intensity of the call for freedom emanating from the crowd in Vaclav Square, Prague.

What is the relevance of Auroville to all this? Well, as one of the Aurovilians involved put it, when ideology dies, then the *real* work begins. And that, in our stumbling, erratic way, is what we've been trying to do here for 22 years now. To live without ideologies and -isms, to avoid taking the superficial, 'quick-fix' roads of centralized control and imposition. To journey without the usual maps.

If young people in places like Russia and Argentina are turning to Auroville for inspiration, it's not because we embody any radical solutions as yet. It's because Auroville offers the possibility of another path to a world that increasingly is trying to shed ideology — and breathe again.



Bharat Nivas, March 22nd. Tibetan dancers participate in the dedication of the future Pavilion of Tibet.

Photo: Sven

THE Global Forum on Environment and Development, held in Moscow from January 1st to 19th, was organised jointly by the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary leaders on human survival, a group that is based in New York; the Supreme Soviet; The U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences; the International Foundation for the Survival and Development of Humanity; and the All-Faith Communities of the U.S.S.R. (a group coordinated by the Russian Orthodox Church which includes representatives of Islam, Judaism and Buddhism.)

Six hundred international delegates, three hundred journalists, and four hundred Soviets met for nearly a week to examine the pressing environmental issues of the 90's — issues such as pollution, threats to the ozone layer, the population explosion, deforestation and the serious loss of species diversity. Speakers at the conference included astronomer Carl Sagan; Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute; Sheikh Ahmed Kuftaro, the Grand Mufti of Syria; Dr. Karan Singh; author Fritjof Capra; and Frederice Mayor, Director General of Unesco. The Forum's plenary session was opened by Javier Perez de Cuellar, Director General of the U.N. and was addressed at its end by Mikhail Gorbachev himself.

A Moscow Declaration and Plan of Action were published by the delegates of the conference. Both document the state of our global environment, as well as providing suggestions for practical responses to the global crisis. These suggestions include the protection of Antarctica; the expansion of parklands and wilderness preserves; support for indigenous peoples in the protec-

A VISION FOR THE NINETIES?

Two Aurovilians were present at the Moscow Declaration and Plan of Action of the Global Forum on Environment and Development for Survival. Moscow, January 15th to 19th, 1990

tion of their homelands; the banning of dangerous pesticides and the promotion of non-chemical methods of pest control; the making available of modern, efficient and environmentally sound technologies to developing countries, and last but not least, that human material resources otherwise spent on defense be diverted to the protection of the global environment and the eradication of poverty.

A two-hour television broadcast provided live coverage of the conference to 129 countries and reached an estimated audience of 1.2 billion viewers. Ten minutes into the broadcast, Marti's poem 'What is a tree?' (see AUROVILLE TODAY no. 12) was read out.

Marti and Forrest, whose 'Children and Trees Project' was presented in our 6th issue, were delegates to the conference. They shared some of their impressions of Russia and the conference with us upon their return to Auroville in February.

AUROVILLE TODAY: What for you was the importance of the Global Forum?

Forrest: The Global Forum brought together parliamentary, scientific and spiritual leaders. Usually these types of conferences only bring scientists and

diplomats together, but this conference emphasized the spiritual aspect. The final Moscow Declaration highlights that.

At the conference itself, there were native American chiefs in ceremonial dress, Mongolian monks in Buddhist attire, Indian swamis in orange *sadhu* robes... The most important thing about the conference was not the speeches but the actual meeting itself and the connections made by people in positions of economic and political power with spiritual leaders. Why? Because global environment problems are now linked to the feeling that there has to be a higher planetary consciousness. There was a growing recognition that for the problems we face, scientific solutions are not enough. We have to look towards a new, less selfish orientation towards life.

AvT: How did this come through at the conference? Did you feel there were people with new ideas who were capable of generating enthusiasm or were people just adopting a new vocabulary?

Marti: It was a mixture. There were speeches that were official and not very interesting, but there were also people who spoke from the heart. You could feel something strong in some of the women, for instance. Harlem Brundtland, the former Norwegian Prime Minister, who is interested in the Third World as well as the

environment, spoke about a new world based on viable sustainable development and how we have to learn to give and to share and reconsider our priorities. She was followed by Audrey Shenandoah, elder of the Native American Indians Iroquois Confederacy. She spoke about earth consciousness and how we have to listen to what the earth tells us about our own possibilities for survival. In the same vein, several leading scientists expressed alarm over the rapid disappearance of species on this planet and the inevitable consequences for us all. The Grand Mufti of Syria gave a landmark statement on family planning for Muslims. Lester Brown, World Watch Institute, reported that every second, an acre of forest disappears forever from the earth...

The culmination of the conference came at the end of the week, when we were invited by Mikhail Gorbachev to the Kremlin for a final session. That week, there had been upsetting news in Moscow of tensions in Azerbaijan, as well as a declaration of autonomy by the Communist Party in Lithuania. There were also rumours of a massive impending Soviet civil war. We were all wondering if Gorbachev was going to have time to be with us. No one had great expectations, but from the Soviet side, "the meeting was going to be on", and it was. On Friday afternoon, you could see high level U.N. diplomats trying to crowd — like excited children — to be the first ones on the official buses that took us to the Kremlin.

Forrest: In the Kremlin an enormous bust of Lenin in white marble overlooks a massive hierarchically designed room with podiums where the Politburo normally sits. And when Gorbachev came in and the

contd. on page 2

contd. from page 1

grand assembly was convened, an Indian sadhu, Swami Paramananda Bharati, walked to the podium as if he were walking up a mountain road in Karnataka. This old man with white hair and thick black glasses had a powerful voice and began an invocation in Sanskrit. Then he asked everyone to join in the chanting. Soon the whole room was resounding with 'AUM'. It was very moving.

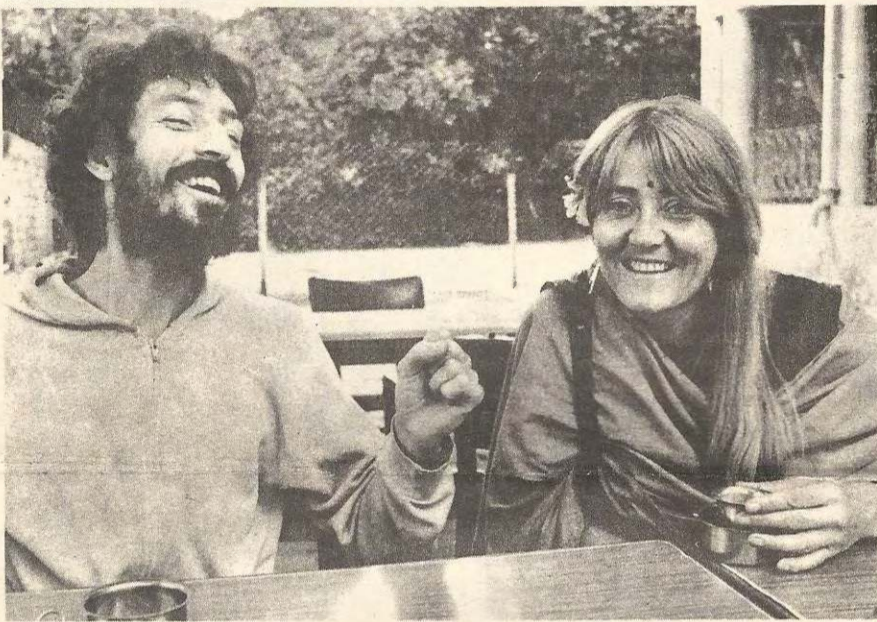
AVT: What were your impressions of Gorbachev and the speech he gave?

