

Auroville Today

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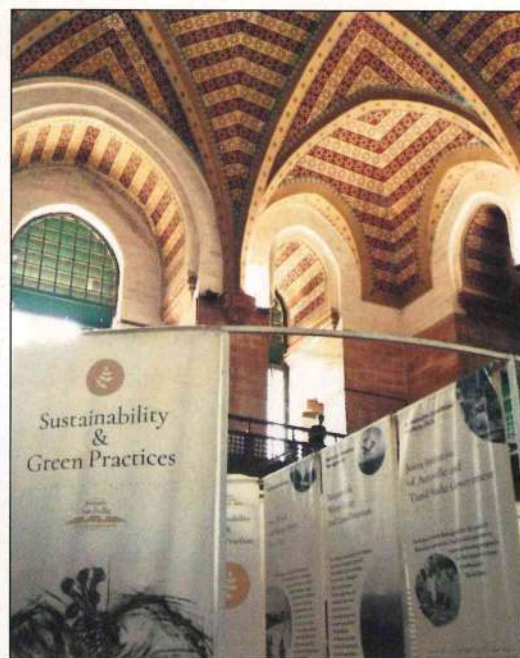
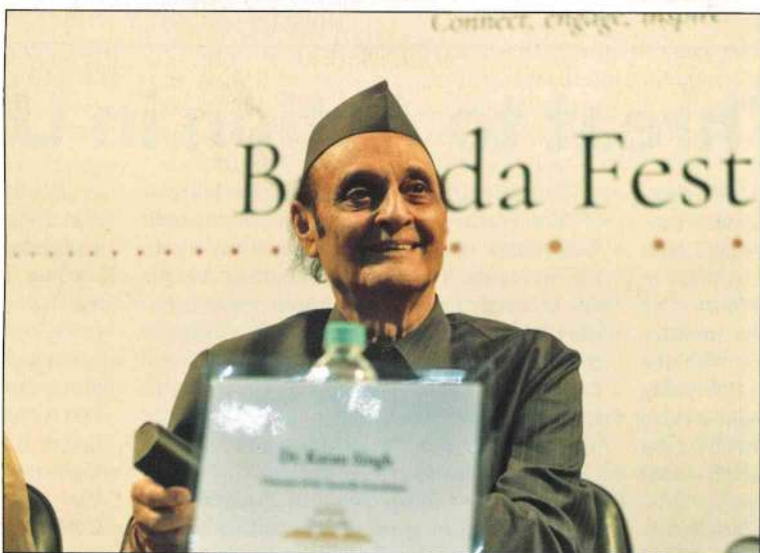
Journey of Auroville festival in Vadodara

The Journey of Auroville is a project under the special grants from the Government of India for Auroville's 50th anniversary. Officially started with the Auroville Expo in Delhi, which took place in November 2017 and comprised an exhibition and two conferences at the Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts and the UNESCO Office, this 50th anniversary commemorative project has evolved into a festival format to reflect the many facets of Auroville's vision and realities over the past fifty years.

A few months back, we started making plans for the first Journey of Auroville festival — to the city of Vadodara (earlier called Baroda) located in Gujarat. We called it the *Journey of Auroville: Baroda Festival* as a nod to Baroda College, the predecessor of The Maharaja Sayajirao University (MSU) of Baroda, where Sri Aurobindo was a member of the faculty and Vice Principal after his return from England in 1893. The festival took place from 25th to 30th September 2018 in Vadodara. While far from comprehensive, the festival aimed to give a sampling of the manifestations of Auroville's vision, through art, theatre, dance, music, education, outreach, architecture, and bringing Aurovilians and Barodians together to create meaningful interactions around common areas of expertise.

The opening ceremony took place on 25th September on the campus of MSU, which was also the location for most of the events of the festival. Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman of the Auroville Foundation, recounted the importance of Vadodara in the transformation of Aurobindo Ghose when he addressed a packed auditorium of over 400 individuals from Vadodara as well as other parts of Gujarat such as Surat and Ahmedabad. He concluded his remarks by stating that the festival would help to "reconnect Sri Aurobindo with Baroda, and Baroda with Sri Aurobindo." Dr. Karan Singh was joined on the dais by Rajmata Shubhangini Raje Gaekwad, not only the Chancellor of MSU but also from the family of Sayajirao Gaekwad III, the Maharaja of Baroda State in the late 19th century, who met the young Aurobindo Ghose in England and recruited him for the revenue service in Baroda State. The Rajmata's presence on the dais and her support of the *Journey of Auroville* events beautifully symbolized the exploration and relinking of Sri Aurobindo's history and spiritual development with the Auroville of today. The opening ceremony concluded with a concert by Nadaka, Gopika, and Keshava of Raga Mantra Trio, embodying the fusion of cultures and artistic focus that so characterizes Auroville.

