

Auroville Tomorrow

June-July issue 2019, N° 359-360

EDITORIAL

In the first issue of Auroville Today, way back in 1988, we said we would make it our mission to provide an overview of what is happening in the community in each issue.

We like to think we haven't done badly in this endeavour, but one aspect which we have covered less well than others is the world of the Auroville youth.

In this special double issue, we begin to remedy this by inviting the youth of Auroville to present themselves.

There is no attempt to parcel their contributions up into a neat package because the youth are as individualised and unclassifiable as all other Aurovilians. But we hope that something of their lives and, above all, what they passionately care about and believe in, is communicated through these rich and varied expressions.

ALAN

A YOUTH HACK OF AUROVILLE TODAY

Our adventure started in February 2019, at Bhumika Hall, when ten young Aurovilians spoke about what Auroville means to us, presenting our aspirations, projects and ideas for the community. This was the spark for this special issue of *Auroville Today*, which is not only dedicated to the voices of young people in Auroville, but is also curated, edited, and designed by a team of young Aurovilians – Bhakti, Inge, Michael and Suryamayi.

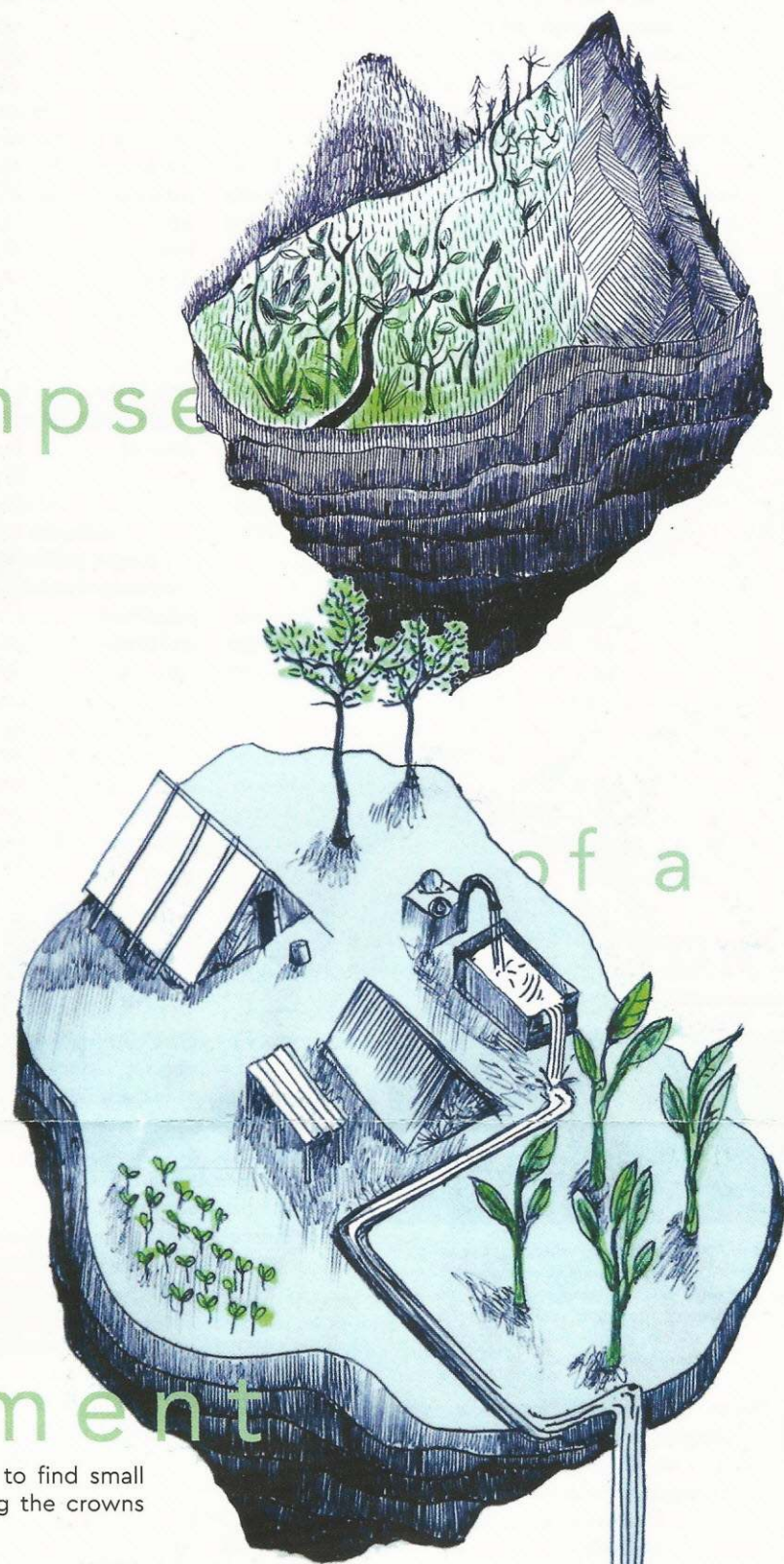
The four of us unconsciously chose not to interview and write for our peers; instead we invited them to take up this opportunity to express themselves freely, directly, in their own way, in their own words. The only suggestion we had was to communicate what makes them feel alive and connected to Auroville. Some have shared personal or professional journeys within Auroville, projects they are involved in and talents they developed here; others have reflected critically on aspects of our community. The contributions take various forms – beyond articles, they include creative writing, poems, images and songs. We felt moved to see an opening up and sharing of passion in such a unique and authentic way.

Our little team worked intensively for the last three months to harvest all these gems hidden in the Auroville jungle. Inge, Suryamayi and Michael were the gatherers, tracking down and encouraging youth who had something to say, but who were maybe too shy to do so under their own steam. We tried our best to support the writers to align their contribution with their intention and what they deeply wanted to share. And then Bhakti conjured her design magic to present all these contributions in one amazing package that reflects the spirit of this generation of youths.

But this is just a beginning! We are giving you here only a glimpse of what the youth can express!

We would like to thank the *Auroville Today* team for welcoming and supporting this issue – especially Alan, for proposing it in the first place, and Lesley, whose final round of proofreading and editing was key to producing this polished edition so that you – the readers – can enjoy this journey to the fullest. You will find a great range of writing styles, along with a wide diversity of experiences of Auroville! There is no attempt to make any point or convince anyone: it is simply a pure expression of opinions, dreams, aspirations and experiences. We hope you will be surprised, delighted, moved, tickled and shifted by these contributions.

MICHAEL, SURYAMAYI, BHAKTI & INGE
– THE YOUTH ISSUE EDITION TEAM



glimpse

of a

moment

Wandering around to find small oasis and forgetting the crowns for a while...

MARIE

l'espace d'un instant

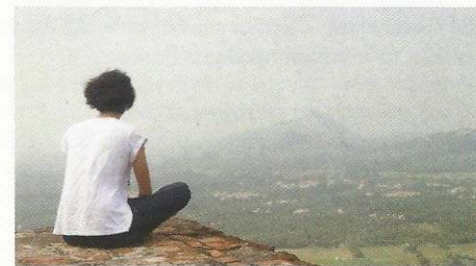
PLEASANTVILLE

There was a place called Pleasantville, a township by the sea
It was named for its friendly citizens and delightful pleasant trees
These trees had hollow roots although they stood so proud and tall
They crumbled fast, had brittle leaves and bore no fruit at all
These trees could not grow naturally, not there nor someplace else
But, all around, you saw them; people put them there themselves
They built houses on their branches, opened businesses below
And what happened next, you would expect and you'd expect they'd know

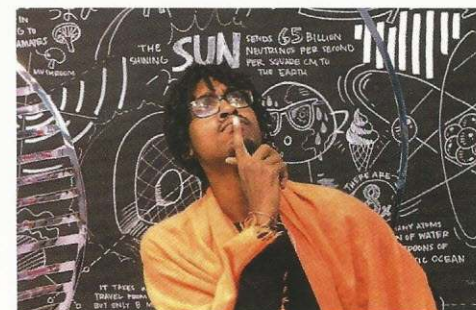
There was a place called Pleasantville – far too bizarre, but true
People lived entire lives there yet were still just passing through
Even newborn babes without a name would claim where they were from
Pleasantville would welcome anyone! Not everyone ... just some
Even though they built no fences, locked no doors, they needed not
Those who did not fit in were forbidden, cast aside and blocked
As divides between the neighbors grew, the tensions too would grow
And what happened next, you would expect and you'd expect they'd know

There was a place called Pleasantville – whether history admits
A thousand times this town appeared though everyone forgets
The citizens who felt the need pushed seeds into the land
They moved in strict accordance with their leader: Plaster Man
His vision was so clear, where he would point, the people went
Though, he bent when folks would question the directions they were sent
Eventually, he pointed anywhere they told him so
And what happened next, you would expect and you'd expect they'd know

MALCOLM



My name is Marie, I come from France where I studied art and graphic design, in Paris and in Le Havre. I came to Auroville in October 2018 through Service Civique. I stay in the French Pavilion and volunteer in Old School. I like roaming around, drawing and taking pictures.



My name is Malcolm, I am an internationally acclaimed poet and author living in Auroville since 2017.

COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS & SEMANTICS OF CHANGE

I love Auroville. I fall in love again every day. OK, not every day, but most days. Because at the innermost delicate layer of meaning, Auroville is an immensely accelerated karmic wheel with such an ooouuumpppphhhh of power that it shakes and tumbles you all over the place with no way out than through it. Yes, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. Although, however tough we think we are, time and time again, in Auroville and elsewhere, there is something that happens when a group of well-intentioned people get together to explore and solve triggering issues and topics. Emotions roll, we lose control and the sense of ourselves, we enter into reactionary mode, our vital being overrides the psychic, and we result in some forms of chaos, blame, fear, mistrust, frustration and division. Needless to say, this doesn't always happen, and our governance is so multi-faceted that I can't even begin to describe it. But, reactive emotions are the trend in the face of particularly challenging situations, and also in our magical Auroville. When something meaningful emerges in our exchanges, we are functioning at our best, but at times we also leave gatherings with a feeling of collective disappointment. And we lose a bit of the sense of hope and trust in each other. We grumble. It's tough. And hot. And we want better. We always want better. We are not satisfied with our quorum. We may forget how often we exercise it.

For me, the hardest part of being in a quasi-functional organisational and governance structure is that however centred I feel in the face of difficult situations and confrontations, I can sometimes feel let down by the collective consciousness, and I get triggered by the disharmony that ensues. As a result, I find myself seeking refuge inside, or with like-minded people, or horses, even to the extent of avoiding the collective, in some ways. But then, I am always reminded of just how much we care about Auroville, and how the magic takes place in everyday life, in all spheres, in the endless ocean of opportunity and in the efforts of our community.

Unequivocally, the magic that happens when we get together as a community in times of daily work, sharing, discussions, or reading the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's transformative guidance is not the magic that happens when we discuss our organisation, mandates, selection processes, guidelines, and issues that we face as a community. I find myself wondering;

why not? We are not managing to perfectly carry over our highest aspirations as individual beings into the realm of our collective.

We all feel this disappointment at one time or another, be it in general meetings, working groups, or on our communication platforms. In the context of our selection process, this is a major stumbling block and one of the things that holds people back from participating. Also, if the way we speak, give "feedback", and behave with each other is a reflection of our current state of consciousness, then I can understand why the level of participation is low. Who, exactly, wants to face this reflection?

Changing the outer world by inner means is the challenge. The step in between? Bringing forward the inner wisdom. But, engaging in opinion aggregation without extracting meaning does not lead to collaborative decision-making. Why does a group of conscious people with an inner fire that burns for Auroville and who dedicate their life to integral yoga, struggle to translate their inner wisdoms into group wisdom? We surmount indescribable challenges as individuals: from the deepest wounds, we nobly raise ourselves into the sphere of Love and Oneness. The work of dedicated friends in places such as Auroville Council, Koodam and Restorative Circles helps us tremendously with this. Can we look inwards and find an answer to how we can achieve this? And next, why we stumble to bring it to the collective? What tools do we need here? I believe answering this question is the single-most (r-)evolutionary thing we can manifest today in Auroville, and doing this would unleash the full potential that Auroville holds, as an anchor for the accelerated evolution of mankind. We are only as strong together as we respect, learn from and with, admire, and hold each other, in all our excruciatingly wonderful differences and individualities. We have to be nothing less than pioneers, heroes and historical figures in how we relate to and learn from the other souls with whom we share this evolutionary journey. We can only rise by raising each other.

Is there a way for the emergence of an integral, real-time and adaptive learning model, system or network, that could support and connect all Aurovilians and their working groups, and serve to translate each individual's inner wisdom into a meaningful lesson and can contribute to the collective growth of Auroville?

Can we retrieve the essence of the methods of our inner work for individual growth, bring it to the surface, and then apply it to the growth of the collective?

Then we learn to talk with each other in harmony and beauty, without the ego, and focus together on the task at hand, in our Yoga of Transformation. How to apply the inner dialogue with oneself, to an outer dialogue of speaking with someone, and let go of the archaic semantics of speaking to each other?

In an effort to nudge this laboratory of evolution forward, if enough people are open to this question, perhaps something will bubble to the surface of our proverbial fish bowl. Perhaps even a swimming lesson could be fashioned that can help our transformation, moving away from the auto-immune disease of obsolete patterns, and towards unison similar to the body's trillion cells that function in harmony for our body's health and growth, to yield beautifully vibrant Psychic beings before the Divine Consciousness.

INGE



I have been in Auroville for 20 years since the age of 10. I worked as a teacher in Future School, a writer for the Auroville Today and Auroville Village Action Group, and served a term in the Working Committee. I am now engaged with the FAMC.

AUROVILLE IS NEVER EASY



I was born in Auroville in 1994, where I grew up as a child. I left for France when I was nine years old, came back for one year in 2009, and returned to France to finish my studies. After graduation in Psychology (bachelor) and Social Anthropology (masters), I returned to love in Auroville in 2018.

There are several forces at play, accompanied by a constant pressure and a never-ending invitation for growth. That's how I would summarise my latest experience in the Residents' Assembly Service (RAS), in which I stayed for six months.

My decision to come back to Auroville, where I was born and grew up for my nine first years, was accompanied by an inner quest for something radically new. In this endeavour, I thought I would drop all my difficulties behind; and yet, the "boomerang effect" is unstoppable. All that remains to be transformed gets back to you.

A naked mirroring experience, this is what Auroville means to me.

After having spent two years conducting my research and writing my masters' thesis on the way Aurovilians re-enchant their lives, and more especially on the way ritualised silence binds us together, being confronted with such a tough reality has been a challenge. After looking at one of the countless pathways towards Human Unity, having to face our current hurt, divisions and lack of trust has definitely been a laborious learning.

FEAR.

That's perhaps one of our unconscious guiding principles in collective organisation today. I have seen many group members – including myself – deciding what to publish or not to publish based on fear: how will the community react? Do we have solid grounds before we can publish this or that? Are we ready to face the turmoil and stand the hits?

Many of our policies and mandates are based on fear. We're afraid that this or that will happen, so we write policies to avoid possible future situations. We're afraid that group members take too much power, so we write mandates – and whenever people exceed their mandates, we blame them. The mind is afraid of the unexpected, and so we try to get everything under control.

Many of our decisions are based on fear. We often don't act in ways that seem true to our inner selves – first we check if our mandates and policies allow us to act this or that way. If not, we're ready to write new policies, or to twist our

own truth so that we can follow them thoroughly. And still, we don't manage to protect ourselves. Not everything can be written or regulated. There's always room for interpretation. There's always room for a diversity of perspectives, and instead of welcoming that richness and embodying the freedom we aspire to, we blame the uncontrollable and 'the Other'. We grow and nurture our divides and polarities.

Being afraid of 'the Other', we start living in our own wor(l)ds. Working group members stop visiting Auronet and participating in community discussions. They don't want to get hit or polluted by excessive criticism. Other community members stop going to meetings, taking part in decisions, or participating in the organisation of our collective body. They don't trust in these groups, over there, which seem so far away from them. Individuality reigns and we oppose each other more and more – while hopefully still feeling bound by this Invisible Force and Her Grace.

Perhaps what is missing from our current structure is captured in the essence of one word: vulnerability.

Vulnerability for working groups to be totally transparent and share openly without shame – even when there isn't any solid ground, or when they're themselves in a climate of opacity.

Vulnerability for all community members to assume their part in taking responsibility – and recognize that none of us is infallible, and that we're all in the same boat.

Vulnerability in being totally sincere to ourselves, despite our numerous fears, and in daring to overcome them. Divine Anarchy might not be so far away – it's all about courage and perspective.

Vulnerability in getting rid of all these protections we put around us that prevent us from truly being ourselves and truly meeting 'the Other'.

Vulnerability in being open to the unexpected, getting away from the controlling mind, and surrendering to a higher force.

Vulnerability in letting go of all boundaries and trusting Her that all is right and that She takes care.

And perhaps before being able to fully surrender in vulnerability, we should first strive to restore Trust. I myself can only feel ready to get naked if I have trust and faith. In Her, in the Other and in myself – which is all the same.

What about you?