Marti: He is very direct. He looks you in the eyes. He listens to you. He is very present. He was also extremely calm. And given that the Soviet Union was not in a calm state at that moment in time, that was something that struck us. Mikhail Gorbachev is a man who has an inner quality to his being. When he talked, he presented a six point program of concrete proposals. He talked about converting the world's armies into environmental task forces to deal with global environmental problems. He proposed creating a Green Cross similar to the Red Cross, which could respond across the international boundaries in the case of

The Moscow Declaration (Extract)

"The future of humanity and of our fellow creatures is at stake. We must act in time, and we must now adapt a new planetary perspective... our loyalties must go beyond narrow frontiers to all life on earth.

We must accept responsibility for adopting a spiritually wise, technologically sound, ethical and farsighted stewardship of the planet. We must find a new spiritual and ethical basis for human activities on earth. Humankind must enter into a new communion with Nature, and regain respect for the wonders of the natural world."



Joyful experience in Russia... Forrest and Marti

environmental disasters like Chernobyl, the Armenian earthquakes and the like. He also talked about the idea of setting up an international ozone bank and an ozone research station to monitor the earth's atmospheric state. The Soviets seem to understand very well the importance of the ozone layer.

Forrest: And the last point that Gorbachev raised — and he said it while almost pounding the podium — was that the most basic thing we can do for the environment right now is to ban all nuclear test explosions. "We are ready to do this", he said. When the meeting was over we lingered on in the room after everyone had left because it had been such a impressive experience.

When we came out into the hallway, we noticed a cameraman weeping. We asked what had happened. "Just take a look up the hall", he said. In a long corridor we saw the Jewish delegates, many of them rabbis, performing their night Sabbath ritual. The meeting had gone on a bit longer than expected and they had found themselves in the Kremlin at 6 p.m. on a Friday evening. So they began their services. This was a powerful historical moment. The Jews had never before been allowed to worship in the Kremlin, which is the old Tsars palace and a symbol of Jewish persecution.

AVT: You mounted an exhibition on Auroville. What interested the Russians most?

Forrest: One man came up and said with twinkling eyes, "I know Sri Aurobindo. I've been reading him for the last 20 years." There were a number of people like that. Nobody mentioned Mother and we found out none of her work is available in the USSR.

Some people knew about Auroville as

an environmental community and they were interested in plans and ideas how the town would develop.

Marti: The Soviet people are looking for new ideas, new visions, new concepts. They don't want to go into a traditional capitalist system, they are strongly committed to something collective. Auroville represents an alternative. Many seemed very idealistic about Auroville. We had to tell them that we have all the problems in Auroville that exist everywhere in the world. We told them that we're trying to deal with them in new ways.

The Soviets remain quite cynical about what has happened to the ideals of communism and the utopian society that was envisioned by Marx and Lenin. So, in some respects they can understand the difficulty of putting the theory into practice.

Some people said they were captivated by the idea of an exchange. Some would like to come to Auroville and others are extremely committed to staying in Russia and said they will create an Auroville in the Soviet Union.

We found Russians to be a profoundly mystical people, even considering the effects of the communist experience. That mysticism is symbolized by St. Basil's church on Red Square, an ancient church almost out of a fairy-tale. That it has survived the modern period in Russian history is a miracle in itself. The Sunday before the conference its bells were rung for the first time since the revolution — in honour of the Russian New Year.

Forrest: I think that what is happening now in the Soviet Union is not just a political restructuring but it's actually a spiritual renaissance.

But for a lot of the young people,

returning to an orthodox religion is not a viable choice. They are looking for something else and Auroville may be interesting for them.

Marti: There is a saying in Russia that if India and Russia would be joined spiritually, it would have direct ramifications for the planet.

Forrest: What came out of the Conference was something called the "Moscow Declaration", a Plan of Action. It is a

blueprint that governments can use for their own legislation. I think it will become a landmark for the years ahead and that people in environmental circles will refer to the Moscow Declaration and the Plan of Action of the Global Forum throughout the coming decade.

Interview by Roger

"There is a possibility in Russia, too, but of a different nature — mystic, a great mystic possibility there. When the mystic spirit awakens there... It has been repressed, so..." (gesture of explosion)

From: Mother's Agenda, March 7, 1964

RUSSIAN INTEREST IN AUROVILLE OVERWHELMING

FOLLOWING the Peace Trees seminar held in Auroville in December 1988, which brought together 15 youth from each of three countries — the United States, the USSR and India — an article was published by the journalist Yuri Lepsky in the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (Youth Pravda).

We heard later that every single copy of the paper that carried the article on Auroville was sold out as soon as it hit the news stands! Enormous interest in Auroville was sparked in the Soviet Union, resulting in a steady flow of letters written to Mr. Lepsky and directed to Auroville from more than 9000 people. The majority of the writers want either to visit or to come to live permanently in Auroville.

In Sverdlovsk, a large community set up a society for the friends of Auroville last October, and presently funding is being sought to bring a few Soviet people here who want to set up an Auroville International USSR.

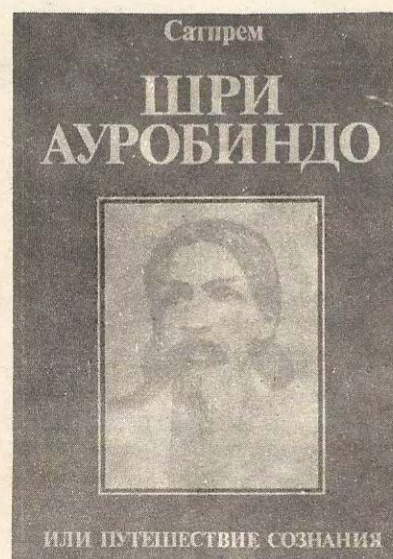
Unlike in many other countries, Soviet citizens cannot just hop on the plane and

come to Auroville. It requires a personal invitation and sponsorship to bring an individual here, or a 'programme' through which a group can come.

So when Mr. Lepsky came a second time to Auroville in July 1989, he proposed such a programme, which would operate under the auspices of the Foundation for Social Innovation (M.S.S.R.), which would sponsor 15 Soviet citizens for one year in Auroville. This is envisaged as a first step towards creating a much larger and long-term relationship, which will hopefully culminate in constructing the Soviet pavilion here, as well as in a permanent Soviet presence and participation in building Auroville.

In this connection, a few Aurovilians will journey to Moscow this year to assist the editorial board of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in making their selection of the first 15 candidates. If things go smoothly, it is hoped that this first group of Soviet citizens will arrive in Auroville by December, 1990.

Barbara.



We have just received from the translators a new and, it seems, very good Russian translation of Satprem's *Sri Aurobindo, or the Adventure of Consciousness*. It is printed by the Leningrad University Publishing House, in a first edition of 100,000 copies!

A Big Thank You !!!

We would like to express our gratitude to our many subscribers who have sent double the amount necessary to renew their subscriptions.

We are happy that through AUROVILLE TODAY we can help to link you to the Auroville experience.

Your generous extra contributions will enable us both to continue and to send free copies of AUROVILLE TODAY to those people all over the world who for some reason or the other are not able to send us any financial contribution.

The editorial team

"It was like the early days of Auroville all over again"

The experience of an Aurovilian in Prague and West Berlin last November, watching history on the move.