The focal point of the festival was in the historic Premanand Hall in the Faculty of Arts, a stunning domed building from 1880 that was designed by architect Robert Chisholm, and where Sri Aurobindo's office room was still maintained in his honor. The large-scale yet mobile Auroville exhibition which was first fabricated for the Auroville Expo in Delhi was erected on the ground floor, with a



Savitri corner, brochures, and a talking corner for interested students, faculty, and others. Around the corner in the Sri Aurobindo Seminar Hall, we hosted a different film from Auroville every day, including "City of the Dawn", "What Keeps You Here", "The City the Earth Needs", and "The Great Adventure" (which was also screened at the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Kendra in the neighboring city of Vallabh Vidyanagar).

Throughout the week, Marc and Ok of Upcycling Studio conducted an art camp on the campus of the Maharaja Ranjitsinh Institute of Design (MRID), part of the Faculty of Fine Arts at MSU, where they had a group of about 50 students transforming clean waste into objects of beauty and practicality. Supported by Prof. Rutvij Mistry and Prof. Anju Pawar of MSU, they created artwork, fashion accessories, and everyday household items from old circuit boards, plastic bottles, CDs, cardboard, and more, which were displayed in a two-day exhibition of their creative philosophy and conceptions.

Across the campus, Philippe, Thierry, Barbara, and Delhi-based modern dancer Gopal Dalami put on a striking performance of their work-in-progress production, *Vast*, at the Faculty of Performing Arts. This two-performer piece explores the themes of solitude and the vast. They also offered a body movement experience for students, which Philippe described as "an approach to find the performer's creativity through body movement".

As another cultural highlight, Kalvi and Agila performed a trio of Odissi dances in three venues, showing their unique individual repertoires and harmonious style. This dance offering was a particular treat for the community in Vadodara as most dance schools there focus on Bharatanatyam.

A succession of seminars and lectures was organized at the Faculty of Education and Psychology and at the Faculty of Social Work, beginning with Kavitha Urvase facilitating an interactive session to explore the meanings of service, education and offering, based on the work done by YouthLink in Auroville.

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Clockwise, from top left:

- 1) Auroville Exhibition at the Premanand Hall
- 2) Close-up of the exhibition
- 3) Sri Aurobindo's office at the Premanand Hall
- 4) Seminar at the Social Work faculty guided by Kavitha Urvase
- 5) Dr Karan Singh, the Chairman of the Auroville Foundation, giving his opening speech on Vadodara and Sri Aurobindo

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Jürgen Axer gave a lecture on integral education in Auroville, where the audience of teachers-in-training was challenged to think beyond their preconceptions on educational philosophy. Ribhu of WasteLess gave an interactive seminar on the role of education in waste management, which saw energetic student participation.

Aurovilian architects and planners Mona, Lara, Lalit, and Shailaja joined us on 28 September for a special architecture symposium organized in collaboration with the Institute of Indian Interior Designers (IIID) – Vadodara Chapter, which took place at the Federation of Gujarat Industries Auditorium. They showcased a wide selection of the finest examples of Auroville architecture around the themes of planning, building materials, earthen construction, and innovation, while also highlighting the distinctive environment that has shaped its built forms. In the words of Mona, “Auroville is sustainable by necessity, not by choice”.

The Sri Aurobindo Nivas hosted a special lecture on Sri Aurobindo’s Five Dreams given by Dr. Karan Singh, as well as an Odissi performance and film screening on its annual day. The Sri Aurobindo Nivas provided a powerful backdrop for these events, as it was the house where Sri Aurobindo lived for the majority of the years he spent in Vadodara. The cool halls of the house still reverberate with his presence.

The festival came to a close on 30 September with a performance of Bhu, the Kalaripayattu-inspired performance developed by Philippe and Thierry, which received an exceptional standing ovation from the entire audience. Dazzled members of the audience then walked up to us to say this performance had surpassed anything that Vadodara had ever hosted before.

Throughout the festival, connections were forged between Aurovilians and the numerous Barodians who took part in the events, thus reinforcing the community-to-community approach that we aimed to embody. In concentrating the festival on the university campus and focusing on youth, a lively dynamic of interchange was established, with the goal of inspiring general awareness of the aims and ideals of Auroville in this new generation of Indians, perhaps leading



Clockwise from left: The set-up team Ganesh, Ravi, Suresh, Hilary, Jürgen, and Ankita.