MAËL



INTEGRAL INCLUSIVITY IN THE MATRIMANDIR



My name is QurratulAin Contractor and I am 27 years old. I come from Mumbai and have been living and working in Auroville since April, 2016. Architect by qualification, I volunteered with AVAG until Jan 2018, where I wrote content and initiated a community kitchen garden. Following this, I joined EcoPro to pursue my interest in water and sanitation issues.

The first time I attended the Matrimandir tour, I was struck by a remark from the tour guide when he said, "Most cities have at their center a parliamentary building or a financial district. Auroville is a city with the Matrimandir – a meditation centre at its focus; this speaks volumes about the nature of this city."

As I spent more time in Auroville, I came to realise that the Matrimandir is not, in fact, the physical centre of Auroville as yet, and that there are mixed opinions about the appearance of this structure. Over the last three years, I have introduced Auroville to many friends and family. Those who choose to visit the Matrimandir often return awestruck. When they ask me what

I think of its design, I often tell them that to me, its appearance matters less than its significance.

I find it fascinating that so many residents of Auroville carry a living memory of working on the manifestation of this central structure. That the journey of the Matrimandir's manifestation is so closely linked to that of the community itself – and that the complex is not complete as per its design – indicates the hurdles the community must still overcome.

On a second tour, I recall a visitor asking the guide if the grandeur of the Matrimandir was in contradiction to the principles of Auroville. To this the guide replied, "This is a place to be absorbed in beauty." I looked around me and

took in the serene calm of the Matrimandir gardens. The attention to detail is impeccable, vast stretches of rolling green lawns, every blade of grass standing in perfection, even as the only humans in sight were the few gardeners and volunteers working in silent devotion.

The same summer, the ongoing drought in Tamil Nadu was written about in the News and Notes and awareness raised in Auroville regarding the judicious use of water. It was also brought to our attention that the water requirement of the Matrimandir gardens was equivalent to that of the rest of Auroville's residents put together. This information struck me and made me question what "beauty" really is. Is it a static state or a cont.

dynamic living concept? Does it appear constant through time or adapt itself to blend with natural cycles? How can it remain inclusive and yet be preserved?

The execution of the design of the Matrimandir gardens as well as the water bodies around it is not yet complete. It is this last phase which proves to be the most challenging for the community, since it describes our relationship with nature and brings up questions of conservation and judicious use of physical life's most vital element: Water. It is interesting to note that the solution to the problem of water overuse in the Matrimandir today lies in the very design of the same structure.

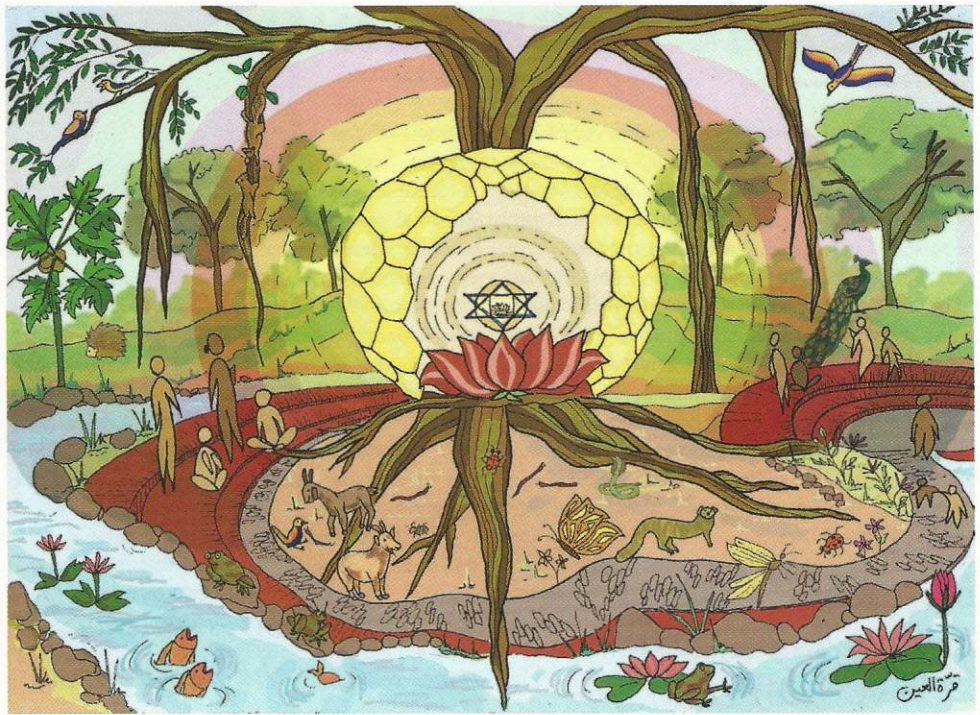
A report prepared by Auroville Centre for Scientific Research in 2013 claimed that the water bodies, if appropriately designed, will not just cover the water needs of the Matrimandir gardens but will also further contribute to the water security of Auroville, providing water for up to 15,000 people. However, there remain hurdles in reconciling varying points of view. On one hand, there is a deep emotional and spiritual connection with the structure which shapes a certain approach to its maintenance and inspires a particular aesthetic. On the other hand, there is

also within the community a deep understanding of ecological preservation and in particular water management. Water, being a common resource, gives opportunity for both dispute as well as unity and cooperation. The limited availability of water compels us to act in a spirit of unity.

In the case of the Matrimandir, the physical manifestation of its design is in itself the manifestation of Human Unity.

This painting is called "Integral inclusivity in the Matrimandir" – "inclusive" to me is not just a matter of including all humans but also all living creatures with the unique and often hidden roles they play in maintaining natural balance and harmony. It is not a realistic or precise image of the Matrimandir as it stands today, but a fluid depiction of the possibility it inspires in me. It shows the three elements of the Matrimandir complex: The Matrimandir itself which represents union with the Divine; the banyan tree – which represents union with nature –, and the amphitheater – which represents union with the community. Together they represent Human Unity.

QURRATULAIN CONTRACTOR



Integral inclusivity in matrimandir

AM I NOT AUROVILIAN?

According to the Entry Service in Auroville, I do not exist in Auroville. I am neither "Aurovilian", "Newcomer" nor "Friend". I have hesitated for years to comment on my apparent non-status in Auroville. My discomfort with writing this piece stems from a desire to not be misunderstood or perceived as ungrateful or grasping. Finally the words started to form as I spoke to Sunaura, aka Sunny, who is also a child of Auroville from the early 1970s. As she shared her current sense of disenfranchisement from Auroville, I realised what I wanted to say, which is that there needs to be an official category for children of Auroville in the entry process. This category needs to be expanded beyond its current function, which is only for when we want to return permanently to Auroville. Instead, the category should be a permanent status so that we can easily come back and serve at any time.

I am the same age as Auroville. I came to Auroville when I was under one-year-old. When I arrived, the school in Aspiration was founded because the children of Auroville were a priority for Mother. I was reminded of this era as I watched a video from the 1970s posted on Facebook by Auroma, which contains a clip with 2 or 3-year-old me sitting on Norman Dosset's lap (he was one of the people Mother put in charge of our first school). In it he says, "The children here which are growing up are entering into a new consciousness, into a new world", such was the deep reverence that we were treated with in that school. There was only a handful of us then, and there are even fewer of us left from that era now. Whenever I see my childhood friends, I feel their eyes light up and a spark flies between us of understanding. This is why it is so jarring to come back to Auroville and be told that I am not an "Aurovilian", not a "Newcomer", and not a "Friend". By the way, when was I ever not a friend of Auroville? I see my childhood friends cringe everytime people ask me what I am or who I am and it happens a lot. Rather than giving long explanations, I have taken

to replying, "nobody" or a "visitor", which visibly upsets those who do know me.

I was there when the beautiful bubble of a school Mother had mandated for us was torn to shreds by a rabid dichotomy in our community that ripped beloved teachers and friends from us. In a matter of days, the first generation went from being the future manifestation of a new consciousness to being vagabonds in Auroville. During that time I rode my little red bicycle all over the Green Belt, sleeping and eating in almost every community. There were always kind mentors and friends who seemed to hold the spark of kindness that Mother had wanted for the children of Auroville. I was in the first group of kids at the new Kindergarten near the Center that still exists today. The children of Auroville regrouped where we could at the time, receiving kindness from those adults not distracted by dissension. We ate wherever we could find food in those lean days, and we played all over Auroville. As we became pre-teens, we spent a lot of time at Fertile where Johnny always seemed to be able to put us to work until he formed a school for us as we turned into teens who needed focus.

Along the way we participated in concretings as the Matrimandir emerged from the ground, and we planted so many trees. As we grew into adults in this uncertain landscape, we got our sense of continuity and stability from each other. There were so few of us back then that we knew all too intimately each other's weaknesses and mistakes, as well as our strengths and beauty, and we all share in an echo of a dream.

Whenever and wherever I meet these early youth, there is so much understanding that comes from being molded in the early, hot, dusty, bare years of Auroville. Unfortunately, that understanding doesn't always seem to extend from Auroville to us. We were all brought together by forces beyond our control, and we found each other at the beginning of the dream. I know that I am

a much richer and more contemplative person because of the gifts I received from Auroville... and yet I wonder that Auroville hasn't created a simple path back home so it can benefit from the wisdom it wrought? If indeed we youths of Auroville have actually received any spark of the "new consciousness" it hoped to awaken in us, wouldn't we be a valuable asset for Auroville's future? I wonder when I come back as a "nobody" to the red land that forever stains my heart and I pass trees I remember as saplings – "Do you remember me?" If yes, then let me know.

BINAH



Year 1985, me at Johnny's school in Fertile. I'm second in from the right and probably 14 or 15. Photo credit: Jan Allen

I am currently 50, I live in Denver Colorado with my husband, Murugan and my 13 year old daughter, Rasam. My son Chidambaram is a junior at Harvard. I currently serve on the board of AVI USA. My mother is Jocelyn from Ravena.

Video for reference: <http://auromaa.org/auroville-1972-early-documentary/>

AUROVILIAN?



I came back to Auroville as a young adult at 21, and found myself working in the Entry Service. Even though I had already had the privilege to sign my B-form at 18, I was curious about what the Newcomers went through. In a way, the Newcomers helped me deepen my understanding and clarify my commitment to this community.

At a General Meeting at the Unity Pavilion about the Newcomer process, I remember one of my team members trying to explain to the crowd the difference between "Aurovilian" with one "L" and "Aurovillian" with two. Many did not understand the point of this differentiation, but I was intrigued. She was trying to differentiate what it meant to carry the Auroville spirit, versus the technicality of the word.

So, what does it mean to be announced as "Aurovilian" at the end of one's Newcomer period? If all goes well, the applicant is announced, confirmed, signs a form, and then is entered in the official 'Register of Residents'. But, I had been on the 'Master List' since birth. Was I not "Aurovilian" until I turned 18? If I spent too many years out, would I have to prove myself again? Many questions circled my young mind, as I could not accept the current definition of Aurovilian as a status.

Many Aurovilians hold on dearly to the arrogance that sometimes accompanies the status. Many Newcomers strive to join this superiority club. "Let me help you understand what Auroville is all about," I have felt it too,

what a boost to my ego... to feel that I could guide another.

I was well aware that the Mother had been clear that joining Auroville was a choice. An inner choice, to be made by each individual who resonated with the Charter and the Dream, and who embodied a willingness to work towards the vision of an integral life.

Both my parents had been born into the community. So, often when people asked me where I am from I would simply state "I am from here, from Auroville. My grandparents brought me here. My parents were born here, and so was I."

Identity is a fascinating construct that I, we, all play with in our minds. I was always very reluctant to claim an identity as my own. It was more liberating to not-belong. I remember gaining clarity, at an International Zone meeting, when I was in my early 20s and was still exploring what Auroville had to offer. I sat in on their Monday meetings for a year, and listened carefully, admiring their diligent work to represent the world in the zone, but also feeling a deep sense of unease.

Would I ever have a place in the International Zone? Born into Auroville I was aware of my Indian heritage and European background, but I had not really lived either.

*In Kuilapalayam
I was a foreigner,*

*and in the Netherlands
I was perceived
as a foreigner too.*

It is not an unusual feeling for Auroville children. There was no way I could represent the cultures of the Indian or European Pavilions – not whole heartedly at least.

As Auroville kids, we all know our accent can lean towards several directions, depending on our need at the moment. We've learnt to enjoy walking barefoot, but we can also wear that fancy shirt when needed for the Pondy dinners. A chameleon that crosses the dirt road, wide eyed, but hesitant to be seen.

It had always been clear to me that being "Aurovilian" was my aspiration and that I would work hard towards that goal. When I would close my eyes I could feel the Mother laugh with me, I knew that she knew very well. Becoming "Aurovilian" was an intangible goal, a call for evolution, a call to keep persevering to something divine.

Becoming Aurovilian was not something that happened after 1-2 years of work, housing and a supportive mentor. That was just a process for becoming a "Resident" of this locality.

Embodying the Aurovilian spirit was something else. It was much larger than my mind could grasp. It was something I felt strongly in flashes, and simultaneously could feel its constant

presence. Enveloping me when I was most shaken. It was something I carried with me as I travelled far. I recognized it in the eyes of those who knew. Being Aurovilian was an aspiration in me and you.

So no, I am not Aurovilian. And neither are you. I am a third generation resident of the Auroville community. We may both aspire towards that spirit together, perhaps we may even embody it for brief moments at a time. But together we enjoy the fact that we have more than enough time to breathe deeply, to play, to run, to swim, to fly higher...

KAVITHA



I am now 28, born and brought up as a third generation in Auroville. My grandparents are of Indian (Kuilapalayam) and European (Dutch/German) background... my grandparents having worked for Auroville at its very start. I have spent some years studying Sustainable Development abroad, before returning to work for Auroville as a young adult since 2013 – working in governance, education, environment, enterprise development and now youth empowerment.

"SESAME OPEN PANNE"

"You wanted to be born in Auroville, you made that clear," our mothers told us. I told my therapist I wasn't clear and she told me she couldn't understand, because I was so clear. I remember, at four years old, being clear my parents should divorce. "The relationship I am questioning the most is my relationship with The Mother," one of us opened the conversation with one evening. "So many people have extraordinary relationships with her, I don't feel like I do." She's with you in the most ordinary of moments, one of our mothers said, "Talk to her when you are brushing your teeth. Ask her things. She always said one had to ask her things."

I felt like she asks me things. And I don't always want to do them.

It was only when I surrendered to Mother Nature that she saved me, and brought me back to shore, he said. She was in the water in the middle of two currents, one hot and one cold, struggling between the two, when she realised it was a metaphor of her life in that moment. One thing that's still a mystery is the man I saw with a friend, when I was 7, a man on the other side of the canyon who was all in white, with a white beard, holding a rifle and pointing towards us on the other side of the canyon.

I'm also wondering about the spider who returned the dead fly I tried to gift her.

"What's your advice for us, as mothers of

Auroville?" You do things differently already, they say. You have so much less baggage than we did.

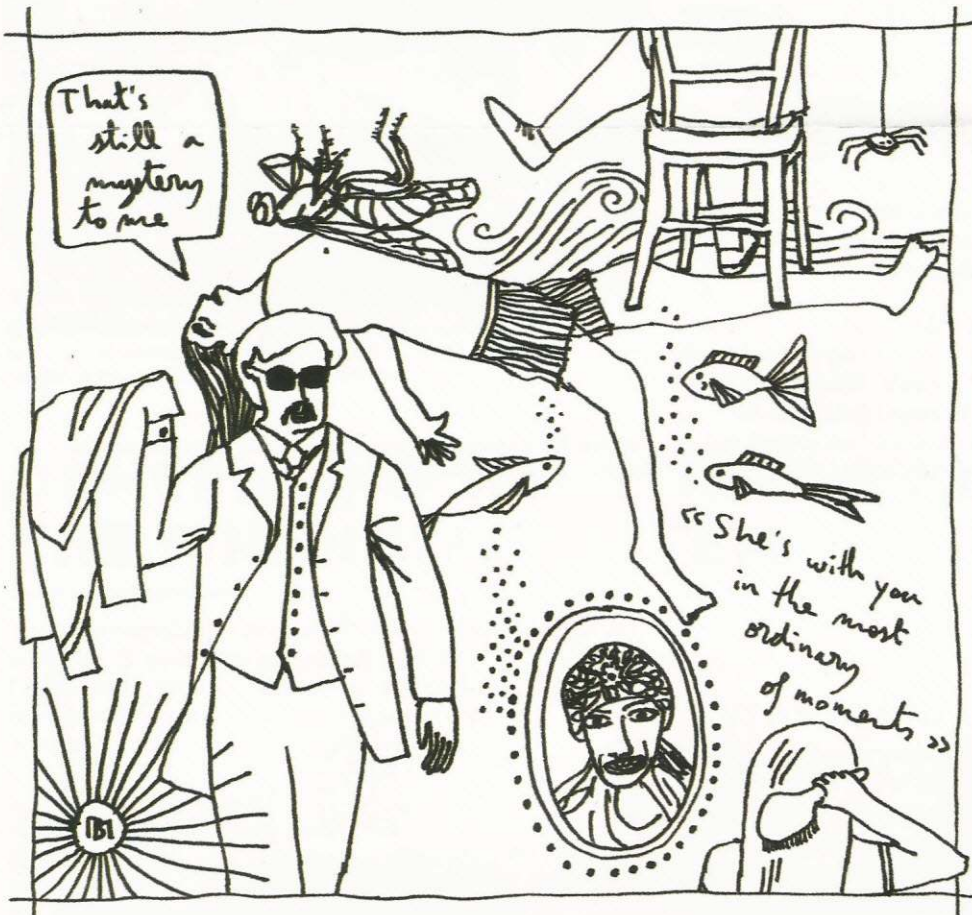
"Sesame Open Panna" is an experimental, informal forum for sharing light-hearted, low-pressure, deep conversations about meaningful experiences of ordinary and extraordinary life situations. We don't talk about the weather, or who is dating who. We choose a theme to reflect on and share about. Not a topic of contention in Auroville – we don't debate, expect outcomes, or make decisions. We want to have more intimate collective exchanges. We laugh, we cry, we hold our breaths, we pause in silence, and we leave feeling moved.