Peter Anderschitz first came to India in 1971, after reading Sri Aurobindo in Germany. He met Mother and arrived in Auroville at the Foundation Ceremony for Matrimandir. At once he knew, "That's it!" To come to India and Auroville was, for him, like coming home.

Since 1973, when he returned, he has worked in various community services and has given talks about Auroville in India and Europe. At the moment he is working as an architect.

Last November, he attended the International Prague Assembly organized by the 'Union of Czechoslovak Architects'. The conference purpose was to see what architects and planners could do to help solve the world problems of ecological disaster, social disintegration and the armaments race.

Getting There

Peter first heard about the conference when a letter arrived from Auroville International Germany last September. It contained an invitation from an old friend of his (who was also one of the organizers) for Auroville to be represented at the conference. "If it had been anywhere else in the world, I wouldn't have been interested. But it was to happen in Prague, on the borderline between East and Western Europe. And as I come from Berlin, the chance to bridge the ideological barriers between East and West touched me deeply. And it

display. But they've extended it to tomorrow. If you hurry, you can still be included."

And suddenly the beautiful side of Czechoslovakia surfaced: its warm hospitality and friendliness. Architectural students helped him begin to arrange the Auroville information, four display panels materialized, some essential glue was offered. When he finished the last panel, the jury who were judging the panels were already walking around. "And looking back at it, that moment when the final panel was fixed in the hall, my life changed. Another energy took over. I was carried by some-

"Of all the projects presented there, Auroville was the most comprehensive, it embraced all the main topics. And what interested people was that it wasn't just an idea. It was actually happening."

was the first time that a communist country invited Auroville to be represented. It was evident: Auroville had to be there!"

But then the fun began. Along with the invitation to the conference came a proposal for each participant to present the project they were associated with on display panels. The best panel would receive a prize. "Why make it a competition?" Peter thought. Nevertheless he felt it a good occasion to present Auroville. But it was already late. Everything had to be improvised. Friends and organizations helped, yet the difficulties mounted. Peter rushed around Auroville trying to find photographs and texts, often discovering that the best material had somehow disappeared. Messages went astray in the tangled web between Berlin, Prague, Moscow and New Delhi. And then, in the middle of this madness, he had a motorcycle accident that put him on crutches!

"Even when, still limping, I reached Delhi, it continued. No ticket, no confirmation, and when finally it came through, I couldn't get the display panels on the plane. I began to get the feeling that, beyond my own madness, there was some 'terrestrial resistance' that didn't want Auroville to be present at that conference!"

The Conference.

So, finally, there he was at Prague airport. It was cold, and his heavily bandaged foot was shovelled into a shoe three sizes too big he had bought in a Delhi bazaar. Of course, there was no one to meet him. Of course, when he located his hotel, they had never heard of a Mr. Peter Anderschitz. So in desperation he went to the Palace of Culture in the centre of the city, where the conference was to take place. "It was a Sunday, ice-cold and windy. The palace is huge and modern. I went down to the basement and limped past 50 closed glass doors. And finally there, behind the only one that was open, was my friend! He told me, "You have missed the first deadline for the panel

thing else."

Two days later, it was announced that the presentation *Auroville, a Living Laboratory* shared the Grand Prix, the first prize. And Peter learned it was the vote of the Soviet jury member, who may have been touched by the theme of brotherhood and unity, that was decisive. "Later I realized how important this prize was, for it pushed Auroville more into the limelight during the conference. On the last day, for example, I was asked to give a short talk about the general background of Auroville to the 600 delegates, who came from places as diverse as Mongolia, Peru, New Zealand and New York. I was nervous, but somehow, I was totally involved, totally living it. And when my heart is there, I overcome anything!"

"Of all the projects presented there, Auroville was the most comprehensive, it embraced all the main topics. And what interested people was that it wasn't just an idea. It was actually happening."

Prague and West Berlin

Peter never managed to get booked into a hotel in Prague. "And it was a gift. Instead I stayed with Czechoslovakian friends from the conference, and through them I got very fast into what was happening in Prague. Prague is an amazing city. It's incredibly diverse and has a very rich and refined culture. It's no accident that Václav Havel, the president, is a playwright. That culture went underground after the Spring of 1968, surfacing briefly in Charter '77. But when the moment came last November, that unique Czechoslovakian consciousness was suddenly there, fully!"

On the 9th November, the Berlin Wall started coming down. "My Czechoslovak friends were envious. 'We are always the last', they said. 'We've no courage.'"

But something unstoppable was building. On 17th November, a large, peaceful demonstration in Prague was brutally suppressed by the riot police. The street was

stained with blood and up to 30 people are still missing. It was the turning point. "I had been in the provinces. When I returned to Prague railway station, a few days after the demonstration, it was an unforgettable sight. There were little posters and pamphlets everywhere — on the windows, the statues, the trees. Everybody was discussing what had happened. That same evening I went to the second big demonstration in Vaclav Square. The atmosphere was amazing. I was reminded of the early days of Auroville by the quiet intensity of an aspiration, of a call to be free. And it wasn't ordered by an ideology, or party or other form of mass appeal. It was totally individual, but shared. Only once before, in a huge peace demonstration in Bonn, have I experienced such a compactness, such a density of aspiration expressed in such a diversified form.

"And next morning, there I was, standing in the snow in my Delhi chappals, hearing Dubcek and Havel addressing a festive crowd of one million. Fantastic."

Peter felt he belonged to these events more and more. But friends had organized a lecture tour for him in West Germany to present information about Auroville. So, reluctantly, he left before the final overthrow of the old regime. "Of course, Berlin was as unbelievable. When you've lived under the shadow of the wall most of your life, you can't imagine what it means to see it come down. My mother was out there night after night joining in that deeply moving embrace of the two Germanies."

Yet, for Peter, the Czechoslovakian experience was much closer to Auroville. "In Czechoslovakia, the rich cultural substance of the Czechoslovaks took over. It had been kept alive by underground work, and they were able to seize the moment when it came. Whereas the East Germans were not prepared when the time came to fill the political vacuum and start to build a new society. There, most of the élite were in the Party. There were few dissidents. So when the Party was finished, they didn't know what to do. I think they will have to go a long way beyond materialistic unification before they really find what they need. Whereas,



Peter

for the Czechoslovaks, they're already deeply united. That's the difference."

Return

What was it like returning to Auroville after all this?

"It was as if I was so full of that experience that there was no place for anything else. I needed some time to find my way again into the beauty that is Auroville. But as your first love helps you to discover other loves, so after being spiritually rooted in Auroville, I know now that any country can become my home.

"What makes Auroville unique is what it represents. A place on Earth, created by Mother where the whole world can come together to make an experiment that goes far beyond the limitations of any one country or race.

Yet I think we can also learn a lot from the happenings in Europe, and from a man like Havel who is a man of the spirit and of the world, in the best sense of the word, and who has this power to materialize something true in terms of the real world. This was my strongest experience in Czechoslovakia. It was all linked. From the spiritual to the most material plane, it was all one.

Alan

All photo's in this issue have been taken by Sven

AUROVILLE TODAY tries to appear monthly and is distributed to Aurovilians and friends of Auroville in India and abroad.

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Design: Franz (Prisma). Printed at Auroville Press.