We have talked about how we make major life decisions, though.

One of us relies on owls, and when she decided to move back to Auroville, it was such a confirmation to find out that they lived in the Banyan tree.

We have talked about ordinary and extraordinary relationships, and mostly spoke about how we each relate to The Mother. And other animals, like the spider, and praying mantis – and a yoga teacher who looks like a heron. We have reflected on the role of magic in our lives, and how it's interwoven with crossing thresholds, from the Berlin Wall to marriages. And of course, the Free Store came up in our conversations – the women's section is more colorful and fun for everyone.

SURYAMAYI, BHAKTI, ADITI



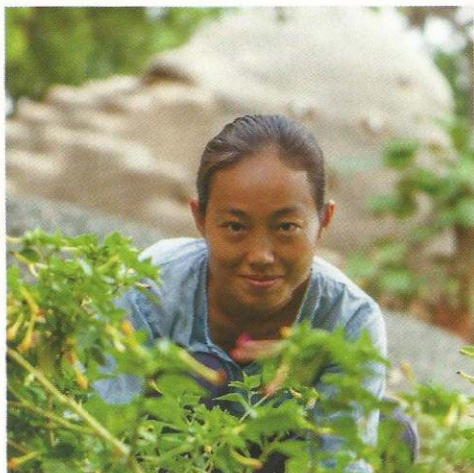
A YOUTH THAT NEVER AGES

There inhabits in us a youth that never ages —

Accepts Adventure
Grows in Gratitude
Enthusied with Energy
Loves Life
Empowered in Equanimity
Surrendered in Solitude
Sincere in Simplicity

Yes to Yoga
Open to Oneness
Unaffected by Uncertainty
Trusting in Transformation
Humbled by Humanity

ANANDI Z, WITH OTHERS



I am engrossed in the playdough of Life.

RAP MUSIC IS MY ART FORM



Born-and-raised Aurovilian, I created a rap group called The Lyrical Trinity (TLT), the concept being three rap alter egos in one man. The first and primary rapper is The Druid, followed by Young God and the Nomad, each representing Mind, Body and Soul respectively, while all being part of a whole – hence a trinity. This particular piece is written from Nomad's perspective. While obviously pertaining to family, this song is really about finding strength in our roots, however far away the apple rolled from the tree, so to speak, because no matter how bad or good things get, we can never forget those whose love is unconditional! Who loves unconditionally? The people you call family! Auroville is my family: it's my roots and without them, I don't know where I'd be. Where would you be without those who you care for, and that care for you?

SUSHANT

www.soundcloud.com/thedruid645

My Family

By Nomad
TLT

(Me and My...)
Where would I be without family
Those I care for that care for me
I see my nephew and all he could be
How could I lose sight in this life they offer protection
My family like Smith and Wesson are my only weapon
Blood and bond bind us strong
I know that's where I belong but for a while I know that I had it wrong
I lost sight of them by my side
When I needed them most they were still down to ride!
My dad he's the man! My brother's his right hand
My mother she's the heart, her and my sis keep us from falling apart
We got a new member in November to join our crew
A precious little boy was born, my nephew
Where would I be without my family
Those that I care for that care for me

Me and my, me and my, me and my family
Me and my, me and my, me and my blood
Me and my, me and my, me and my family
Me and my, me and my, me and my kin
For all them I'd do anything!
Me and my, me and my, me and my family
Me and my, me and my, me and my blood
Me and my, me and my, me and my family

...But I lost my way like the black sheep
I'd be out all night, while my dad lose sleep, just cos I had love for the street
And I can't blame em, for anything
They gave me everything and every chance to win
Yet I'm confused, still living by sin, I choose to lose! Every time and time again
Maybe I'm corrupt the cancer cause
Collecting and projecting the family flaws
Rack my brain why I'm the stain on my strong family name,
I think I got the wrong family name
They gave me nothing but love, yet I was too busy, blind being a thug!
Getting mixed up with pigs in the mud
Till it was too late! I was in too deep
Me and my, me and my, me and my family but I lost my way like the black sheep

Me and my, me and my, me and my family
Me and my, me and my, me and my blood
Me and my, me and my, me and my family
Me and my, me and my, me and my kin...

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO LISTEN TO MY FAMILY



TheDruid645



PHOTOGRAPHY SERIES BY THE LGBT SUPPORT GROUP

Stereotypes play an important role in daily suffering. Especially when you belong to a minority. The majority can easily fall into humiliation games towards the minority, which can lead to depression or worse. It takes then a huge amount of courage to be who we are again, to accept ourselves fully, and - one step further - to let ourselves shine in society.

The struggle to accept ourselves is even greater when parts of who we are show on the outside, in a way that bothers some narrow-minded people. What we want to express through this photography series is that, while it is easy to label someone from their behavior or outfit, such labelling doesn't really mean anything at all.

EUGENIE FOR LGBT

It is not because I am a girl that I cannot play football.
It is not because I am a boy that I should not be interested in fashion.
It is not because I am a woman that I should not wear big shirts.
It is not because I am a man that I cannot wear tight jeans.
It is not because I am a woman in love with another woman, that I am after all women.
It is not because I am a guy who has a lot of style and sensitivity, that I am gay.
It is not because I dress like all other men that I don't go back at night to my boyfriend.
And it is not because I conform that I am going to be happy.
Love is.

IF YOU WANT TO SUPPORT OR GET SUPPORT,
YOU CAN WRITE US GROUPRIDELGBT@GMAIL.COM



ANWAR SUDIPTA DEEP LUC



REWRITING THE STARS



"CARBON, LIFE"

People may tell you that some things are too deep to change. Some things are set in stone. Written in the stars.

You can make a difference though. Making a difference doesn't mean saving someone from a burning building or discovering the cure for cancer.

Making a difference is smiling at the new kid on the first day of school. Making a difference is giving a homeless person your lunch. Making a difference is taking home a stray dog you find lying hurt on the road. Give a compliment. Help someone carry their groceries.

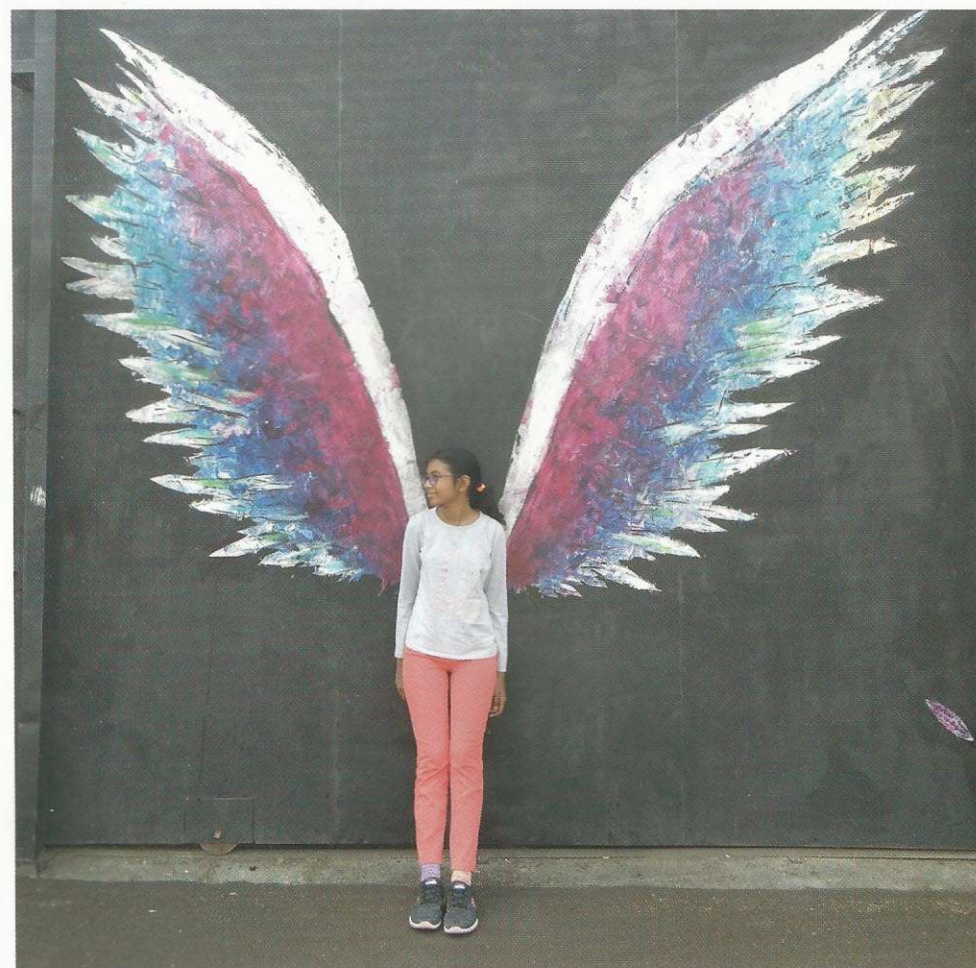
I'll never forget the day my friend used her ice

cream money to buy a meal for a child on the street. When I was seven, it mattered a lot to me when my best friend stayed in at recess with me until I finished my math work.

You can make a difference by being you. If you want to eat blue food instead of regular food, do it! If you want to read Shakespeare instead of crime novels, do it! If you want to watch the Harry Potter movies (again) instead of Avengers, do it!

You run your own life and choose your own path. Anything can be rewritten. Even the stars.

MANYA



I'm Manya Sekar, 12 years old and I like reading, writing, and music.



AMRITA

'It has been said that man is made up of blood and cells. But in truth he is like a tree's foliage. Not compressed into a solid block, but composed of scattered images like leaves upon the branches, through which the wind must blow so as to make them sing.'

~ Jean Giöno, Que Ma Joie Demeure

AUROVILLE, A SITE OF UNENDING EDUCATION



Over the last 50 years, Auroville has developed collectively and experimentally as a society dedicated to conscious evolution, grounded in a multiplicity of pursuits – commercial and social enterprises, alternative schooling and environmental restoration, a vibrant artistic and (multi)cultural life. This dedicated opportunity of applying consciousness into everyday life makes Auroville an enhanced learning environment, because every endeavour and interaction is a potential, perpetual site of multidimensional transformation and reformulation, inner and outer, subtle and physical. Precisely how is it ‘enhanced’, one ought to ask? Can we not learn from all of our experiences in whatever context? Of course we can – but our community does provide a socio-economic, political, and spiritual context in which the capacity to engage in shaping oneself and one’s environment meaningfully is practically fostered. One of the things that has come to light for me in the course of my doctoral research on Auroville is how so many aspects of our society are structured in ways that support and facilitate it being a place of ‘unending education’, ‘constant progress’, and a ‘youth that never ages’ – in addition to the role of our ideals in inspiring individuals to approach our personal and collective lives embodying these. I share some of these insights with you here.

EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

In highlighting Auroville as a learning society, my focus here is on continuing educational opportunities for adults, and not on schooling. Although interesting to note in terms of understanding Auroville as an enhanced learning environment is that many young adults educated in Auroville emphasise their upbringing as a whole, and not just their schooling, as being “an educational experience.” They were exposed to many learning experiences within the community, and developed an adaptable capacity to learn from each of these, a quality which they carried forward in their lives (“Auroville Education Survey; 1968–2013”). In a survey circulated to alumni of Auroville schools, I found it significant that many listed teaching as at least one of their current activities in life, given that I too have often taken up teaching various activities, often on a pro-bono basis, intentionally carrying forward the generosity so many showed me in Auroville when I was growing up here.

I wonder if this is a shared rationale, and whether being exposed from a young age to a dynamic and participatory learning environment is conducive to engaging in creating such opportunities.

Incidentally, aside from graduates of Auroville high schools who have chosen to continue on to teach within them, young Aurovilians have become significant contributors to learning opportunities within Auroville and beyond. In the past decade, a team of Aurovillian-raised adults has been organising the “Auroville Holi Tango Festival”, the biggest in Asia. It has shaped the practice and culture of tango in India, where, following the Auroville example, not a single school charges profit-based prices for similar events. The unit Tree Care India, another team of Auroville-raised adults, is offering the only arborist apprenticeships in country, intent on defining the development of environmentally-conscious arborist practice in this India. Wasteless, another young Aurovillian-founded and driven social enterprise, now has its educational material included in the Tamil Nadu Education Board’s school textbooks, with potentially dramatic impact for waste reduction in the coming generation of Indian citizens. The Tree House Community travels internationally and offers workshops to teach people to build their own, eco-friendly housing, and YouthLink offers a number of residential educational programmes in which young adults from across the world and Auroville’s bioregion immerse themselves and learn from our community’s best practices, emerging with UNESCO-recognised certification and the skills to train others. Perhaps the most recent of youth-led educational initiatives is the free night school open to all, “Night Conscious Learning”, launched by the Youth Centre.

I choose to single these out because this is the ‘youth’ edition, but of course there is a huge wealth of learning opportunities that are provided by so many members of our community, in so many fields, contributing to manifesting Auroville as a site of ‘unending education’ for many within and beyond the community. Starting at the primary school level, Auroville serves more children in

Outreach Schools than in the community’s own. Guests benefit from the many workshops Aurovilians facilitate, and more young Indians than young Aurovilians intern in Auroville units, such as the architecture studio DuStudio. University student groups regularly visit our community on accredited field trips. Channelled through Savi – now managed by a team of young Aurovilians too! – hundreds of volunteers each year learn from their immersions in Auroville’s wide-ranging units and centres of research. A 2013 research report “Educational practices & opportunities for Adults in Auroville” reveals that the facilitators of these opportunities aspire to embody and transmit integral educational experiences to their participants, and that their immersion in the environment of Auroville facilitates an inner dimension of personal development. Participants go on to practice, and even teach the knowledge they have acquired within Auroville units – such as Sunlit Future, the Auroville Earth Institute, EcoFemme – elsewhere, so that their reach, while perhaps not ‘unending,’ is certainly not finitely restricted to Auroville.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AS UNENDING EDUCATION

For adults in Auroville, work is a key site of lifelong learning. The Mother spoke of work in Auroville not as “a way to earn one’s living but a way to express oneself and to develop one’s capacities and possibilities”; work was to be undertaken as a yoga.

She envisioned an economy in which the basic needs of all would be provided for, in which Aurovilians would not be driven to work long hours, but would also be able to dedicate a significant amount of their time to an integral development.

Work is an important site of yogic practice for Aurovilians (a topic on which a soon-to-be young Newcomer recently completed a Masters thesis in psychology). This principle is key to the very understanding of what it means to be Aurovillian, and is certainly a constant, self-educational work-in-progress. While I assume not everybody in Auroville is engaged in work that is meaningful to them, I also assume that the proportion of the population that is, is considerably higher here than elsewhere. Furthermore, the flexibility of work in our community – the capacity to engage with various places and projects, to change fields of work entirely (many of us effectively ‘learning on the job!’) – also facilitates exposure to diverse learning experiences, and is an inconceivable freedom for the vast majority of working people in modern society.

Various other avenues of personal development are pursued within the community, including physical practices such as yoga, tai chi and dance, in addition to meditative, contemplative and healing practices, as well as artistic production and performance. In following with Auroville’s economic values, these opportunities are made available to all Aurovilians free of cost – whether funded by SAIER with GOI donations, the community’s central fund, income-generating centres such as Quiet and Vérité, or the generosity and financial capacity of individual teachers. They include weekly classes as well as free or cost-price workshops and trainings, enabling Aurovilians to become certified aquatic bodyworkers or Awareness Through the Body facilitators, for instance. Such pursuits are restricted to the wealthy in the vast majority of modern societies, for example, an hour-long yoga class in the United States is almost double the hourly minimum wage. Beyond these personal development opportunities, our central fund and SAIER also subsidise performances, concerts and arts exhibitions, making them free to Aurovilians and visitors, and thus fostering a public erudition. Again, such cultural exposure elsewhere is often expensive, and thus limited in its accessibility to the general public.