♦ ♦ ♦ To Receive Auroville Today ♦ ♦ ♦

The contribution for the next 12 issues of Auroville Today is for Auroville Rs. 94, for India Rs. 100*, for other countries: Rs. 350, Can.\$ 27, French F. 145, DM 45, It.Lira 31,500, D.Gl. 50, US \$ 22.50, U.K.£ 13.50. This includes the postage by airmail. Please send your contribution (or your supporting contribution of double the amount) either to the Auroville International centre in your country (add 10%) or to the Auroville Today Office, Auroville, Kottakuppam 605104. Cheques should be made payable to Auroville Fund, specifying: *Contribution for Auroville Today*. You will receive the issues directly from Auroville.

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The Auroville Economy... Again!!

Yes, we know, dear reader. Already quite a number of times we have brought you stories about the impossibilities and unclarity of that aspect of Auroville that some try to grasp under the term "Auroville's economy." And you wonder why we continue. Didn't we conclude before that this part of Auroville is like a bowl of spaghetti? Isn't it clear that the vast differences between the always insufficient income and vastly excessive expenditure can only be solved by resorting to Auroville's Miracle Resource Fund? Isn't it sufficient to know that any real change in Auroville's economy can only come with a change in the consciousness of the Aurovilians? Has *that* change occurred?

Of course, it is clear. Of course, it hasn't changed. But, to quote Lao Tze, "a journey of a thousand miles starts with one step". And we might add: it continues step by step. This holds for a change in consciousness, it holds as well for a change in our economic structures, frustrating though it may be for those who believe that the lofty ideals expressed by Mother as an aim should be realized immediately.

So let us bother you again, this time regarding the results of the work of the Economy Study group (see AUROVILLE TODAY, December 1989), whose 60 page study report was made available to Auroville in the beginning of March. A summary was sent to all Aurovilians as a topic for discussion in a general meeting on March 20.

The outcome of that meeting in brief: the need for a step by step change.

What did the study group do?

Firstly, they made an in-depth study of the financial situation and a prognosis for the coming year of the needs of each of the collective services: Auroville Electrical Service, Auroville Water Service, Pour Tous (Auroville's food distribution ser-

What was lacking in the report was a thorough survey of the financial position of Auroville's ~~commercial units~~. The study group had mentioned that the community — including the commercial units — should first study this report and make a decision on the next step. "After this", the study group continued, "we would like to visit the commercial units in a spirit of sharing interaction; to understand what the productive units need and expect from the community, to understand and discuss, if needed, the functioning of the unit, and to decide together with the unit-holders on the financial commitments the unit is able to make towards the community."

The question from the study group to the general meeting was: Is there a preference for any of the proposals?

The answer: "Definitely yes, for proposal 5".

This proposal requires us to take the biggest step, which is about a thousand miles from the present system! According to this proposal, each Aurovillian will receive from a central body an amount for basic subsistence; that central body will also pay all bills for electricity consumption, for repair and maintenance of electrical installations and water pumps, and will also provide for clothing, health and dental care.

But the study group warned that a number of assumptions have to be verified before this proposal can be implemented. Three of these assumptions are of a financial nature. The fourth has directly to do with the development of our collective consciousness: all Aurovilians will have to agree to financially participate in this system — a condition which seems difficult to fulfil at present.

The conclusion: proposal 5 will need a lot more work before it can be implemented at all. Therefore... back to Lao Tze, and to a less ambitious proposal.

Only through the participation of the majority of Aurovilians in a collective system can the financial burden of the Auroville services and of Auroville's collective budgets ultimately be carried.

vice), Nandini (the service that provides clothing and other personal items) and Auroville Health and Dental Care.

Secondly, they made a study of the majority of those needs that are presented to the community every month as collective budgets. They divided these budgets into 'subsistence' budgets and 'community' budgets. The subsistence budgets are budgets that relate to the subsistence of individuals, like children's nutrition (food provided at school), children's maintenance (family allowances made available to some families), the bridging fund (for Aurovilians who are temporarily without any other source of income) and the personal emergency fund. The community budgets are budgets which are directly related to the activities, administration and maintenance of the community as a whole. However important and necessary, these budgets are of secondary importance in comparison to individual subsistence needs.

Thirdly, they assessed the present income situation of the Central Fund of Auroville.

And finally they made a series of 5 proposals for a change in Auroville's economy, presenting a spectrum of possibilities, ranging from very small to big steps for changing the present economic functioning.

At the end of the report some words of Mother on the economic aspects of Auroville were included.

EXPECTED MONTHLY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR AUROVILLE'S GENERAL MAINTENANCE 1990

EXPENDITURE 1990		INCOME 1990	
1. AV Services budgets	1,08,500	1. Rs 200 x 480 adults	96,000
2. Subsistence budgets		2. Newcomers contributions	11,741
balance	67,000	3. Donations for maintenance	6,995
3. Community budgets		4. Guesthouse contributions	2,886
balance	38,570	5. Artisana Trust	30,725
		6. Altacs Trust	1,070*
		Excess expenditure over income	64,653**
total	2,14,070	total	2,14,070

*The contributions from Aurelec Trust are given for specific budgets.

**Rs 26,083 for the subsistence budgets; Rs 38,570 for the community budgets

WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN?

Many friends of Auroville have expressed the wish to participate in the Rs 200/month scheme. If you too would like to support Auroville's general maintenance needs, you can do so. Send a cheque to the equivalent of Rs 200 (approx. US \$ 12.50) for each month you wish to participate to either the Auroville International Centre in your country (for addresses see the subscription box) or directly to Auroville Fund, Bharat Nivas, Auroville 605101, India. Please mention on your cheque: "Participation Central Fund Rs 200/month scheme".

the service budgets on those who wish to practically implement this aspect of the collectivity of Auroville.

The general meeting also agreed to immediately implement one of the many other recommendations of the study report: the creation of a group called the Economy Working Group. This group will have the immediate responsibility to implement proposal 2, and to prepare for the implementation of proposal 5 in some not too-distant future. It will have to manage Auroville's collective economy, monitoring the services and collective budgets, and reaching agreements with Auroville's commercial units on their regular financial commitments to Auroville.

The Auroville economy: a never-ending story. In the words of Lao Tze: "There are many ways, but the way is unknown". As we said before: AUROVILLE TODAY will keep you informed.

Carel

"The age of Capitalism and business is drawing to a close. But the age of Communism too, will pass. For Communism as it is preached is not constructive, it is a weapon to combat plutocracy. But when the battle is over and the armies are disbanded for want of employment, then Communism, having no more utility, will be transformed into something else that will express a higher truth. We know this truth, and we are working for it so that it may reign upon earth."

from: Mother's Agenda,
March 21, 1956

Yusuf Kassam

29.11.39 — 17.3.90

JOURNEY'S END

*The day ends lost in a stretch of even,
A long road trod — and the little farther.
Now the waste-land, now the silence;
A blank new wall, and behind it
heaven.*

Sri Aurobindo

Mostly he laughed, this Yusuf. One of Auroville's "flaming pioneers", he lived the early dreams, overcame the hard times and leapt into our future.

At fourteen, Yusuf found out about Sri Aurobindo and Mother from his uncle, Dr. Dalal (author of *Living Within*) in Africa. When Auroville began, he wanted to be part of it and wrote that he could start a colour photo laboratory! His first job was helping to construct the bridge over the Aspiration canyon, just down from Pour Tous. He kept accounts so well that he he ended up keeping virtually all the accounts of Auroville and helped in the setting up of community services. In 1971, on the same

day as the inauguration of Matrimandir, he started building his house in Certitude.

In 1981, Yusuf, together with Dorothee and Peter, made the European tour that led to the foundation of Auroville International. He was the driving force behind the first meeting at Le Roc in France.