UNENDING CIVIC EDUCATION

Let’s take a look at our governance, too, which strikes me as key

site of unending communal education as well. In my observations and experience, virtually all aspects of community life and development in Auroville are constantly being deliberated and (re)defined, at various scales and forums, formal and informal and somewhere in between, sometimes overlapping. Such forums are few in representative democracies (let alone dictatorships), existing almost exclusively in activist spaces or within political parties. Few engage with these: the only form of political participation for most people throughout the world, is voting for national leadership once every several years – an individual, not a collective practice.

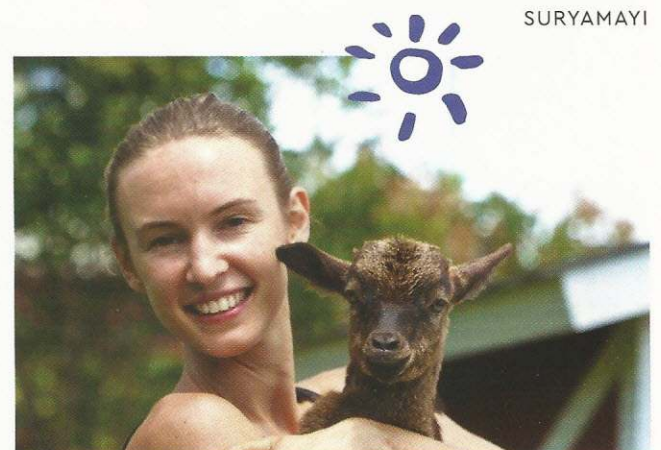
By contrast, the sheer magnitude of participatory processes occurring in Auroville at any given time is overwhelming; even in my own full-time doctoral field research, it was impossible to follow most of them. Our community’s political life thus consists of an almost unparalleled opportunity for an enacted civic education, in communal self-governance. While Auroville is certainly not the only collective using self-governing, horizontal and participatory forms of decision-making and community management in the world, it is one of the most significant. Consider the fact that in Auroville, any one individual or group of individuals can design and propose a policy, or the amendment to a policy, and bring it to the community-at-large for ratification – as has recently been the case, with the Entry Policy for example.

Because less than 10% of the population is ever present at a General Meeting, or Selection Process, or required for a community vote to be considered, many draw the conclusion that there is a low level of involvement among Aurovilians in shaping our public life. However, many who do not participate in General Meetings, nor vote on community-wide matters, are not politically inactive. On the contrary, they are engaged in forums at other scales, more directly related to their areas of interest and activity. I am not saying we should not concern ourselves with considering whether there are systemic issues that discourage greater participation in our ‘centralised’ political processes. On the contrary, I think we need to work for an increased quality of exchange that is facilitated in these spaces – that is, we need to recognise the incredibly active decentralised network of political agency and involvement that is key to the everyday functioning and development of our community, and this is an important aspect of our learning society.

OUR LIVING IDEALS

Our ideals really are alive, in practice. I had my doubts when I started my PhD. I started out questioning whether the ideals actually were alive, and if so, how and to what extent – and I am surprised by how much my research has revealed and convinced me of this. They are alive because they inspire people in their individual lives, and because they have, and continue to inspire (some of) us in intentionally shaping our public life in order to facilitate a societal framework in which they can flourish. We’re not perfect, of course, and I don’t want to distract us from looking at our limitations – we all know that there are many we need to work through, get over, and move beyond, to continue to move towards realising an integral society and not be unravelled at the seams through various other pulls. But I think we also fail to recognise the ways in which our ideals are alive and articulated, and that in recognising this we are empowered to build on it.

SURYAMAYI



I was born and raised in Auroville, and I am currently finalising a social science PhD on the community. I have been active within Auroville in facilitating research collaborations, community administration, and embodied education.

AUROVILLE AS A PRECIOUS, SELF-RENEWING & BREATHING "PLANT"



I am Francesco Colturi, of Italian origin, and I arrived in Auroville when I was twenty years old after a pretty regular western education and at the end of an early career as a professional snowboarder. The shift of life and lifestyle was intense: it felt as if I had passed from one life to another in a blink of an eye. At that time, I didn't know yet that my "new life" would be very much centered around the theme of education. Just a few months after arriving in Auroville, I came into contact with the work of Awareness Through the Body, with which I fell in love and which became the focal point of my work.

What brought me initially to Auroville was the call towards the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and the aspiration to live in the very place where people could put those teachings into practice throughout their daily lives. From the very beginning the atmosphere that I could "breathe in the air" has been very perceptible and tangible to me, a magical indescribable feeling that has always accompanied my staying in Auroville. I also perceive a very keen sense of being at home and a strong sense of belonging, at times so strong that it gives a perception of being like a cell that's part of a larger organism.

During these years, I have been facing the various difficulties that living in a place like Auroville entails. I saw its limitations and shortcomings, its challenges and its contradictions. On the other hand, thanks to the possibility of travelling to several countries, I became more aware of the incredible positive uniqueness of Auroville. I could acknowledge the privilege and luck we have to live here.

Multiculturality, commonality, collective aspiration and intention, diversity, a strong shared spiritual base, intimate contact with nature, warmth in human contacts, space for self-expression, for experimentation, for continuous education, for inner growth, for self-discovery...

These and many others are very valuable ingredients that, blended together in a complex pattern, make Auroville what it is now.

Becoming aware of this privilege and luck also developed a sense of responsibility:

what is rare and unique must be preserved and helped to grow towards its fuller potential. The way I see it, it's similar to a very rare plant, which needs proper care and attention. But, like any living plant, in order to grow it needs to renew itself. To be fresh and alive, it needs the flowing lymph of youth, the renovation of old leaves with new ones, the fresh water of new ideas and the indispensable transpiration-exchange with the "external" world. Auroville has stable roots that sustain it, which need to be honoured, but at the same time, if the space for a new revitalising sprout of growth is not allowed, it risks becoming stifled or clogged.

My wish for the future is exactly this: a blooming of new possibilities that is brought forward by the revitalizing contribution of the new generations, as well as an opening to the possibility that the "outside world" is offering. I feel that Auroville needs to be able to breathe, both in and out, sharing its discoveries and resources while being open to receiving external energies and inputs. We will then have more "air" in which that "magic" can be breathed, and more people will be able to benefit from it, both in Auroville and elsewhere.

FRANCESCO



HAPPINESS IN AUROVILLE

We drive on dusty roads,
Reaching home covered in a hue of orange-red
that leaves our white cloths ...un-white...
We quarrel over fences and noise,
Over cars and cut trees.
Standing in the queue at the Solar Kitchen, we all have a
world of thoughts in our heads
Each one in its own mother tongue
And looking around we may ask ourselves
"Who is having the same dream?"
Many or few
Sometimes we stand together, sometimes we stand
alone.
Sitting on the bench of the Financial Service, hearing the
noise of the printers
We wonder
MONEY, or NO MONEY
MONEY, or NO MONEY.
Eating in our lovely restaurants we can thank the cooks
that bring "our" cuisine from so far away: Korean, Italian,
middle-Eastern, Japanese...
But then we say to ourselves
"Hey, I have to eat local food."
So, we find all about wild edible plants.
We misjudge the past
We disagree about the present
We argue on the way forward

Because
We are only humans after all
ATTENTION: WORK in Progress
Wear a helmet
Sometimes it's too easy and we wonder why everyone is
complaining.
Sometimes it's unbearably hard so that we can learn
about our strengths and about our weaknesses.
We all think about water and when the next rain is going
to come; waiting for it thirstily.
We want to make the world a better place, so we strive
and fight and hope and work.
...waking up with the sounds of birds,
How can we not feel grateful?
Feeling supported,
How can we not feel grateful?
...in a place like Auroville
Where the impossible is possible,
And where the possible is impossible;
Over and over again
In eternity
We meet our own self, raw as it is,
we learn to love it, accept it and work with this mutable
nature.
Happiness is in Auroville

SARA



Born in Yugoslavia, raised in Croatia, I went to University in Italy. I found that there is much more in life than what it seems; stars and clouds were seen as messengers of the infinite...one day the pull and push and call was so strong that I embarked to a Journey: Auroville - Integral Yoga. I visited Auroville for the first time in 2006. I have been living in Auroville since 2008; I found home, family, friends and a lot to explore. I have been working in different services, farms, forests and engaged in communication with volunteers from all over the world. At present I am working in Savi (Volunteer Service) as a coordinator. I am also part of the management team of Joy Guest House and activities... and I have a few projects on my own....

WHAT'S MOVING IN MY HEART IS MOVING IN YOUR HEART

I invite you to put both of your hands on your heart. You can do it now while reading. Hold it tight to feel into your heart, feel it pumping. Take a deep breath. What's moving in your heart?

How we all are connected in our hearts

The sun enables all life on this planet. The plants that grow around us absorb the sunlight and convert it to food, through its photosynthesis. The plant also absorbs water and nutrition from the soil.

We harvest the plants and eat them. And then, what happens?

We have sunlight in our heart

Our bodies are a mirror image of the plants. Our metabolism releases the sunlight from the plant, it passes through channels in the small intestine into the bloodstream and through our body. It goes through our heart.

We have the water element in our heart

Imagine that you are holding a piece of watermelon. The watermelon is not a part of you, but when you eat it, it becomes a part of you.

Our bodies release water from the watermelon, it passes through the stomach, goes to the small intestine and from there into our blood and through our body. And now it's circling through your heart. It will come out and go back



I consider myself as a smiling acroyogi who landed in Auroville in 2014 after stepping out of managing my international social responsibility business within the textile industry. Lately, my passion has been "growing with wild", realising our interconnectedness with nature, building a relationship with where we come from, and moving beyond the extractive economy.

to the environment again and then it won't be you. It's flowing in everybody's heart.

What more?

We have the earth element in our heart

The plants are releasing oxygen that we inhale, we are releasing carbon dioxide that they inhale. We use the oxygen to break down the carbohydrates that the plants have created by photosynthesis.

By breathing in the opposite pattern with the plants, the nutrition from the soil can go into our bloodstream, through our body and heart.

The entire world is constantly passing through our heart

At some level, our heart knows the condition of the soil through the food that we eat, it knows the quality of the air and water. It knows how the food was grown, what chemicals that might have been used, how it was transported, the love or suffering involved.

The inside of our heart is in contact with the outer world in every heartbeat. No matter where you are or what you are doing, this is happening. It's biological.

We are all connected in our hearts through the elements that we are dependent upon.

love,

EMMA

SPIRITUAL REFUGEES IN THE JOURNEY BACK HOME



To speak about how I feel about Auroville or what makes me feel a part of Auroville is always really difficult. It is almost like a mission impossible. But since I'm playing this game I would bet on one word that I can relate to: Auroville for me is Aliveness. I've been here for little more than one year, but I feel as if I've been living many lives at once. Each day here is so charged with intensity. In one year I have lived more events, changes and realisations than in the 27 years of my past life.

Is it because of Auroville? Is it because of me? I don't know, and maybe I don't need to know. What matters to me, what I have been learning here, is daring to fully embrace the feeling. If I observe and allow the sentiment right now, I can describe it as a deep nourishing, sweet and feminine gratitude. Gratitude to this place, to these people, to this moment, to life, to God, to Mother, to all mothers that have made my incarnation possible right here, right now.

What brought me here? Who knows? What is more important is what makes me want to stay, especially after going through what I would call the most difficult year of my life.

I came from the country furthest away from India, Chile.

It is so different in so many ways, and disturbingly similar in others. I left everything that was familiar to me behind: "my friends", "my family", "my house", "my job" - my old identity. I came with nothing else other than my backpack, my husband and my heart full of dreams. In one year all the plans changed, and my life made a big turn: I separated from my husband, moved house five times, changed my job a couple more, met totally different people, faced totally new realities, started healing deep wounds, started dreaming again... This time, my dreams are not only more grounded, but they are also held in the support of a collective. They are meeting dream-siblings. They feel, for the first time, that they belong. They have found their right place in the sky where they can play with others.

I have known since many years that crises in life are actually good: they are the way to pull you out of inertia and shake you up, to help you shift. This was not the first big crisis in my life, but this time it felt totally different. Auroville awoke something new. Being 27 years old, facing a divorce in the middle of India just a couple of months after arriving, was not necessarily a great time for me. Yet I've never been so grateful for a crisis before, and I've never lived one with so much joy and trust. I became so interested in what was happening inside, that I couldn't avoid diving in. The deeper I went, the more truth I found. It was in the air: every quote that I read was the precise one that I needed to hear at that moment, every activity that I explored gave me a new insight, every job that I took - with its conflict and challenges - showed me what I needed to acknowledge. But maybe what has been more revealing to me is to realize that every new person that I met had a new clue to give me. Everybody was in fact *helping* me, not only with kindness and love, but also showing me the corrupted side, the shadows of our egos. The right Aurovilian always appears at the right time, for good and bad.

I taught myself to not have fear about losing my stability and then, a new understanding of what stability means was born. It has been growing since then and now, it is not limited anymore to any particular place. Here I have learned from experience like never before. I'm seeing my thoughts manifesting into actions, and from those manifestations I'm breaking through to some deep feelings. I started a simple, but not easy, practice of *feeling what is there until the very bottom*.

HOME

I am sure I am only one of thousands with this kind of story and with these kinds of realisations. And it is precisely because of this that Auroville is so interesting: It is full of seekers. It is made out of souls that cannot stand the fakeness of the world as it is now, souls that are not conforming. Idealist minds. Compassionate hearts. And, what is maybe more important: youthful energy. We are willing to create something new, even if we don't have a clue about how to do it sometimes.

What makes us come together for Human Unity is that in the end, we are all spiritual refugees, and Auroville is The Home that has been beautifully created for us to awake to The Truth, and then to share it with the world.

After spending some time in Auroville, I needed to come back to Chile for a visit. Trying to reconnect with family and friends was a bittersweet confirmation that even when there's so much love and history between us, familiarity has nothing to do with home. Not necessarily. I see now that the real baggage that I am unpacking is called Conditioning and Fears. To be able to see them is actually the first step, but then, what will you do to transform them? That is part of the great adventure that Auroville encourages you to live.



I'm a 28-year-old professional film maker from Chile, and an amateur dancer and artist. I joined Auroville as a newcomer in 2018, and I make videos for different units and projects. My main interest is to seek progress, healing and beauty in everything that I co-create with the universe. I have found my home here.



In my own journey here, maybe the most beautiful realization that I had is that actually serving "The Divine" is nothing different than serving your Divine Self. That one that is pure unconditional love. That one that is probably hidden between layers and layers of *not-you*, so the adventure to *unfold you* cannot be more challenging, and at the same time cannot be more exciting.

Auroville is not perfect. Not at all. There are so many things that don't work yet, still being very far away from the ideal. Many times it seems to be more *chaos* than *divine chaos*... But for me that's precisely why it is so interesting! There's so much potential and still so much work to do. I see a rough diamond; I see a reflection of myself.

It is difficult to explain to someone who has not been here, to communicate why this investment of my life is worth it.

If it is measured by the yardstick of the outside world, it doesn't seem to have any logic. You come here, you work for free, you give your money, time and energy to some purpose, apparently "outside" of you. You have to find different ways to fulfill your material needs, which can be complicated. At the same time, you learn so much. Much more than any university can offer you, because you learn from deep intense experience. So it may not look like an intelligent material investment. It is not: it is a *life* investment.

NO FEAR & DEVOTION

Since I was a teenager, I've been accumulating a lot of spiritual tools and practices. In Auroville, I found a new brick that holds the wall together. I dare to call it devotion. I never truly met that quality before coming here. I was raised in a rigid Catholic society where the norm is religiosity, where people live through their minds. There was always a feeling inside that didn't find the right space to express itself. At times, I even felt embarrassed to experience and share this natural sense of gratitude to the creation. I usually felt like an outsider, so I suppressed my sentiments and adapted to the context. That's what humans do, we adapt to the environment that we are in, so in an unhealthy disconnected context, you most probably will live in that way. Here, that is not the norm. God is in the air, and I finally feel I don't have to sacrifice my authenticity anymore.

For me, devotion is not a quality learned from outside. It doesn't even have to manifest in some outer way. It may be helpful to evoke some image, some representation that carries meaning to you. You can also name that quality by different names, using many different figures, shapes and faces and to manifest it. Eventually, you may light a candle to a deity; you can do your pujas or allow whatever wants to be expressed. I have many rituals, but I found none of them matter if I don't light a candle for myself first. If you don't know yourself as divine, you will never meet *The Divine*. And once you know yourself as God, how can you believe in your fear any longer?

This is the place to grow bigger than fears.



I've also been observing myself the way I resonate with Mother's words. It awakes powerful things that have always been inside, as I'm the one that is being *read* by a much wiser someone. What do I see when I look at her eyes? Love. Compassion. But also: myself, and this realisation makes me want to keep feeding not only my connection with her, but also the connection with everyone; to joyfully accept the gift of mirroring and being mirrored. Auroville is a really good place to put that in practice, and this is the only way I see human unity possible.