In 1982, the long legal battles that had to be fought in Delhi for Auroville kept him often away from home. It was during these years that his health began to deteriorate, and he never managed to recover.

He died in England, but was buried near Forecomers in a forest grove under trees that Mother named Service, Work, and Wisdom. Now we feel him close, and very happy again.



INTERVIEW

The Earth the City Needs

AUROVILLE TODAY: Why did you choose to come to Auroville?

Serge: There are two reasons. Firstly I discovered Auroville, Mother and Sri Aurobindo and it came at a very good moment in my life. I feel very good in Auroville and see there is a lot to do.

Secondly, I was working for four years on short-time projects and felt the need for a longer commitment. And earth-architecture has a great future in Auroville. To think of Auroville being built completely out of earth would be nonsense, but to try to apply it in all the appropriate places would be very interesting. One example of the use of this technique in Auroville is the new Information and Reception Centre.

Then there is also the opportunity provided by the Building Centre at CSR, where I will give training courses on earth-architecture for masons, architects and technicians from all over India. I hope the Auroville Building Centre will become one of the leaders in earth-technology and can show how much is possible. By the turn of

Serge Maini is a new Auroville architect who specializes in earth construction. After graduating as an architect from the University of Lyon, France, he took his Masters Degree at Grenoble while working with the well-known earth architecture group, CRATERRE. He has practiced in France, Somalia, Ivory Coast and Haiti. He arrived in Auroville as the right man at the right time, just when the new Reception and Information Centre, constructed entirely out of earth, was started. Sonja and Bill spoke with him.



Two quite different examples of building with earth.



material, but I prefer to build with only compressed earth blocks in places where it is appropriate.

AVT: Can you make a high building with earth?

Serge: Yes. For instance in South Yemen, there are seven storey buildings. Also in France and in Germany there are four and five storey buildings.

AVT: Can the life-span of an earth house be the same as a brick and cement house?

Serge: Yes, even longer, if it is well designed and well maintained. In Europe there are earth houses that are two or three hundred years old. In Egypt, there are earth buildings that are four thousand years old. But there is hardly any rain or termites there.

AVT: What about the problems of rain and termites?

Serge: Well, with termites and water earth-architecture has some problems. The biggest problem is the water, in fact. The English say: "A mud house should have good boots and a good hat", meaning the foundation and the roof.

As for the termites, you have to protect the plinths of the wall by making a thin layer of concrete and/or a layer of bitumen — two things termites won't go through. And for the roof, a good waterproofing has to be made, by means of a lime-plaster. Good ventilation adapted to the local conditions must be included in the design.

My dream would be that more and more people would be interested and do research into earth-technology and architecture so we can design for a conscious eco-development. □

At the opening of the Greenwork Resource centre, that also houses Village Action.

The centre is constructed of earth blocks.

Greenwork Resource Centre Opens

It was Wednesday afternoon, 5 o'clock — an auspicious hour of the day and the most auspicious day of the week, according to the Tamil almanac. At Isai Ambalam, Kottakarai, an atmosphere of expectation was created among the visitors by a Tamil welcoming song. Sundaram shattered a coconut on the doorstep, which was a sign for Mrs. Ojha, the wife of Auroville's Officer on Special Duty, to cut the green ribbon for the official opening of the Auroville Greenwork Resource Centre. Ed, the driving force behind the realization of this project, informed us about the goals of the Centre (see AUROVILLE TODAY, No. 10). Mr. Ojha stressed the importance of afforesting India and the role this centre will play in informing villages about how to achieve this. □



The Singing Wire Goes Electronic

It was in November 1984 that the first central telephone line was installed in Auroville. With an initial capacity of 50 lines and later of 100, this exchange — of the electromagnetic kind — was very difficult to maintain. Many of our friends must have had the bitter experience of unsuccessfully trying to call Auroville from Europe or America: the wire didn't often sing!

Our Telephone Service therefore contacted the Ministry of Telecommunications of the Indian Government and obtained, after a long process, agreement for the installation of an electronic exchange of Indian design, manufactured in Bangalore. This telephone exchange has a capacity of 200 lines. This will enable a hundred new connections to be added to the existing 85.

The Indian Ministry of Telecommunications has invested more than 2.5 million rupees in this project. What is remarkable is that more than 11 kilometres of underground cables have been installed in order not to disfigure the landscape of the future city and its surrounding forests. Auroville has participated in the project by constructing a new wing to the existing exchange building, by digging the trenches for the cables, and arranging for the installation of the new lines.

The new exchange was opened on the 30th of March 1990, and in a few days Auroville will be put on the list of the STD and ISD stations, which means that it will be possible for Aurovilians to make direct calls to more than 100 countries and almost 500 Indian towns without having to go through an operator.

The telephone numbers in Auroville have changed: verify the new number of your friends. Normally, adding 21 before the old number should be sufficient. For example: 62 becomes 2162, 36 becomes 2136... For callers from abroad we will communicate the new codes as soon as possible to all Auroville International centres. — Claude



Serge

the century there will be a shortage of 65 million houses in India. Earth-architecture can be one of the answers

AVT: Why did you choose to work with earth?

Serge: I decided to specialize in earth-construction as there is a very high energy input needed to manufacture modern construction materials, and this has a great impact on the environment. Also, building with earth allows you to build more cheaply (up to 15 or 25%) and to make beautiful and comfortable homes, and then you can give more houses to the people with little money. 'Comfortable' in a sense that building with concrete you create the 'Faraday Cage' effect — it blocks all radiation from the earth and the cosmos. Earth just lets this radiation pass through as it should do. Also the earth wall has a great cooling effect as it collects humidity and slowly releases it again.

There are many earth-building techniques. I work a lot with a cement-stabilizer of 5%. This makes a good building

Decision-making in Auroville

A personal reflection

Who can recall when the showing of hands became an established form of decision making in Auroville? I only remember it as an exercise we resisted putting ourselves through for years and years. Why has it become an established form?

There are perhaps many reasons, though ultimately they can be traced to the need of simply making a clear decision—full stop.

It need not be argued that the decision making process in Auroville has been, besides the weather, the most frustrating aspect of our life here as a community. From the early origins of the 'Co-op' to the present, we have created various methods of administration. We have chosen our representatives to handle this question of decision making; everything was tried, from pulling the names out of a hat to voting. We propped them up and we pulled them down, usually without a thank you, as we were eager to get on with a new, better, improved model.

The original purpose of our administration, any administration, is to facilitate our lives so that we can go on with our various activities. It is there to ease our interaction with the world around us as well as among ourselves. It is there to encourage development, both collective and individual. In Auroville, we can even see it as a tool to facilitate inner growth, the basis for anyone to be here. It should be possible for individuals and groups of individuals to put their confidence in a group of representatives who would take care that, first and foremost, the atmosphere for this growth is preserved.

If confidence would reign, the need for individuals to interfere in the administrative process would automatically disappear. There would be no factions, no politics. As it is, the confidence has never been totally there and a long list of checks and balances came into play. Groups formed which wanted their points of view to be adopted as general policy, people felt they were not heard or even listened to. If a section of the community was satisfied with the set-up, different tendencies then proceeded to confront each other in other contexts, such as the working groups.

The most obvious way out of this predicament was the introduction of a few democratic principles, like voting and the election of representatives to a council. The premise is that those who are concerned by an issue will voice their opinions and be heard; otherwise their silence will be taken as a passive assent to the eventual outcome.

Our General Assembly meetings have always been a forum for opinions, and at the same time the decision making assembly.

This is wrong. If our general assemblies are a forum for opinions, and at the same time a decision making body, the pressure

and the wish to influence an impending decision forces individuals and groups of individuals to be political in an environment where politics are not welcome. It has been asked time and again, "Why don't more people come to the meetings?", especially when it is known that a decision on a crucial issue will be made. Whatever the reasons, the point is that the meetings don't represent the feelings of all Aurovilians properly and therefore they cannot be considered to be 'decision making'.

To take decisions when the whole community is not adequately represented, and to continue to ignore the fact that there are other opinions and feelings in the community which are not expressed strongly in meetings is to force a reaction, a politicized one, from the 'dissatisfieds'.

In terms of a forum for exchanging ideas, the General Assembly fulfills an important purpose. If it is further loaded with the task of decision making, its role as a forum is diminished—the simple reason being that a number of Aurovilians will come to make a decision, not to listen. Also, the meeting has to take into consideration other forms of communication in the community at large, which are just as important as 'speaking out' in a meeting. Writing, for instance, has never been encouraged. Our *Auroville News*, for example, is read weekly by pretty much everyone in Auroville. Personal opinion, if seen at all in the *Auroville News*, has usually slipped in by mistake (!). In any case, washing our laundry in public is considered, by some, as unwise, if not dangerous. ("It will be used against us!")

As opinions find a way to be heard sooner or later, it would be sensible to have an integrated editorial policy for ourselves. Isn't it part of the process of decision making to be well-informed? If it is so, then liberalizing our policies on expression, if it doesn't create any miracles, would at least create another accepted forum of expression in Auroville, one which is generally more thought-out and possibly clearer than the 'spontaneous' orations of many of our speakers. (Spontaneity is not being denied here; it has on the contrary given us many brilliant, as well as pathetic, moments in our meetings.) Even through the Auroville-style performing arts we can discern relevant opinion—any one of Johnny's plays has been a "letter to the Editor" of sorts.

Today's trend of individuals and working groups managing and directing their own affairs has probably turned out to be the most positive development in Auroville's administrative structure in the last years. First, because who is in a better position to decide what to do than those who have taken up the particular responsibility? And second, but equally important, the increased concentration on one's own

work makes it all the more difficult to meddle in other people's concerns.

On the other hand, this trend has caused in many a feeling of disjointedness within the community. The impression created is that a large number of Aurovilians, as individuals or as groups, are no longer interested in the process of Auroville as a community but are mainly,

or only, concerned with their 'own trips'. As the Auroville seesaw is never idle for long, the counter balance for the 'individualistic trend' comes in the form of the 'search for community values'. How to regain the spirit of community life which is essential to the growth of Auroville?

(end of part one)
Francois Grenier



MORE OF THE SAME?

—Auroville experiments with its internal organization—

TEA PARTIES seem to be contagious nowadays. After Joy and Edith's genteel bash at the inauguration of 'Avalon' guest house last month, Aurovilians were recently treated to the sight of Aster and her girls—as the old Council was affectionately known—playing the perfect hostesses and offering home-made cakes and tea to all and sundry. Pre-summer madness? The advent of the Millennium? What exactly was going on?

In fact, the outgoing Council had called a General Meeting to announce the results of the Auroville-wide poll for a new group that would replace the old Council and Task Force. The idea for this new body had arisen during a seminar on internal organization a month earlier. Out of a general feeling that communication was poor between the Task Force (whose work concerned Auroville's relation with the Government and outside agencies) and the Council (the internal coordination group), and that the community as a whole could be better informed about important issues, it was proposed to form a larger, integrated group. This group would have three functions: to continue both the externally orientated work of the Task Force, and the coordination role of the Council, and to facilitate communication between members of this group and the community as a whole. The three 'sub-groups' taking up these different functions might meet separately, but they would all meet together at least once a month.

But who would be elected to this experimental hybrid? That's what the cakes and tea were preparing us for one hot Tuesday afternoon in March. The results, in the end, were rather predictable. Of the twenty names that received the most 'votes', 18 had served on either the last Council or Task Force, or had been on similar bodies in the past. More interestingly, of the 20 names proposed, 7 were women and 7 were Indian (one even managed to be both at the same time!).

How does one interpret this reliance upon the familiar and newly-familiar names? As a vote of confidence? As a failure of collective courage and imagination? Or as evidence of extended political families who faithfully elect and re-elect their political sisters and brothers? Probably something of each.

More interesting, perhaps, than the names themselves was the extent of the

community's participation in the process. 240 Aurovilians sent in lists of names for the new group—something like 50% of the community's adult population. This is an astonishingly wide participation considering the relatively limited response to similar exercises in the past. It is clear that many Aurovilians care about the make-up of this new group, particularly as this group will be the focal point for working out certain current concerns regarding the Auroville Foundation Act. The widespread response may also be due to the practice established by the last council of involving far more people in the decision making process, and in inducting new members with little or no previous experience of this work.

In fact, when the 240 lists of names were analyzed, some interesting findings emerged. The 20 names selected received only 32% of the total votes, another 31% of the votes went to other Aurovilians in high-profile positions in the community, but 37% of the votes were for a total of 257 other Aurovilians, many of whom had never served on such bodies before!

Statistics are slippery and can be interpreted in different ways. But this appears to show that a high percentage of community members are believed to be suited for this work; it is no longer seen as the exclusive domain of the professional 'politicians'. And the success of the 'professionals' in this election was partly dependent upon the alternatives to them being spread so widely through the community that very few or none of them gathered sufficient votes to challenge the better-known names.

Apart from serious doubts about the wisdom of a voting procedure, one of the weaknesses of this process seems to be that, at the voting stage, it is not known who is willing to take up the work if elected. Since the work is onerous and, sometimes, controversial, it is valuable to know beforehand who is willing to put his/her hand in the fire.

Perhaps (and here I put my hand in the fire!) what is missing most in these 20 names is a sense of creativity, humour and unabashed zaniness that could leaven the rationality and commonsense of the old-timers, and float laughter through the decorous and serpentine corridors of power... But I always was a dreamer!

Alan



A New Step for the Matrimandir Skin

A talk with Mr. Switbert Greiner, the engineer who recently began research on the skin.

AUROVILLE TODAY: How did you come to know about Auroville?

Switbert: Ulli came to Germany to meet a friend of mine to try to find satisfying solutions for the skin and the discs of the Matrimandir. My friend asked me to join the meeting with Ulli. Actually I became more interested in the project than my friend and I came to Auroville to tell the people here, "I offer you my contribution".

AVT: Now what is your proposal?

Switbert: My proposal is to create a three-dimensional net of stainless steel bars to cover the existing concrete net of the Matrimandir whose purpose is to hold the glass panes of the skin and also the discs. There will be approximately 900 small discs and 500 big discs.

AVT: You went with Toine to Madras to explore what materials and technologies are available in India. What did you find out?

Switbert: When making the design, I always had in my mind that it would be best to produce everything here in India, and even better, in Auroville. But I have to learn what is possible here.

In Madras we went to the Engineering Construction Company, ECC, to see Mr. Ramakrishna who is a very good engineer. We showed him the structural concept and discussed a lot of technical items. His reaction was very positive. He is also willing to give us professional help concerning the welding equipment and other important details. Then we went to glass dealers to check the materials and prices. But we were not satisfied and the glass question is still open.

Then we went to KCP to ask whether they could shape the discs—the discs are as a matter of fact dish-shaped. They gave us a tour around the factory buildings and we saw the possibilities they have there for manufacturing the 'dishes'.