CONSCIOUS CINEMA

I see such a big potential and so many things to do and create in Auroville that I can only be enthusiastic for the future ahead. There is so much to learn here! What I want to focus on the most is putting the skills that I have been developing through my profession as a filmmaker to use in a meaningful way. Cinema is a relatively new art, younger than any other, and yet it is the most powerful and impactful one nowadays. As quickly as the world is progressing, audiovisual has become the main communication system. It is not only an artistic expression anymore; it is a new language. I feel in Auroville this powerful tool is not yet well-developed, and I want to be a facilitator for this development to occur.

You can use a tool in many different ways. "From the point of view of a spiritual life, it is not what you do that matters most, but the way in which it is done and the consciousness that you put into it (...)" *The Mother, CWM Vol.14, P.36.* There are some films that have a special quality, the power to touch what is beyond the emotional body. They can be fictions, documentaries, animations, experimental films. Many times they offer you storytelling too, but what they have in common is they *touch a bigger place of awareness*, offering you some *truth*. That quality doesn't speak to the mind, it doesn't disturb the vital, it touches a deeper sense of self.

What if we can use movies as a useful path for our karma yoga, to motivate us in our inner discovery?

A film is more plastic than anything, and it has everything inside. In that way isn't Auroville a good place to make films with originality, and to make not only the product but also the process more conscious? What does Auroville have to offer in this area of expertise to the world? I am just starting out on my path and I don't have the answer. I have so much learning to do, but what is really wonderful is to feel that I am in the right setting to start such an exploration. Not only do I want to know: I want to create it. I want to make it happen.

VALENTINA

A TAMIL YOUTH STORY

I grew up in Sanjeevinagar village next to Auroville. My father worked as a builder in Auroville. My first impression of Auroville was from my father. Whenever I had a holiday from school, I would go with my father to his workplace and play there. One day, I met this foreign family with two kids. The father of the kids invited me to play with the children. It was a very new experience for me as I didn't even understand the language they were speaking or why they looked so different or what they were doing here.

I had many more questions and was curious to know about these 'strangers' who lived in a strange place called Auroville.

I slowly started learning and got interested more and more about the culture of Auroville.

But a few years later, my father passed away from a heart attack. I was only ten years old, and my family was facing a lot of financial difficulties, and I was also struggling with my studies. So I decided to work to earn an income to support my family. I found some short term jobs in my locality like carpentry, plumbing, cleaning and assisting with load carriers, among other odd jobs I would do on a daily basis. While I was able to financially support my family my education took a backseat and my grades started falling and I stopped going to Auroville.

Two years later, I joined Mohanam Cultural Center for weekend classes where I got the chance to re-connect with Auroville and its people. There I learnt a lot about traditional dance and music from my Tamil culture. My interest in the creative field started developing at this stage. I started enjoying my time at the workshops and slowly developed a lot of interest. My keen interest and determination towards traditional dance and music were visible throughout my days. Mohanam selected me to perform on multiple occasions. At first, I was very shy and it would take me time to open up in front of people. But each performance would help increase my self confidence and my courage to perform in front of a large audience. At the end of each performance, listening to the audience cheer and applaud gave me a lot of encouragement and motivated me to continue in this field.

Through Mohanam, I also started spending a lot of time in Auroville and met several people from the community. Auroville, with its unique model of conscious living and alternate methods of human development, attracts people from all over the world to volunteer and work and contribute to the society. The township gave me a very wide exposure and gave me the chance to meet and interact with people from all over the world, like France, Germany, USA and several other nations. During my interactions, I realised how limitless my opportunities were if I was only willing to do my best to manifest my dreams. It inspired me to think bigger and to see the importance of being ambitious and having goals in life.

Mohanam gave me the chance to perform outside of Tamil Nadu. My first trip was to Odisha a state in the eastern belt of India known for its tribal cultures and temples. I always had a lot of inhibitions and misconceptions about people from other states of India. But travelling to different states and getting first-hand experience with the locals made me realise that despite culture and language differences, we were very similar as people. Since then, I have had several opportunities of intercultural exchanges with other places in India, like Mumbai, Delhi, Kullu Manali, Sikkim etc.

But at this point of time, the financial situation at my home worsened and I was unable to give time to my studies, which led me to drop out of school in 10th grade. However, to continue supporting my family, I joined a unit called Svaram in Auroville. Here, I learned how to create musical instruments using materials like bamboo and clay and also got into music theory and research. I was really happy to make something with my own hands and this experience made me dive deeper into music as medium of expression. I also started learning music theory and slowly started shifting my focus towards performance

arts and not towards traditional mainstream education, like most of my peers.

This was the time when I decided to move out of my family house, which made them very upset, but I was determined to live a life of my own. I realised the importance of education and its scope, and after two gap years, I enrolled in school again to complete my studies. This time, my perception towards education was different. It was no longer about scoring high grades but more about learning new things, even if it was at my own pace. I started enjoying school and became friends with my books. After completing my higher secondary school, I tried to enrol in college to study mathematics. However, my interest lay in the creative field and I knew I would be able to pursue a career in this field. Therefore, I decided to go against the traditional approach and instead I took a course that interested me more: Bachelors in Visual Communication in Acharya Arts and Science Collage, under Pondicherry University. This course was closely aligned to my interest areas and included electives like photography, video-making and other technical topics that I was keen on pursuing.

Meanwhile, I was still working and performing with Mohanam Cultural Center and in 2010, I was selected to perform at the Yonchai Thailand International Theatre Festival. This was my first ever experience of flying to a different country and turned out to be one of the most enriching experiences of my life. There were people from over 15 countries who had come to the festival to represent their own country. This global exposure impacted me in a positive way and broadened my outlook on the world.

This opportunity, coupled with my time in a cosmopolitan world like Auroville, gave a new meaning to my life - one that was a combination of freedom and the will to bring a positive change in the world and also to live a life of consciousness and harmony with myself and others.

Mohanam helped me stay connected to my roots.

With them, I conducted multiple village tours and expeditions for those outside of India who were interested in knowing about the traditional culture of rural India. I have also been teaching dance and music to people from different countries. This was a form of cultural exchange for me and opened my mind to new opportunities. Whenever I would have a conversation with foreigners, they would express their interest about my culture and this made me realise the value of my tradition and roots. I started focusing much more on Tamil culture and traditions. I also started teaching kids from my village about our traditional dance and music so they will not forget this gift from the past.

After my post-graduation, I wanted to use my new skills in my work in Auroville. Under Youthlink, I was one of the organisers of the international youth day festival for three consecutive years. I also worked as a media communications person with Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG). I have known this organisation from a very young age. I really wanted to work there, but I didn't know how. Later, I got the incredible opportunity to teach women traditional dance during a women's festival. When I see the women in an AVAG event, I feel deeply touched because there is a big difference in their expression compared to the way they are in their daily life. Like my mother, women take care of the family and the house in everyday life. When they come together to dance at an AVAG event, there is freedom in them and they are happy to have contact with other women from other villages. I have always felt close to the issues that rural women face, and when I got the chance to have female mentors who helped me learn many things about rural and community development, I felt incredibly honored. I am really happy to work in AVAG - there is no end for learning there.

Simultaneously, I also got another opportunity in a theatre production called Bhu. This production, led by international directors from France, has literally changed my life. For this performance, I started learning Kalaripayattu (Indian martial art) and for the past two years I have been waking up at 5am everyday to attend Kalari class. This has brought more discipline in my life. I discovered a completely new side of me through this experience. I also got the chance to

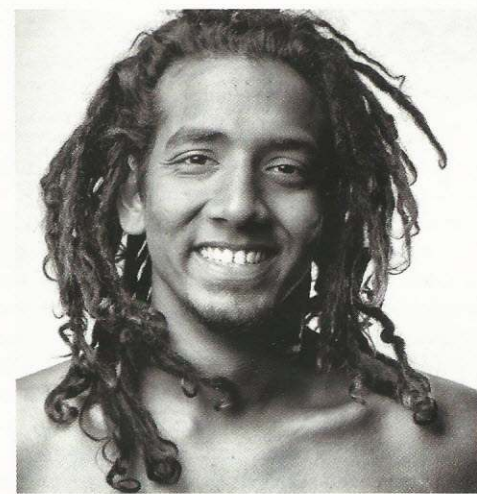
go for multiple national tours for Bhu.

My experience in India and Auroville has been enriching and fulfilling in several ways. I feel so grateful towards all the people who gave me hand when I needed it, who showed and guided me through my own path, who trusted me to be part of their performance project, who always pushed me to become better. I don't know how I can express my gratitude to all of them. I will continue on this path and make them proud of me. And this is why I intend now to go to Europe: I want to share the treasures of my country and of this very special place which is Auroville, to the world. I also feel the need to get a global experience and learn the differences of perspectives and cultures.

Today I am applying for a master degree in Germany in the creative field of media and communication combined with traditions and cultures; a combination which aims to bridge the past and the future, the West and the East. It feels like Auroville has been spreading seeds, and

I would love to be part of those who can carry its spirit throughout the world.

MADHU



HUMANITY POEM

Ignorant, unconscious, veiled in darkness and doom,
Humanity treads forward through the barren lands of Falsehood.

Man has made the desolate, arid plains of death and fear his home,
Blind to the splendors of Truth nestled within his very own heart.

To suffering and pain he clings, from beauty and light he flees,
For too bright and pure shone the radiance of immaculate Infinity;

Wielding the sword of wrath and chaos he destroys, plunders the Earth,
Setting off on a wild, reckless pilgrimage of devastation and ruin, roaring:

"We shall not cease nor relent until our work is done, till all beauty has been made obsolete,
Delight turned into despair, and the Suns of Truth turned bleak and lifeless!
Rise O children of the bottomless abyss, and fulfill thy dreadful act!"

His haggard, fury-filled gaze drifts along lands of fire and smoke,
Whilst the stench of death and waste wafts through an air unbreathable;

To the distant shores of Illusion has the terrestrial ship drifted, sinking
In blood stained waters, once crystal clear sapphire seas of Truth.

What was once an immobile, innate Evidence of the Divine Creator's Grand Play,
Has become a wild and reckless battlefield for the sons of the Endless Night.

Yet, as darkness spread across the land as if blown across Earth by the wind,
A Divine Messenger of Eternity descended from the heavens into Matter's womb;
A God-Seed of Truth was planted deep within the cold ash of man's past fallacy.

As the Spirits' call is answered and dawns upon the hearts and souls of men,
A Supreme spark of concealed Divinity is lit within Matter's unconscious depths.

The Grand Cycle of the Obscure Night reaches its final spin of completion,
A new world is born as the radiant children of Infinity now walk upon the earth, incarnate in man.

The Eternal Self is awake, and Heaven's flame sheds its bare, bright light
Into the darkest corners of the world until all Falsehood is transmuted.

The Grand Scheme of the Timeless Creatrix unfolds onto the terrestrial vessel,
And the false, ignorant gods crumble and turn into dust at the feet of Truth.

A God-smile of pure Delight and Immaculate rapture lights the face of the Earth, The
Bliss-breeze caresses each and every living thing in its outspreading reach;

Love pervades the pores of existence and fills every gap till all is returned to the One
essence of its original creation: a Supreme Being of Unity, devoid of duality.

Within the Silent Witness' abode reigns an atmosphere of undisturbed Eternity; The
Knower beyond time and space silently weaves the works of the future.

Lost in Infinity, a wounded little blue sphere known as Mother Earth laboriously prepares
itself for the advent of a yet unknown, new species to walk upon its soil.

Once perceived Impossible, The Divine Work is turned into the play of a child.

MITIA



Born and brought up in the international context of Auroville, I teach English, I am a freelance photographer and content writer, massage therapist in the becoming, and am dedicated to all things community related.

LA MAISON DES JEUNES - A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT IN CREATING AN INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY

Imagine being a young person, discovering, participating, and actively dedicated to the development of Auroville. Imagine living in a group of twelve, all volunteering in the community: people from different parts of the world, with different cultural backgrounds, but with a common intention to experience and contribute to Auroville.

Unfortunately, long-term young volunteers coming to our community often have difficulties finding affordable accommodation, and an integrated community experience within Auroville. Louis, the founder of La Maison des Jeunes, was inspired to come up with a solution, and created an affordable, communal place in January 2015, for a monthly contribution of only Rs. 1500.

La Maison des Jeunes ("The House of the Young") is in the centre of Auroville, close to the Matrimandir, next to the Town Hall and Citadines – and surrounded by nature, bordering Bliss Forest and Mahakali Park. The accommodation is minimalistic, with common dining, kitchen and bathroom facilities. Each volunteer has their own cabin, named after one of the twelve qualities of the Mother. It is a simple and cosy space, that doesn't heat up too much in the summer and cools down fast during the night. The structures are easy to dismantle, so that they can be reassembled at another site as the city center develops.

For many of the young people coming here it is the first time that they experience community living. We come together as a group to make decisions, share responsibilities, coordinate and organise to maintain and manage our communal life: A typical weekly meeting is followed by cleaning, maintaining the common areas, and taking care of the plants, together. Other fun activities involve potlucks, movie nights, game nights and sharing circles. Volunteers, from the age of 18 to 30, from different walks of life and nationalities, dive into diversity and find a lot in common. The current members of La Maison des Jeunes, nicknamed "MDJ", are convinced that if Aurovilians would encourage similar projects, it would contribute towards creating meaningful and engaging experiences for our volunteers.

MDJ CURRENT MEMBERS: (FROM BOTTOM TO TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT)
SANTOSH, SORAIA, RICCARDO, YAN, QUENTIN, HENRIK, RITUPARNA, BASTI, SUDIPTA, JORIS



A WORD FROM THE PROJECT HOLDERS:

In 2013, a very small group of youth coming from a community on the beach, a mix of volunteers and Newcomers, was making a lot of noise in Auroville. They wanted the community to hear the call of the youth to join Auroville, and the need to make it accessible for them. Some people like Louis heard the call, and decided to act upon it.

La Maison Des Jeunes was born from this in 2015, and since then we have seen more than a hundred young people experiencing community life at MDJ – often for the first time. It is very enjoyable to see them change through their exposure to this communal lifestyle. We emphasize self-responsibility, encouraging each group to take care of the place on their own. There is no cleaning maid or gardener, the young people act as both the care-takers of the physical space and the managers of the social space created here, dealing with their differences together, and creating some unity within this tiny microcosm. We consider this place to be an experiment, so we observe the dynamics, and try to evaluate the benefits of this model. It is interesting to see how the proportion of men and women, and the balance of nationalities, considerably influences the character of a group. It has not been always easy to facilitate and oversee this project, but we always feel so rewarded to see the transformation it sparks in the hearts of its members. We surely witness that this is a life-changing experience for them, and we feel blessed to be part of it. We feel it is very important for Auroville to have more places like this. It gives a chance to young people to stay longer, and have a much deeper experience of the different life this place represents, giving them a better opportunity to consider joining our community permanently – as some of them have!

DIRK AND MICHAEL



PERSONAL AND UNIVERSAL

This piece is inspired from my days in "La Maison des Jeunes" back in 2015. I was among the first batch of people to live there. The style of poetry is narrative in nature and has personal and universal elements in it. This form of poetry is the evolutionary child of linear rhyming forms of poetry. It often contains non-linear patterns and metaphors, almost becoming the love offspring of traditional poetry and narrative prose.