AVT: And what is the result? Is KCP able to manufacture the dishes?

If you have answers to the as yet unresolved questions, please send your suggestions to the Planning Office of the Matrimandir.

Switbert: The very big factory was impressing. And, no doubt, they can do the job. But the question is, how much will they charge? If it is too expensive, we can make the dishes on site in Auroville. There are two possible ways to do this: with a press and a die or by hydraulic bulging. Both procedures are simple and it is worth investing in the tools if one considers the large number of discs.

AVT: What colour and what kind of finishing will the discs have?

Switbert: There are many different opinions about that. Many people prefer the really bright gold colour, but if we make gold plating or covering with gold leaf it will be tremendously expensive. One can also just paint the discs. This is very cheap but not so long-lasting or so brilliant. And then perhaps later one can give the golden finish.

AVT: And what about heat?

Switbert: This has to be studied more carefully than has been done up to now. The discs become very hot with infrared radiation. This radiation can heat up the inside of the Matrimandir.

AVT: And now the cleaning aspect. How to protect the glass and the discs from the dust and from the bird excrement?

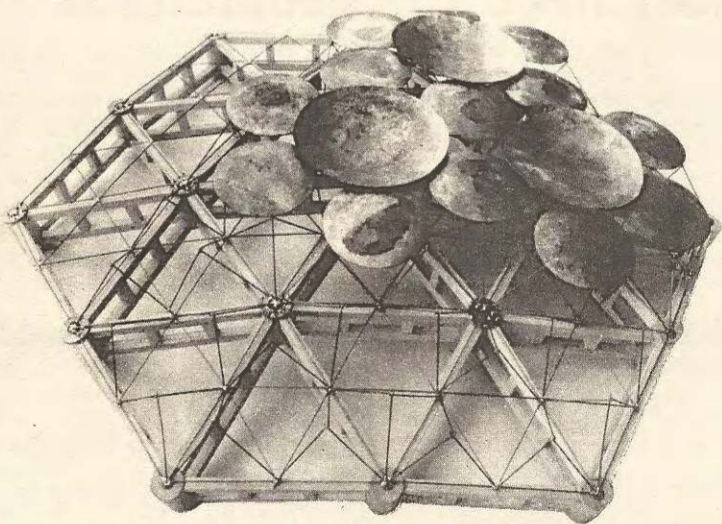
Switbert: Maybe we can prevent the birds coming in by a stainless steel net which is attached at the level of the discs—just covering the open space between the discs. Maybe they will sit on the net and do their job there—that I don't know.

The cleaning of the glass is also a problem.

AVT: How long do you think we have to wait until the skin and discs are all mounted?

Switbert: I don't know. It depends more or less on the money. The technical problems are more or less solved. If we had the money that is needed at once, it could be done very quickly. The work could be completed this year.

Yanne



Disc-design for Matrimandir skin

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BOOK REVIEW

□ **SRI AUROBINDO et l'avenir de la Revolution Francaise.** Buchet/Chastel, Paris, 1989, 183 pages.

As fireworks exploded over the skies of Paris last summer and the bicentennial of the French revolution was media-blitzed and commercially exploited for months (little model guillotines competed with key-chain Eiffel towers in the chintzy souvenir stands off Palais Royal), debates raged in the columns of *Le Nouvel Observateur* and *Le Figaro*, and on the evening TV talk shows, as to whether there was much to celebrate. After all, the rational idealism of the thinkers and philosophers of the Enlightenment, the belief in the noble powers of reason and the dreams of a perfect society, which echoed in the mantric thunder of the orators of 1789, had led to the bloodbaths of the Jacobin terror, and, within less than a generation, to Empire under Napoleon.

If the 18th century could be labelled retrospectively the Age of Reason, our century now drawing to its close might well be labelled 'The Age of Ideology'. An age whose seeds were sown two hundred years ago by the freethinkers, philosophers, statesmen, orators, inventors and pamphleteers of that era; figures such as Franklin, Jefferson, Paine, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Mirabeau; and by the event that was the French Revolution. Today, as once sacrosanct ideologies stand bankrupt and discredited, or are vehemently discarded in uprisings throughout eastern Europe and Asia, in hindsight the Jacobin terror appears like a mere rehearsal for the ideological genocides of the 20th century.

In August '89, unnoticed amid all the bicentennial fireworks and celebrations, Buchet/Chastel published a remarkable and well-edited anthology of Sri Aurobindo's historical and political writings. This anthology draws mainly from his books *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*, his essay *War and Self-Determination*, from *Thoughts and Aphorisms* and from his historical impressions of the French Revolution. While most of these writings first appeared in the journal *Arya* over seventy years ago, they read today with a stunning and prophetic relevance. His historical and psychological analysis of the failure of a rational age in its attempts to create perfect societies—whether based on the ideals of egalitarianism or of democratic individualism—leads onto his vision of the need for a spiritual awakening of humanity, an awakening that is not, as in many traditional spiritualities, life-denying, but life-transforming. Only then could Fraternity—the great unfulfilled element of the mantra of the revolution: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—be able to come to the fore as the power that would help build a society based on the ideals of the revolutionary triad. The traditions of intellectual anarchism—in the higher sense of the word—have anticipated this theme of a society based on Fraternity; yet it is a tradition that has lacked the fuller spiritual vision and experience so necessary for its eventual fruition. Sri Aurobindo was a political revolutionary, but, even more so, a spiritual one. His vision of the necessity of a world-affirming spiritual change in humanity—if humanity is to survive—is the leitmotif of most, if not all of his written work.

For those of us who were first drawn to Sri Aurobindo by his political and historical thought, this book is a precious addition to our library, as it saves having to search through many volumes to find those chapters and quotes we like to re-read. A new edition should, however, include more selections from his writings on the self-determination of cultural confederations.

It is surprising that a well selected anthology of this nature does not yet exist in English, particularly considering the relevance of its contents to the epoch of transition in which we are living, an era in which the Bastilles of ideology are crumbling and a new world spirit seems to be in the process of taking birth.

Roger

The Theosophists are wrong in their circumstances but right in the essential. If the French Revolution took place, it was because a soul on the Indian snows dreamed of God as freedom, brotherhood and equality.

Sri Aurobindo—*Thoughts and Aphorisms* (275)

"Yet is brotherhood the real key to the triple gospel of the idea of humanity. The union of liberty and equality can only be achieved by the power of human brotherhood and it cannot be founded on anything else. But brotherhood exists only in the soul and by the soul; it can exist by nothing else... These three things are in fact the nature of the soul; for freedom, equality, unity are the eternal attributes of the spirit."

Sri Aurobindo—*The Ideal of Human Unity*

The anarchic is the true divine state of man in the end as in the beginning; but in between it would lead us straight to the devil and his kingdom.

Sri Aurobindo—*Thoughts and Aphorisms* (302)

A day's gift

Auroville,
I wake in the morning with joy
under your precious trees
that fill the sky
catching the sun
and throwing green and gold beauty
across my doorstep

Auroville,
I move in the afternoon with peace
on your red roads

slowly absorbing the still air
and the majesty of two white bulls

Auroville,
I rest at night with the knowledge
that in the darkness
your center is glowing
and pulsating with infinite galaxies
drawing the Divine ever closer.

Chandi.