// LA MAISON DES JEUNES //

it was morning,
sunrays seeping through
the early morning mist
that for the first time
seemed so selcouth,
smearing wakefulness
all over my face
and awareness all over the
endless clinkety-clack of the
fifteen bogged Vellore express
as it mildly teased its passengers
into thinking that it would shortly
enter the vomitorium of
Chennai Central station,
but of course,
it took two and a half hours more:

(for those of you who've spent
those static three days on wheels
while traveling from the north to the south,
you know the agony when
the freaking train keeps getting delayed)

two and a half hours later,
as my car spent its first 45 minutes
snuggling its way around the city traffic
before finally letting its window panes
collaborate with my foresight and
hindsight
in sketching newer dimensions of
possibility,
before college placement shenanigans
and my disinclinations for them
became more irrelevant to me
than a blind two-dollar whore's
unkempt pubic hair was to her,
the summer skin of the day outside
kissing me ever so gently
with its palliative care
seemed to promise me
a lesser known treasure ahead,
and i wasn't going to
not believe in it:

...
now,
having learnt
different names for the same freaking thing
in the cocoon of my physics and chemistry
pages
all throughout my adolescent years,
i wasn't so sure what to do
with the "commesichiamo" greeting
i got from Riccardo,
the papaya-eating, dread-wearing
part gardener, part philosopher
caretaker of la Maison des Jeunes;

but, one thing i knew,
that i had come to the right place
for my morningsto retrace their origin
back to their fulfilled state,
for my sanity's wreckage
to recover from all the
getting lost in translation
over the years of chewing
heavy books and their weightless lessons,
for my previously pusillanimous
inner ram flames to rekindle
its lost relationship with Krsna

as Prof Manoj would often profess,
for my fish scales to learn to master
its sense of clepsydra again
after years of Bhootnath and Blue-Door
trips
in search for constipated chillum hay,
and for my late redemption
to take birth after having shed
the whole nincompoop act
attached to my previously held identity:

(you see, we mermen forever strive to
make you scratch your heads
the moment you think
you have us all figured out)

...

la Maison des Jeunes,
a house for the youth,
a howff for pasta addicts,
a community based on smiles,
on panglossian mornings full of
dark Italian coffee
and fruitarian meals
on afternoon hammock chortles
that brought back to awareness
a faint and forgotten recognition
of that sense of being
from some past life,

(we mermen have to
go through eleven past lives
in order to get to
the twelfth one)

on evening yoga postures
that made the wind in us
do the swan dance
before gently kissing
the setting sun goodbye,
on recurring potluck dinners
where my black sesame lemon potatoes
combined with the pasta pesto
would cause massive eruptions of
orgasmic tastebud volcanoes
and delay the night
into witnessing more laughter
than it had signed up for:

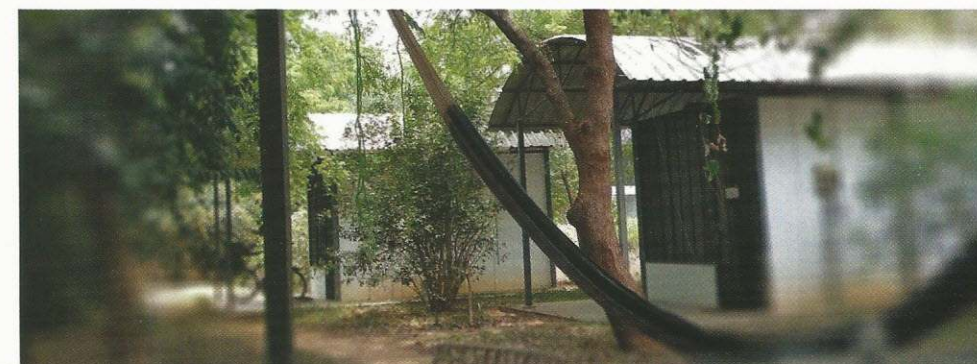
...

and now that
change has come out
of its camouflage
fully revealing its swollen cape
that turns river beds into
the archaeologist's chance to get
a scrap of paper he calls his degree,
now that change has spun its wheel
that causes the embryo sacs
of aged mothers to rejuvenate
after having given birth to
triplets, quadruplets
and a couple of
back to back twins,
la Maison des Jeunes too
has become a distant galaxy far away
made of reminiscence and throwbacks,
made of feathers of the memory bird,
made of mispronounced Italian words
and hilarious gardening mishaps,
made of scattered hearts that were
once in sync with one another,
made of music that was devoid
of physical sound:

screw you, change!

~AMAL

The post hails from the cozy north-eastern town of
Shillong in the state of Meghalaya. The inspiration for
the writings comes from my personal journey through
this labyrinth that we call life. Cheers!



COMIC STRIP

The premise of the cartoon is about the relationship between a mother and a daughter. Since a very small age, the daughter had never been responsible about cleaning her room and washroom, and depended on her mother for it. Her mother always scolded her for this issue and wondered when she would learn. The daughter then moved away to a land far from home and lived in a special community. Something within her changed while living as part of this community. After returning home, the mother catches her daughter cleaning her own toilet. Overwhelmed by the fact that her daughter has grown, the mother sheds tears of joy.

NANCY



I have been volunteering in Auroville for about 1.5 years with Mona Doctor-Pingel at Studio Naqshbandi. I finished my undergrad studies in architecture in 2017 from Bangalore. I come from Ayodhya, in Uttar Pradesh. During my stay in Auroville, I lived in several places including 'La Maison des Jeunes' which influenced me to make a comic strip relating to the community.

ADULTING



AUROVILLE: DESTINATION OF YOUTH IN SEARCH OF MEANING



I grew up in the Ashram school in Pondicherry where the approach is based on principles of integral education with a strong focus on sports and extracurricular development.

I had the privilege of choosing my teachers and subjects, free from the constraints of exams.

Inherent to this education is its founder Sri Aurobindo's spiritual social philosophy. As a result, I grew up with a strong sense of social responsibility, critical of current logics, systems and structures.

Right after finishing school, I spent a transitory year pursuing a liberal arts postgraduate diploma course in Ashoka University in Sonapat, Haryana. It was valuable for the exposure it gave me to the outside world. I could measure myself to test how my ashram education matched formal levels. Even though I found many interesting and useful tools, theories and structures at university, I was left convinced that there was more gloss than substance in the regular education system. Having spent my entire schooling life without the logic of exams, I saw how the exam-based system immediately curtailed my curiosity and restricted what I retained.

My taste of 'regular work life' at a Chennai-based research and policy NGO called Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group was equally brief and left me yearning for freer spaces. Too much time and energy went into useless reports for donors. Policy briefs about central schemes looked good on paper but failed to capture the richness of ground reality or to make an impact. Worse, while I wrote and engaged on different platforms to promote a greener, more ethical life, I struggled as a young person to embody this within the existing social system.

I quit, feeling disenchanted and disengaged.

WALKING TOWARDS THE COMFORT ZONE



In popular culture, the 'comfort zone' is regarded as a state of complacency that people need to break out of in order to grow and acquire new skills. Alasdair White, a management theorist, in 2009 defined comfort zone where a person reaches a steady level of performance in the absence of stress, leading to conducive steady output. White argues that businesses need to find their comfort zone in order to go beyond their limitations.

I related his theory to my personal needs, and the meaning of the word 'comfort' in my own experience ended up being very different to the meaning implied in the White's term of 'comfort zone'.

The definition of the word comfort generally means having things at ease, or requiring minimal effort to acquire the necessary. And if I have to name a place that matches the word, I cannot think of any other place than my hometown, Bombay. But comfort zone, in White's understanding, does not mean having things at ease, but it simply means doing things that you love without stress; and moving to Auroville made me realise that I hadn't found my comfort zone yet.

Acquiring this steadiness in cities is quite paradoxical. Stress and traffic are part of the city routine, and the majority of people do not leave their workplaces before sunset, ever! And even though employees have some comforts while they work – like a hot chocolate on the desk every hour – the amount of productivity one is able to deliver is as fluctuating as the aim. As an aspiring writer, it is difficult to find a place that supports your writing style and doesn't often give you a writer's block. I happened to find a

Now as a volunteer living and working in the international intentional city of Auroville, I live and thrive on the fact that the gap between my "talk" and "walk" is reducing. I live in Maison des Jeunes, a minimal and eco-friendly community where we take care of our own space, both individually and as a community. YouthLink, my workplace, is run by youth for youth, where the principles of sustainability, self-development, youth empowerment, integral education and living are infused in our daily routine. These principles are also reflected in our Comm4unity course; an ecovillage development experiential learning programme to discover oneself and the role one can offer in sustainable community development. With the value of fancy titles and rote learning slowly diminishing, and with the space and opportunities to explore a more immersive, inter-disciplinary and introspective way of life, I am happy to be part of a place where people aspire to build something new and true.

SUDIPTA



I was brought up in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram School and I am currently working for YouthLink and living in Maison des Jeunes. In my quest for meaning, I have found my place in Auroville. I am exploring what a sustainable, more caring and just world could look like.

place in Auroville that didn't just ask me what I can do; rather it asked me what I want to do. I did not have to adapt to a style, but rather, I have the freedom to write in a form I choose. My workplace in Auroville did not offer materialistic privileges like hot chocolate on the table, but it did offer the independence to write from a rooftop cafe if the office space was draining my creativity – an approach which actually yields more valuable results that are closer to what I want to achieve.

So even though I have lived all these months in Auroville without the comfort of city life, home-cooked food and lizard-free rooms, when people from Bombay ask me what I am exactly doing in Auroville and why I have left so much behind, my answer is always the same – I am walking towards the comfort zone.

MITALI



I am Mitali Joshi, 24, born and bred in Bombay, India. For the last year, I've been volunteering with Thamarai Educational Projects as a content writer, editor and facilitator in the after-school program. Other than working for children, I own a website called Bombay Binge, write for a living and obsess over rock music.

YOUTH LINK AUROVILLE TO THE FUTURE



A WEEK IN YOUTHLINK

Following our weekly Monday meeting we divide into our subgroups of Events, Education, Projects or Admin. Each subgroup designs their own weekly schedule together. We are all aware of the need to lead more integral lives, so we attempt this by dividing our time into Head, Heart and Hands.

During the week we spend some time for the Head in the office, working from our laptops or brainstorming together. We also spend some time with our Hands; cleaning, cooking, farming or constructing something for Auroville. If possible we focus on projects that support the integration of our members in Auroville, by helping them build a garden, or housing-pod. Last but definitely not least, we dedicate time to our Heart. We choose an inspiration for learning something new to develop ourselves through attending other workshops in Auroville. Our Heart-time gives us the freedom to continuously explore Auroville and ourselves – on the condition that whatever we learn we bring back to other youth through YouthLink somehow.

"In the last two months I have learnt some non-violent-communication tools and massage skills. I hope this can benefit my team as many of us have sore muscles after construction and sometimes we need more awareness for our team-communication. Maybe one day I could even facilitate this workshop for other youth." Mathilde explains how her Heart exploration enriches the collective.

Beyond the organisation of the week through subgroups and a time shared between the Head, Heart and Hands, the first day of the week reflects this spirit and intention we dedicated to a more integral and collective life.

A MONDAY IN YOUTHLINK

HEART - CHECK IN

"Good morning everyone! Who wants coffee?" Sathish calls out with a big warm grin on his face.

Our morning starts at 9am. We know our rhythm: as young adults we would rather work late into the evening, than start too early in the morning. Walking into the office feels like coming home, ready to receive a minimum of two to three hugs – hugs with back rubs, big warm bear hugs, and intense tight hugs filled with light. Each one of us slowly waking up to how the others feel today. We settle down on mat circle on the floor, cross our legs on pillows, aligning our spine, closing our eyes, and beginning to observe.

Anwar begins guiding us gently, "Notice your breath, notice your heart beat, notice your thoughts as they pass by. How do you feel today?"

As we are guided into stillness, we allow ourselves a few minutes of silence. Once we hear the sound of the shaker, we gently open our eyes and bring our attention back to the circle. Our week starts by letting one another know how we feel today. Each one feels different, some tired, some energized. We practice our deep listening to really hear where the person is at and evaluate who needs support and who can offer support.

HEAD - EVALUATION & PLANNING

"So, who wants to facilitate, who wants to take notes, and who wants to start sharing?" Quentin asks, to which Sudipta and Arul quickly volunteer.

Each week different members volunteer to hold space. It is part of our effort to share leadership; to try and circulate roles so that each member can have space to practice empowering themselves. This week we look at upcoming events such as the 'Human Library' organized by Events team, upcoming workshops such as the 'Auroville Peer Education Training' organized by the Education team, and progress relating to the design of the 'Makers Lab' organized by our Projects team. Our Admin team holds us all together, supporting with data entry, website, accounts and communications. These are the three domains of work we engage in.

We are on average 12 members, and each team has three people. We also aim for a balance of one Volunteer, Newcomer, and Aurovilian in each subgroup. Thus, we try to reflect our goals of

integrating youth in Auroville and to maintain a diversity of status and nationality within our team. We do not actively seek out new membership – youth who need our platform naturally gravitate towards this collective space.

HANDS - COLLECTIVE WORK

"Who wants to plug in some music?" Melodie asks, as others are already rolling mats and stacking pillows.

Before we split up into subgroups for the week, we begin our cleaning together. Mopping floors, scrubbing the toilet, segregating the trash and tending to the kitchen garden. We have shifted our office every year – from a desk at SAIIR, to a hall at Bharat Nivas, to a co-working space at Auromode, to an office at Progress, and now to a hall at Humanscapes. We have been committed to cleaning our own space throughout, because the cleanliness of our space reflects not only our values of self-responsibility, but also reflects the state of our inner consciousness at this moment. The space we welcome you to, the circle we create in our workshops, the gardens we design and pods we build, are all reflections of who we are at this moment in time. Manifesting ourselves through beauty in matter is not an easy task – it takes discipline and daily attention to detail. Many days we look around ourselves at the clutter, reminded again and again that we have a lot to work on, inside.

YOUTH LINK VISION STATEMENT

"YouthLink is a collective space for youth to progress in the Auroville spirit of service and evolution of consciousness."

"Writing a collective vision statement for YouthLink only took us only about three years," one member says while laughing happily.

We are all aware that working collectively takes more time. But the results are immensely rewarding. We have had some deep learnings over the years

2015-16

"...the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within..."

YouthLink was born out of a collective call for more youth engagement in Auroville. In 2015, many of you may remember the "Auroville Retreat", a large community effort to create space for reflection regarding what Auroville has achieved, and planning for where Auroville wants to go. This is where, as part of the reflection on being a bridge between the past and the future, suddenly it became obvious that the youth were missing in the picture. A few youth joined this process, researching the lack of youth engagement, and presenting the results to the older generations at this forum. Together with the older generations, we formulated goals – for youth and education, youth and economy, youth and growth, and so on, for bioregion, town planning and governance.

It was an outstanding task-list set before us. A long agenda of To-Do's, for which our young team had little to no experience. However, what we did have was a lot of idealism, an adamant will, and a fantastic capacity to dream. We set our mind to the goals we had been given. How could we design more apprenticeships? How could we build more housing? How could we work on employment? And what did "youth empowerment & inclusion", the goal defined in the process, really mean to us?!

The first years, in 2015 and 2016, were quite chaotic and challenging for our young team. Our members fluctuated regularly – most of us working after hours to support YouthLink as volunteers, since funds were scarce. With the eventual support from the community (Budget Coordination Committee) and from abroad (Stichting De Zaaier), we gained more stability in the second year. Now, more members were able to commit to this as a place of work and be supported to do so.

2016-17

"... the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages."

In order to tackle community needs such as Education, Housing and Employment, we needed to first understand how Auroville works and what was available. That soon led to our team designing our own learning program – inspired by "Ecovillage Design Education", an international framework used in communities worldwide, we adapted our own version and

called it "Comm4unity". Through this month-long exploration we discovered the various projects and units in Auroville relating to Economy, Ecology, Social and Worldview. Through this course we also learnt about basic project design and project management tools to begin designing solutions for our long agenda of tasks. More importantly, we allowed ourselves and the participants to engage in a deep exploration of oneself in order to find what we call "your offering" to the world.

2017-18

"... a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity."

We soon began to tire, many youth came to YouthLink with a high level of enthusiasm and energy, very ready to serve Auroville. We were all working hard to fill the gaps and meet the many expectations and needs of our community.

We soon discovered that we had to better understand what 'being in service' truly meant. Many of us were working so sincerely for the collective that we had forgotten ourselves. Who am I? What are my interests? If we were to serve Auroville through the right process – we realized this could only happen if we were true to our own inner needs for development. So we turned the tables immediately.

Each new member joining our team takes time to learn this concept. We have to change the way our mind works in order to fully grasp it. I am here to work on myself first – then only will I be able to benefit others as well. It is an inside-out process. So now when people ask us "what is YouthLink, and how can I join?" We ask them "Who are you and what are you searching for in life?"

Vignesh explains his example, "If I am able, through YouthLink, to build my own temporary-pod to live in – then with that design and process, I will be able to help many others as well."

2018-19

"But, to live in Auroville, one must be a willing servitor of the divine consciousness."

"To work in YouthLink one begins to realize that whatever I create for myself, I can and must share with others," Kavitha observes nostalgically remembering when YouthLink had started. Today we have our first YouthLink members beginning to plan their 'graduation' out of the platform. We are very aware of the need for a proper succession plan. Those who came first, who have benefited from this platform, should soon move out and give their seat to the next youth who needs a collective space to support their integration in Auroville.

Integrating in Auroville is evidently much deeper than any workshop or project can support. We have learnt this through our work. It takes time to understand that integration also means service, surrender and self-care. All levels of our being are involved, whether we are aware of it or not. YouthLink is a process and an invitation for a new world.

If youth are to link Auroville to the future, we hope that you will support us... no matter your age, nationality or other unnecessary constructs.

"We are developing a mini accelerator within the larger Auroville accelerator." Michael explains, "Will you join us?"

YOUTHLINK TEAM -

MATHILDE, QUENTIN, KAVITHA, ARUL, SATISH, SUDIPTA, ANWAR, VIGNESH, MELODIE, MICHAEL



I AM WHO I AM AND I MANIFEST THROUGH LOVE

Dear friends,
I'm here today, in a time frame of my journey, collaborating with the universe, trying to go back to my roots, and observe how we arrived here. What are the elements that moved and keep on moving us?

How can we explain to ourselves the reason why we are part of an enormous double effect nucleo, of love and suffering?

What are the steps to take in front of our life?

Are we right or are we wrong?

I would love to share with you my feelings and history as a human being on this planet.

And why I am so grateful and scared sometimes to be here, because let's be honest, the greens and the blues are so beautiful, but when it comes to darkness it's not so easy to find the way back home.

Everything started at the time, when two of the most beautiful persons I've met in my life decided to meet in the path of love.

Fresh air in town, coming from the mountain. The river was cold, the sky was blue and trees were dropping the remains of water left from the snow.

They wanted to keep each other warm and share the most beautiful emotions that we are capable to feel, see and touch. Love.

My journey started through a beautiful and powerful connection. And so, the creation began.

Happiness in their heart. No expectation of me being a woman or a man.

Only warm words to keep me safe.

But as we know, happiness comes together with pain. And if we go through it, then we understand how strong is our faith and truth.

So here we go, the circle of life is respecting the rules.

The woman wakes up in the morning, it was raining outside, sensations are confused. Feeling of fear, shaking in her body, the doctor came in the room. He looks insecure, not sure about what to say, but he has to and so he does.

"My friend, I want to talk to you, woman I'm so sorry to say, that you got chicken pox. That means that your child might have physical issues. It could be that parts of her body will be missing or deformed, I'm very sorry."

Slow tears start falling from her face. The Man comes to hold her, to hug her fragile body.

Face to face they look at each other and they smile. They want to take the risk, they love, doesn't matter what.

Time is moving, I'm getting closer to the beginning of a new and brighter perspective.

Here I am, from a world to another.

Rays of light on my new body. Unknown sensation on my skin, I can feel the touch of a warm matter. I can't recognize what it is.

Slowly she keeps me closer and looks at my tiny eyes, and so I do too. I can finally see, deep inside, that truth is where I belong. Feels good. I'm home.

Step by step, my forms are growing. My mouth can express my joy with a smile. The pain manifesting through my tears. I can use my voice, and make sounds for people

cont.

to hear.
I love you so much. That's how it feels.
Growing up was a jump in my fears, falling down was joy.
And so with all that, I appear.
I was very sensitive all of these years. Was very easy for me to feel weird. Folks used to make fun of me, they couldn't understand my dreams. They didn't like my duality as a human being.
They didn't know I could have been real, a mix of energy in the atmosphere.
You are too masculine, I used to hear. Look at your nose, you should disappear!
So much pain I had to feel. They didn't believe in me, I couldn't trust myself. There was no way out of the insecurity.
But that one thing made me feel real. Running with the fears and make them fly away with the power of my hands, throwing a ball to my team, looking in their eyes and feel their beat. We were running together like wolves looking forward to win. Basketball was my dream. I found myself in it.
The family became wider, so many friends that believe in me. And so together we created the team.
We travel from city to city, leaving the past behind us, willing to go far...
Together with my dream I find new foundation in the sea, like a canvas ink is falling on me, the creation of a new model through creativity began.
Lines of force permeate the air. Art is my new form of care. Drawing on paper, drawing on walls, that's all my heart wants, I hear it call.
Listening to music, writing poetry, understanding the mystery behind my history.
Comets and shooting stars following me. I still don't know where I should be.
Memories are fading, my heart now is aching. Clouds in my head, I'm hard to be read.
I'm floating in the air, not knowing which clothes to wear. I dress like a man and tie my hair, but they call me a woman and that's not fair.
They don't know who I am and where I come from, all I see it's myself that is just a form.
I feel the need to be aware. But finding the time seems so rare.
Smoking and smoking I thought that's the way, what a funny game, for it's just a child's play.
Hiding inside with all of me, eyy!
After losing myself in the way I behaved, I realised there was no place for me to be embraced.
People are hurt they don't shine anymore. I feel wrong, day by day, more and more.
A spring of light comes through my door. It's my parents again taking me abroad.
There is no doubt in me I'm ready to leave.
Flying away, from this big city, grey.
We reach Auroville, a place of will. New doors in front of me, abundance of nature I can see.
It's warm now, my bones are free.
I don't know how to speak, makes me feel weak.
Maybe doesn't matter, I can travel deep.
New faces, new style, so naive, so wild.
I want to embrace. Without feeling in a race.



Observing in and out, what is all of this about?
I'm awestruck with what I see, this is the place where I want to be.
Trying my best to pass my test. It's a track on the mountain, but it flows like a fountain.
I'm a pawn on the board of chess, being moved by itself, but it's all a guess.
I want to love and feel the power from above.
So much to learn, I'm often concerned.
I sing and pray to be happy and gay.
Travelling in space, new culture, new waves.
Dancing in the rain, makes me forget about all my pain.
Spirituality and morality, what a world of duality.
People jumping in a lake, is the time to let go our mistake.
Up in the mountain, inspiration grows.
Like in the ocean when the wind blows.
I see new light, up in the sky, so pure, so bright.
I'm flying high, I might die, so beautiful, makes me cry.
I will bring with me the power of the solar ring.
An aspiration of Love.
A shared hug to involve people in town when they are down.
Back to Auroville.
Only few months left, and my dream isn't manifest.
But something changed, realisation comes through, I can see them both.
The male and the female.
Struggling to get space they find each other face to face.
Not knowing how to be together because here relationships are as soft as a feather and I'm still fighting with matter.
The time has come, not knowing what is next, I take a flight back to the city nest.
Bones are cracking my soul is not reacting.
Old patterns coming on my way, it's very hard to be away.
New job, new mentality, I can't talk of spirituality.
They think I'm crazy, it makes me feel very lazy.
I don't want to accept that this is where I stepped.
I just don't see what they see, it's very hard to believe.
I don't feel respected because of my different perspective.
Business is their only reality, they don't care about equality.
My body is sick, it feels like a hard kick.
Surrounded by fear, I lost control of my own gear.
So much pain for my own gain,
It feels like a summer without rain.
I'm not ready for this I think
I might take another drink.
Depression seems to be my fashion.
I feel love but there is no passion.
Lost in time, I'm trying to find the next rhyme.
But the pain, take my mind away on train.
I want to go far away without having anything to say.
Choosing relaxation for a better vibration.

Half way through, falling in love is what I had to do.
Giving light to my words, imagine my heart like a quartz.
Embracing colors, projection of thoughts.
Trying to undo all my knots.
Energy is moving, following the flow people come and go.
I see the beauty in her duty.
She walks to me and smile at me.
So much passion, so delicious.
Curiosity is my new reality.
I want her closer and I know she knows that I'm not a loser.
We know it's going to be short, that's what it's all about, time to teleport.
Up in the sky again.
Back to be zen.
Amen.
As soon as I got there, I had the need to share.
I swear, I'm aware.
I just want to love who I am and I say damn!
She's standing there, with so much care.
Observing my face lost in space.
A pull from her heart makes me fall apart melting like honey, she's so shiny.
A call of love again, this time I know, I can, but I don't know when.
Few days later we began.
More she loved me, more I got to embrace myself.
Energy was trickling in my vein.
I was feeling pure and sane.
Wanting to know more, to express everything I had learned.
Insecurity keeps on coming, I don't know which way to turn.
The feminine has always been my mystery, facing her for the first time was my victory.
Peace has finally come, with a sound of a soft drum.
My heart is growing strong, makes me feel like rum.
Which are my capacities, where is my creativity.
I need to find my motivation.
Make it strong, for it is never wrong.
If I feel sad I just sing a song.
It's a collaboration between love and war, now I know what I'm doing this for.
I'm an excited storm, so cold and so warm.
Now I am who I am without limit without form.
My soul it's an ever growing tree, going high where it wants to be.
Education is my aspiration.
I want to express with no limitation.
Loving myself is my meditation.
For you to kiss my liberation.
Please my friends come with me, you just got to see.
We're human beings, trying to live our dreams.
Hold my hand, together we stand.
I love you all, with my big bright soul.
We walk together, we are living forever.
I say goodbye, just for a while.
When the stars align, I'll see you again,
Surely love,
I'm not lyin'.

LUC

IS THIS THE WORLD WE CREATED?



As a child, I grew up with music from the band *Queen*, especially the song *Is this the World we created?*. I have always been deeply touched by its message. So beautiful, so simple and also so sad, so scary, so meaningful. Since childhood, everytime I listen to it, a strong knot in my throat arises and a strong pain in my heart captures me. It feels like a magic power that has preserved this very same feeling from childhood to the present-day, and in those moments of hearing the song, I become the innocent child again in all its beauty, trying to change the World.

Although the song was written in response to the dramatic poverty in Africa, its message is completely intemporal, which makes it even more powerful. It is an urgent reminder to me of inequality, unsustainability and the lack of life values which are so present in this World; a world which can be so unique, special and yet so controversial.

Then come the questions about the World we created. Why at some point in our lives do we lose our capability to be connected with our own selves and with the World? How can we, as human beings, be so indifferent and resigned to the reality between the "wealthy man sitting on his throne" and "the hungry mouths" all over the World? How can we offer something with one hand and take it at the same time with the other? How can we not think and realise that the way we choose to live today is putting us closer to losing tomorrow? When and why have we shifted from *being* to *having*? Why are we losing our childhood dreams and the respect for our common home, and becoming sheep following the dreams of an unfair society?

Well, I do not exactly know the answer to all these questions, but I can tell you that those questions are the main reason why I decided to come to Auroville as a volunteer two months ago. This decision obliged me to work very hard to make it happen, in order to allow myself to stay in Auroville for at least a year to give myself the means to answer those questions.

Although I still feel scared and somehow disturbed with the

obvious bipolarity of human beings who are creating the World we live in today; I am still a dreamer, I still want to work and contribute for a better World.

The child within me is still here and is a World believer. And she keeps telling me not to give up and to preserve my childish innocence and naivety because small changes can have a huge impact on our planet.

I discovered Auroville as a world reference and inspiration: a place where we would see the world as one, without drawers, without life boxes, without borders; a place for dreamers, where utopy does not exist;

a place where the purpose is to realise human unity, where we work for equal opportunities, where we believe that everything is connected, where we respect the beauty of diversity while working to carry together the same ideal and vision that the Mother mentioned;

a place where we actively work to give a different focus and presence to money; a place where we are truly conscious of the biggest problems in the world - the dramatic reality with climate change, waste of natural resources and destruction of our home planet; a place where we know that the decisions of each individual are a determining factor to shift this reality.

I totally respect and love the Auroville history and the Auroville Dream. I also recognise that Auroville is a continuing experimental township, where we should respect and stimulate different perspectives and proposals that can help us to realise human unity. However from what I observed over the last two months, I honestly have to say that I feel disappointed with the reality happening today. Somehow, I feel that Auroville still holds a lot of similarities to contemporary society. I cannot yet feel Auroville being "the city the earth needs".

I know that I obviously need more time to be fair, but my first perceptions and feelings were that Auroville is still, somehow, connected to inequality, unsustainability and the lack of life values.

And especially with very simple and basic things such as the use of water, food, plastic, recycling, reducing waste, I felt clearly that Auroville doesn't manage to work as a whole to address these basic issues. Although diversity is something very natural and beautiful, I cannot feel that people are searching for the same unified goal.

I know that life is a constant learning, and perfection somehow relies on imperfections first, but as Mother said, "Auroville should not fall back into old errors which belong to a past that is trying to revive." So, are we not, in a way, falling back again into old errors that we are already conscious of? Do we feel that in Auroville we are all making an effort to be a world inspiration? Or, are the passion and the dreams of our inner child asleep?

Anyway, I still hold hope that Auroville can transform the dreams into reality and the time is here, is now.

Let's believe again that small is beautiful. It is important to feel that you can still awaken the child within you.

I believe that this is the most brilliant way to make your and our dreams as human beings come true, and to create the World we need.

SORAIA



I am Portuguese and 31 years old. I graduated as a nurse, but I consider myself firstly as a change-maker, a totally passionate defender of our environment and our planet. I volunteer at Botanical Gardens and EcoFemme. Every day, I plant a tree with my boyfriend as an offering to Auroville and the world. Do you wanna join me?

THE TREECARE BROS



We are Julian, Jonas and Anadi, three Auroville youths that run TreeCare, an arboriculture business. In case you are wondering what arboriculture is, let us tell you: arboriculture is the synthesis of tree science (biology), physics, chemistry, physical coordination, strength, heavy machinery, and of course some yoga to stay calm and focused throughout technical and dangerous procedures, or as Google would define it: the cultivation of trees and shrubs. A typical day at work consists of climbing trees to prune, rig and fell them with professional gear. The afternoons are dedicated to office work, site visits and preparation for the next day's job.

When did you come to Auroville?

Julian: I came to Auroville when I was seven years old. After finishing future school, I joined TreeCare in 2009 with the hopes of doing a fun job and working outdoors. Little did I know that I would be running it in the years to come, it was the start to a journey of discovery.



How was it for you to grow up in Auroville and what made you choose to stay here rather than pursue a career in Europe?

Jonas: Growing up in Auroville was a dream come true, with all the outdoor freedom I could imagine and the possibility to cycle throughout Auroville was so liberating. I couldn't imagine a better way for a kid to grow up, in the wild, dirt, health, love and protection of Auroville. I chose to move back, after completing my masters in Economics in Aberdeen, UK. Travelling between the UK and Auroville every year, I was exposed to two different ways of living, two different cultures and two different philosophies on life. After self-reflection I could clearly see two versions of myself, I could observe how my ideals, ambitions and life goals would slowly change and adapt to the environment I was in. In the end it was an easy decision to make, as I could compare the two 'versions' of myself and decide who I wanted to be, and how I wanted live my life. I am forever grateful for the possibilities and opportunities that Auroville has given me, and I look forward to a life of self-reflection.

What advantages did you get from growing up in Auroville?

Anadi: I don't know if I got it from Auroville or my parents

- most probably both combined, but I would say a sense of resourcefulness, and definitely the ability to be great at bargaining, but that's more from being in India. All jokes aside, a big advantage was the freedom to be myself and make my own mistakes and to learn to be responsible.

How is it to run TreeCare with your friends and how do you resolve disagreements?

Julian: I would not do it any other way than working in this industry with friends and people I trust completely. Any disagreements we have, we talk about frankly and try to understand where we can come to an agreement and move forward from there. When there is clarity, respect, understanding and trust, it's just a matter of expressing oneself in order to settle anything.

Anadi and Jonas: We agree we wouldn't have it any other way.

Jonas: It's an experiment as well, and we learn as we go and adapt when we need to. Just because something is easier doesn't make it better.

Where do you see yourself in the future?

Jonas: Education and training is key to creating an industry. The arboricultural industry is just starting in India, so training is a huge part of the future.

Julian: We need to teach arboriculture and proper tree care. In that way, tree-workers can safely accomplish working at height.

Anadi: We run tree care with the goal of providing a great place for other youth to learn a unique skill set, and to gain a practical and theoretical knowledge that they can work with almost anywhere in the world.

How do you think Auroville changed in the last 10 years?

Julian: That's a tough question; I think more than Auroville changing, India and the world in general has changed and subsequently Auroville is struggling to keep up.

What are some of the biggest challenges you have running TreeCare?

Julian: I would say attaining professional equipment and gear. The majority of our gear comes from Europe and the west and it all costs a lot, so when you're turning rupees into euros, it can be challenging.

Jonas: Growing the company fast enough to stay ahead is one of the biggest challenges, for me. This industry is rapidly expanding, and staying at the forefront of innovation and international standards is difficult.

What do you consider a great accomplishment for Auroville?

Anadi: All the trees we planted and the reforestation that is going on is definitely at the top, the way Auroville was transformed from a desert into a forest. We might have been a bit below par in regards to other aspects, but community and forestry are up there for sure.

Do you feel that Auroville as a community appreciates and supports your work?

Julian: Yeah for sure, we have a lot of support and positive feedback from individuals.

Anadi: It's definitely challenging to build up a successful unit in Auroville. There are a lot of hurdles to jump over and scurry around, and the fact that businesses that have just started must contribute the same percentage as established businesses doesn't make it easy to grow fast. Regardless, we definitely feel supported by Auroville.



How many people work in TreeCare?

Anadi: We are 6 to 10 people, us three, Bagirath, Sasha, Gopal, Bir, Bahadur, (make up the core team). Then we have volunteers and apprentices who come and go.

What is it like working in TreeCare?

Jonas: The nature of the job is dangerous and technical, so firstly a sense of composure and responsibility is paramount. Creating an environment of trust, communication and technical knowledge is fundamental in ensuring a safe worksite. It is a lot of fun once that foundation is set, and everything runs like clockwork. And like with most things, the more challenging and difficult, the greater the satisfaction once you achieve it. What inspires me the most is, knowing that we can have a profound impact on an entire nation. Currently, arboriculture is not a recognized profession, and there are no industry norms or safety regulations. With the TreeCare Climbing School, we hope to change the approach to tree work in India, to educate and provide the hands-on experience necessary to take care of the beautiful trees and nature all around us.

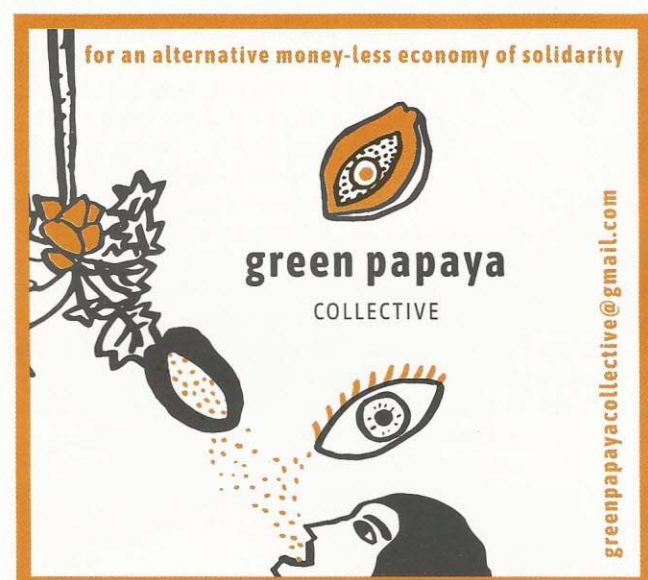
Julian: It's a great experience and we strive to keep it a workplace and learning opportunity that runs on principles of honesty, fairness, self-improvement and other positive qualities. Working in that kind of environment is awesome and motivating.