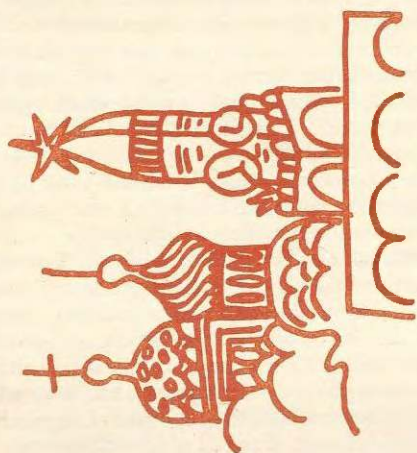
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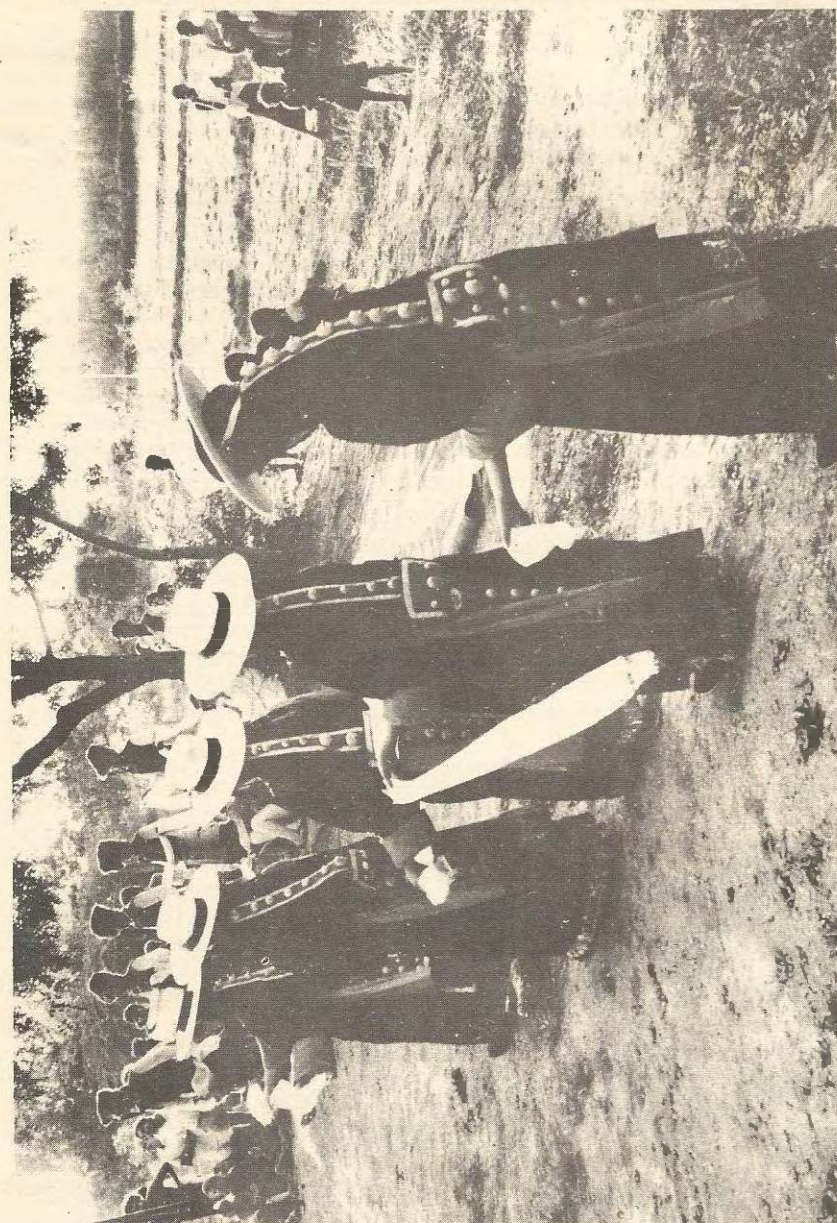
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April 1990 Number Sixteen

In this issue: Moscow Forum; Prague; Auroville's economy; etc.



A glimpse of Tibetan culture - in tropical South India.

Photo: Sven

Dances from the Roof of the World

To many of us, thirty one years of suppression, expulsion from the home country, and a systematic attempt at the destruction of our religion and culture would mean the slow killing of our soul and of the wish to express our deeper feelings. But what we witnessed on the evening of March 21st, in a programme called "Dances from the Roof of the World", put on by the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, was a demonstration of the strong will of the Tibetan people to preserve and carry

The next afternoon at 5 o'clock, as the sun started casting longer shadows and the sky was about to change into magic colours, we all gathered outside the Bharat Nivas for the consecration of the site for the Pavilion of Tibet. After the dancers chanted an invocation to Tara, Roger read out Mother's Dream and the Charter of Auroville, as well as a statement of the Dalai Lama about the Tibetan Pavilion.

Mr.D.Wangyal, secretary of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, read out the Tibetan translation of the Charter. After a song specially composed for the presentation of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama in October 1989, some dances gave us an added taste of what the Tibetan Pavilion might offer after its completion.

While the proud snow lion on the Tibetan flag flapped in the breeze above the palm trees, people from all over Auroville, as well as village children from across the, peanut fields, came to enjoy the spectacle. Before the last number, Mr.Wangyal remarked that the Tibetans quite often invoke thunder and rain through their dances... Four nights later it rained.

Tineke



on their rich culture. There was such a profound joy in the dancers in the way they shared their art, and displayed their extremely colourful clothes, masks and head-dresses.

Dances and songs from different parts of Tibet gave us a glimpse of life as it used to be. There were the Lhasa tavern songs, the harvest dances, the 'Serving of the Chang to the Men', and extracts from a Tibetan folk opera with evocatively dancing 'yaks'. The more spiritually oriented dances, like the Nyingmpa Temple dance that opened the show, were very impressive, as were the ancient movements from the oldest known Tibetan folk opera. The music and some of the dance forms clearly showed us how wide the Tibetan borders had once spread, far into Mongolia and China.



My need to become real

Hello there. Allow me to introduce myself. I am a newcomer's house. Well, almost. Right now I'm just a drawing of a newcomer's house, but soon I will be a real three-dimensional, brick and wood, two-storey beauty. Yes, it is true that I have been a drawing for a long, long time. But I know that this will soon end. How do I know, you may ask? Because Auroville needs me, it's that simple.

Whether or not one agrees with the direction, Auroville is entering into its physical development stage. People are needed to come and to participate in the dream. When people come to live in Auroville there is a process to be followed. They are asked to be a guest for three months and to live in a guest house, to familiarize themselves with the goals and ideals of the community, and to understand if they are willing and able to make a longer term commitment. If they decide they want to stay, they enter into a friendly conversation with the Entry Group. There their status is changed from 'guest' to 'newcomer'. Since they are no longer guests, they are asked to vacate the guest-house, and to move into a newcomer's house, a place for people to stay for nine months while they integrate themselves into the community. For the last three years Auroville has accepted more than thirty newcomers a year. Yet Auroville has only five newcomer's houses. Now you are start-

ing to see the problem. Some newcomers are willing to build their own newcomer's houses - but it takes six months to one year to build a permanent structure. So by the time they are finished, their newcomer's period is over and the community is not in a position to reimburse them. There are many projects in Auroville that are able to receive funding from one source or another around the world, but it is difficult to raise money for housing.

I have many brothers and sisters of all shapes and sizes on the drawing board - just waiting to become real. We have been waiting for a long time but our time is drawing near. Isn't adequate shelter the minimum Auroville can offer to those dreamers who come to help realize The Mother's City of Dawn?

Francis