Anadi: There is a lot of trust amongst our team, and when we carry out jobs that are particularly challenging or risky, that trust is necessary to complete the job safely, and it bonds us together like brothers.

JULIAN, JONAS AND ANADI



GENERATING WEALTH AS A COLLECTIVE BEYOND THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM



Money, in any of its forms, stipulates a hierarchy of values, which creates separations between people as well as between humanity and the environment. Thus money is counter to the principles of the sacred which promote unity, collaboration and peace.

On that note, the Green Papaya Collective was launched in Auroville in March 2019, in collaboration with the Auroville organisation SEA (Social Entrepreneur Association), with the goal of creating a thriving alternative moneyless economy. The intention is to be a collective of free peoples weening ourselves off the financial system, and working together to generate alternative kinds of wealth for our network of participants.

We are a fully inclusive group and we want to expand

participation. The initiative is an ongoing experimental work in progress, and participants can help define it and fine tune it.

A NEW CONTRACT BETWEEN PEOPLE

Our model is a model of participatory economy; a shared economy, partly in the gift and partly through other reciprocal means (checks and balances). It is an informal economy based on new agreements as its structuring principle. An economy of solidarity where cooperation is more important than competition, where quality (health) is more important than quantity and thus planned obsolescence is replaced by planned prevalence. It's a movement toward sustainability as a collective venture that is intended to feel empowering and celebratory.

At the heart of the collective is service - that commitment of working together. It is the base of security and the creation of wealth in the economic and ecological survival sense.

Recently we agreed that hours contributed to the Green Papaya Collective can be counted as Auroville Service hours. It means that Auroville has a moneyless group that can benefit from any interested Newcomer, Volunteer or Aurovilian. This is a huge step forward!

The Green Papaya Collective provides a blueprint and new contract between participants. We have a 10 point agreement with the following objectives:

- To provide participants with some of their needs
- To act as an avenue for people to better learn about themselves (inner and outer experiment)
- To ween the collective off the financial system and become self sustaining
- To develop a sense of bonding with others through a commitment to generating communal wellbeing

We ask participants to write down all the things they feel they need or want that they pay for, with cash or a maintenance. This

list includes goods and services and should be as exhaustive as possible. Participants' needs and wants are then shared within the group. Together with this, we ask participants to list their skills and passion. Each participant is committed to a number of hours per week to work with individual exchanges and/or towards one or several of our collective projects to meet the needs of the group.

EXCHANGES TAKING PLACE

A basic need that all participants share is food, hence one project is a collaboration with AuroOrchard and another is gleaning at various places (we come to harvest and share the harvest 50/50). Housing is a need for many of us, therefore one project collaborates with Jorge at Terrasoul working on a 3D printer to print walls for buildings. We are in contact with ALOT (Auroville Library of Things) and are hoping to collaborate with more units in the future. On an individual basis, we have a wide range of exchanges such as graphic design, food gardening, yoga, baking and massage.

WHAT ABOUT GREEN PAPAYA?

The name is symbolic. We have a lot of green papaya here in Auroville, it's in abundance and often overlooked. You can easily use green papaya instead of, for example, carrots - it is used in a similar way and has similar nutritional values. Yet most people still tend to go for carrots. Carrots are annual plants that take some effort to grow. They're not local to Auroville, and the seeds are not easy to produce yourself. In contrast, papaya is local, it gives fruit again and again with little effort, and the seeds are easily available inside the fruit. This example of how we continue to use carrots despite the benefits of papaya shows we are enslaved to our habits and the financial system. We simply need to give some thought to what we are doing, why we are doing it, and ask us if it makes sense.

Anyone is welcome to play in the Green Papaya Collective!

EMMA & IVAN - THE GREEN PAPAYA COLLECTIVE

PAUSE, BEFORE YOU DRAW A PATTERN

60

What do you think of when I say Patterns? Repetition, influence, design, rhythm, shapes, growth, cycle, life. What is it to you?

Patterns to me are lines and circles. Lines take me up and down like climbing mountains, except there is no end to this trek; circles are a pattern of life and death. Will we ever stop living in circles?

As long as we are made to think and function the same, we will never discover what shapes we truly are.

Yes, we human beings are made up from the same stuff; atoms are inside all of us. But did you know there is something else too?

A Unique Flame. A Fire that burns within all of us!

It is this Flame which can break the patterns because it is the shape we truly are.

Our patterns are either this or that, extreme with our emotions. Conflicted with dark and light, greed and generosity, desire and passion, power and knowledge; these are examples that make us draw patterns. Identifying with our emotions makes us feel like human beings.

Yet are we our emotions, or are we more than that? Being driven by our emotions is one of our patterns, like having a variety of masks in a closet matching the weather of our mood.

So, why not pause before you draw a pattern?

Our patterns have made us stuck in greed and desire for power. Competition has made us compete for the wrong reasons: we only think about ourselves and race behind money when we should compete in breaking patterns and the system of hierarchy based on wealth. Competition should be the driving force of evolution to bring change. So why draw such patterns? Because it is hard to pause and notice them and eventually break patterns we always draw.

Patterns condition us and make us lose our authenticity; instead, fear is the driving force in each one of us. Fear of surviving! Fear of not 'fitting' in our own skin, a dress, a box and the society.

Because of fear, we human beings have become ignorant to the needs of ourselves and the planet. We are digging

up every bit of earth left to gain our own satisfactions, we cut down living beings who have been rooted on this earth longer than any human life. All this to consume and buy the stuff we "need!"

The Flame must burn Fear.

Planned obsolescence: now, why would such a thing be invented? Products that are designed to fail! In the 1920s it all began with renewing the auto industry but naturally it took over the entire economy, it got people enthusiastic to consume! In that time, sustainability was not a priority... But today's world is not the 1920s; we are a population of 7.3 billion people who are responsible as consumers. Manufacturers give exactly what we ask for, with manipulation. We get attracted by what we don't have; a slim, shiny, smooth working lightweight laptop is much better than my wired box, old, slow, fat, ugly computer.

The Flame must burn Greed.

Today we live with words, terms, labels and judgements. Blaming people who we think are "bad" makes us feel better. Comparing ourselves to models and being bombarded by social media which promotes a "nice" way of evolving. Complaining about the world and its politics has become a form of entertainment. Gossiping, such an "effective" way of bringing change! We suppress and put people and ourselves into boxes, just like we put "stuff" into boxes. We are being classified by names and numbers we own. Nobody is interested to hear our passions or dreams that are hidden deep under the superficiality of things.

The Flame must stop being intimidated by social confines. It is all about the bloody pieces of paper we value for education, work, marriage, identity; and above all it is money! Money, a man made value, based entirely on trust! The Flame must not worship money.

Flame needs to pause before drawing a pattern.

We need to think of our future generation, in what kind of a world will we bring them up in? A world of war and destruction? Or a world of Peace and Harmony between

nations and people... I read somewhere a beautiful message which says: "We are not inheriting the lands of our ancestors, but we are borrowing them from our children... so let's give them back in a better state than that in which we found them."

This is where Auroville comes into the picture. Is Auroville trying to change the system and redesign it? We are not trying to change the world, we are looking for change within us. We need to be the change for the world to consciously transform towards Human Unity.

"Auroville is a place of unending education and constant progress." We learn by doing and give our service for something Higher than ourselves.

The Flame must burn within all of us!

PRIYAMVADA



20 years old, I was born and raised in Auroville. I studied in Last School and I am currently living in Mugarhi. My passion/interest lies in several activities like; art, fire dance, horsemanship, writing/languages. I aim for constant progress...

"BE THE CHANGE THAT YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD." BUT WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

In India we are part of a so-called democratic system which is operated by a group of people who think that they are leading the country towards prosperity but is the growth meaningful? I used to tell my friends that India is the land of Harmony in Chaos, but that has already become history. The country in which I was born was different; the stories which I heard from my father and grandmother sounded like they came from another age. The story in which everyone was treated equally, took care of each other and nature, and lived a peaceful life feels like a myth. And what I see now looks like complete chaos, where forests are destroyed, water exploited, farm lands mined, big cities built higher and higher, prosperous villages abandoned, food becoming a commodity to buy and people running after money.

Pause, take a moment: where are we in all this? Who are we? What can we do? Where is this going? Do we want to let the world run towards its own ruin? Is this all we are capable of giving to our children for their future?

Personally I cannot let this happen, I cannot let these lands be wasted and leave nothing but chaos and misery for our future generations. I need to be the change I wish to see in the world.

LET ME TELL YOU MY STORY:

Coming from a conventional middle-class family from Tamil Nadu, I stayed in a rented house for 20 years, took loans to do my university studies, was an average student yet somehow I managed to graduate. Those four years of studying concepts, single lines and sketch up models, following the herd like a blind sheep just because the society wanted me to do so, meant that I graduated in 2017 as an architect.

But then something happened during my internship. When most of my friends spent their time in front of computer, I decided to go spotting tigers, elephants and people who were actually protecting the forest in the deepest valleys of South India. This is how I deeply realised the importance of nature and the role of humans in creating a harmonious world. This encounter with nature pushed me to go find my own roots to know where I come from and how my ancestors used to live.

After some research, I came across the mysterious place of Chettinad in south India, where my ancestral roots are located. I found out that it had an incredibly rich history of culture, community spirit and economy. It was also a living example of Tamil architecture and town planning, and a trading hub for sea trades. I became completely fascinated by this place and what it represented. It was a country on its own. It looked like my ancestors were linked to an unbelievable source of knowledge and wisdom

that our current civilization is not able to reach. I dreamed of living in such society. But then something extremely intriguing struck me; this thriving community and one of the oldest civilizations collapsed into ruins and lost its spirit forever.

This made me wonder about my life and what I wanted to do with it: should I just accept that this kind of ideal life is gone forever? That I have to go back to the herd and live a meaningless life?

In June 2017 I came to Auroville to settle for a bit, not knowing at all what this place was about. As a young architect, my dream was to create spaces with my own hands but it was hard for society to accept such a change from the conventional system. So, I took this as a challenge, trying to break the conventional myth of professionalism by grooming myself as a Barefoot Architect, following the footsteps of my ancestors, and I started learning all the life skills required for creating my own world.

But then something really unexpected struck me while staying here; Auroville is not like any other place! At first I didn't understand what this place was about, but then I realised I had to explore it and get to know why I was here. My entrance door was YouthLink which opened the way for me to learn about earth masonry, carpentry, permaculture, natural farming, community building, public speaking, facilitation, conflict resolution and so on. Learning in Auroville is an endless process which keeps you evolving and learning new things every day. You learn how to be you, rather than being how you are wanted to be (or how people want you to be).

I saw myself transforming from a playful kid, a reckless teen, into a responsible adult and a complete being who wish to change something by being in action, by manifesting in the very matter which has made us.

I know the way is still very long, but every day when I wake up I feel so glad to be living this adventure; the adventure of consciousness and joy. I don't dream anymore of a certain life, I am actually living my dream. And because of this, I will be eternally grateful to Auroville and all the people who made the

dream possible and to those who are keeping it alive. So when I face criticism from friends and family regarding my future career, I always stand by Auroville and say that this will be the future of the mankind.

It has been almost two years now that I have been going through this process of self-realisation to find my way of being in service to the community. So many things have changed and transformed since the time I came to Auroville. But somehow, when it comes to the basic needs such as food or a place to stay it is very difficult for youths to find a way to sustain themselves in Auroville without money. If this is how things are going to evolve in this city that the earth needs and if money is going to define the service that volunteers, like me, are offering to this place, I really wonder what the future of this city will be. I can feel in me the fear of seeing such a gift to humanity disappear like my ancestors' place did, Chettinad. I think Mother said, "Will you help?" And yes, I want to help!

To conclude, I feel that I have been at my full potential while being in service to Auroville, and I will keep progressing. But in this journey of being a willing servitor for the divine consciousness, I have this one question which keeps coming back to me: what else can I do now? I guess that Auroville will find its own very particular way to show me the answer.

VIGNESH



I am 24 years old and I am from Tamil Nadu. I came to Auroville 2.5 years ago, and I work full-time with YouthLink, Joy of Impermanence and Makers' Lab. I also work with Thamarai on project related to the surrounding villages. I consider myself a barefoot architect working on integral rural development through community empowerment and participatory leadership.

CROSSWORD: HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT AUROVILLE PLACES?

DOWN:

1. Reading the epic (7)
2. House of India (6-5)
5. To be alone (8)
7. Urban (9)
8. Without mayor (4-4)
9. Potters (4)
10. Belongs to nobody (9)
11. Famous humus (6)
12. Seeds (7)
14. Science (3)
15. Health (5)
18. Sleep happenings (4)
19. In the spirit of sharing (4)

ACROSS:

3. Popular annual fair (5-6)
4. The longest queue in Auroville (5-7)
5. Far Beach (3-2)
6. Medicinal plants (14)
7. Sportsground (9)
13. Sound specialists (6)
16. The Soul of Auroville (11)
17. The pioneers (10)
18. Washed away by the sea (5)
20. Famous potlucks (7)



AUROSCOPE

BY AAA (ASTROASTROAXE)



ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 19)

We know it's hard for you to wait, dear Aries. But you may have to wait for the next bonfire to start your professional projects. So this is the perfect time to develop your inner social butterfly ... but beware of Scorpio rising! You might just find yourself in the center of an Auro-scandal.



TAURUS (APR 20 - MAY 20)

Taurus, holy cow! Uranus is in your sign for the first time since before the creation of Auroville! That means you are striking out on your own - no longer just eating more wood in the summer, like termites. You should be active with a new project to keep you busy. Get out of your routine rut and try something new - like a tandem bicycle!



GEMINI (MAY 21 - JUN 20)

You know you're going to wake up in a Gemini dream. Expect night sweats. So keep cool, dear Gemini, and sleep under a wet sheet. You should be hibernating this

summer, ideally in A/C. Even if, with power cuts, it disrupts your short term adaptive thermal cooling capacities, at least it might interrupt your REM sleep.



CANCER (JUN 21 - JUL 22)

Difficult as we know this is for the shy introvert, you should work on your kundalini chakra to keep the energy flowing this month. Get out of your shell and draw kolams on Serenity beach. But beware that molting means you will be releasing those pheromones in the air! So stay on the lookout for summer surfers... ;-)



LEO (JUL 23 - AUG 22)

We know that you like to be at the center of attention. But this summer is expected to be too hot for you to shine. Use your energies to test your ego and get inspiration under the shade of a banyan tree. If this is too far from the limelight for you, maybe you should... do nothing. Anyhow there's not too many people left to impress in Auroville in the summer months!



VIRGO (AUG 23 - SEP 22)

It appears that you have recently been through a breakup - and everyone knows about it! The selection pool is small, dear

Virgo, and you may have used it up. Watch out when you ride around on someone else's motorcycle. Befriend Entry service? Or maybe you should just travel abroad this summer!



LIBRA (SEP 23 - OCT 22)

Libra is the sign of balance: playing on rusty antique scales... and never deciding anything. But heat waves will hit into your ruling planet Venus. So stop avoiding the inevitable - your soulmate is waiting for you to take a risk. To muster up your courage, run 10 times around the Matrimandir to catch the universal ray of light!



SCORPIO (OCT 23 - NOV 21)

Your mind is teeming with enigmatic thoughts this summer. We suggest that you go to the Edayanchavadi village festival - to pour hot spices over your head and walk over the coals. No piercing, please! Transform your potential poison into a healing potion, and reach out to people in need. Join the Auroville Council!



SAGITTARIUS (NOV 22 - DEC 21)

Our Greenbelt hunter/huntress, with crowbar over the shoulder... It is too hot to work in the forest now, Sag! Maybe slow down your life pace - a little less vital, please! - and try some Vipassana in the

hill stations. If you dare staying still for that long!



CAPRICORN (DEC 22 - JAN 19)

It has been a difficult time for you this year - universal mourning with Saturn opposition, the planet of oppressive discipline. So shave your head and circle around the Thiru mountain in the full moon. You won't meet the love of your life this summer, but you might inspire a following!



AQUARIUS (JAN 20 - FEB 18)

Aquarians are a dime a dozen in Auroville, my dear, so you may not feel as radical as you'd like to be. Temper that inner fire and go for a Watsu. But watch out for mid-summer thunderstorms - *coup de foudre*! Let the force of love assuage your relentless non-conformity!



PISCES (FEB 19 - MAR 20)

The universal nebula is good for your dreamy spirit. Have faith in the divine guidance of your ruling planet Neptune. Follow your flow and go diving in the Indian Ocean. Expect a miracle - the fish might just meet a mermaid! But beware of jellyfish, coastal effluent, agitating cyclones and coastal flooding. Reality is over-rated.

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