Gopal and Thierry in the Vast performance. Nikhil in the closing Bhu performance. Auroville architects Lalit, Shailaja, Mona and Lara. Rutvij and OK in the Upcycle Exhibition.



to visits, volunteering, and general collaboration with Auroville.

But this national event was not just beneficial in terms of outreach. It had a uniquely galvanizing effect on the spirit of community of those who participated, as multiple participants indicated. “Being outside Auroville with Aurovilians is always something I really enjoy. It gives me the special feeling, this magical sense of community. In Baroda, I was filled with positivity, I could see

the magic spark in the eyes of each of the Aurovilians there,” said Ribhu.

On behalf of our core team of Ankita, Hilary, Jürgen, and Ravi, we thank all the people from Auroville and elsewhere who came to Vadodara to contribute in different ways to this festival. Finally, a special thanks to Dr. Karan Singh for his rousing speech at the inauguration ceremony, his talk at Sri Aurobindo Nivas, and for being a strong supporter of the



Journey of Auroville project to help Auroville celebrate its journey over the past 50 years while renewing and establishing our links in India.

Hilary & Ravi M. for the Journey of Auroville Team

PLANNING THE CITY

Highway: from Threat to Action in Unity

Since the Highway Task Force (HTF) was formed by the community on July 12th, our team has been steadily working on a multitude of tasks, including all kinds of fact-finding and research, strategising action, drafting messages, meetings with government and other institutions and individuals, and preparing maps and documentation on social and environmental impact for the region.

In a nutshell, we are confident that better options for the highway alignment can be explored in collaboration with the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). The main objective now is to persuade the relevant authorities that this highway, even with the proposed shift to the edge of the Master Plan (‘second alignment’), would be disastrous for Auroville and the surrounding area.

An overview from mid July to date, in continuation of the *AV Today* article in the August issue: 23rd July and 5th August: Over 200 Aurovilians gathered around the Banyan at Matrimandir for protection of Auroville.

24th July: HTF members and a member of the Governing Board (GB) met the Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Pondicherry Dr. Kiran Bedi, who advised them to come back with some technical details and evidence of wide-based support from the people concerned. On 30th we went back with a petition signed by 400 Auroville residents and another petition from Kulapalayam and Bommayarpalayam with over 700 signatures. All meetings with LG have been very supportive.

26th July: HTF members and the Working Committee (WC) met with Kulapalayam residents who expressed their extreme grief and objection to the highway’s second alignment close to their village. We explained that we were equally opposed to both alignments, and that we need to work together to prevent them.

1st to 3rd August: A second delegation from Auroville met with the NHAI Chairman in Delhi

and presented our case, including possible alternatives, some of which might even be more economical. We were told that NHAI would look into our proposal. Eight meetings took place in three days, including with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (the ministry directly responsible for Auroville), with the Chairman and a member of our Governing Board, and with our Member of Parliament (MP) from Villupuram district. We are grateful for the peaceful oasis of the Delhi Ashram which hosted us.

Note: We have since learnt that the alternative routes proposed from Auroville to NHAI were drawn in understandable panic and rushed preparation for the first visit to NHAI, without complete information about continuation of the planned highway towards south [see *AV Today* #349, August issue]. Hence these options are not applicable. Another hurdle on our way has been an email from the Working Committee sent after the visit of 2nd July to the NHAI officer. Meant as a thank-you note for receiving the delegation and considering adjustment to the alignment, it was understood and filed as an official acceptance from Auroville of the second alignment just east of the Masterplan circle.

Among the next steps was a Residents Assembly Decision (RAD), for the Residents Assembly (RA) to clearly voice its stance – as described in the Auroville Foundation Act – and to be officially conveyed through the Foundation. Besides the RA, two other bodies complete the Auroville Foundation, i.e. the GB and the International Advisory Council (IAC, currently not constituted). The two resolutions, one on the highway and one on reappointing the IAC, received massive support from the community.

Meanwhile an online petition by an Indian citizen, www.change.org/p/protect-the-afforestation-attempts-of-auroville, has gathered over 70,000 signatures to date and is ongoing, with moving and uplifting comments appreciating the work done in Auroville.

Our MP called a meeting with the Collector of Villupuram on 14th August, with seven Aurovilians and two representatives from Kulapalayam. The Collector clarified that his role is mainly for land acquisition and to maintain law and order. He advised us to consider the cost of any possible alternatives, the fact that these routes should bypass Pondicherry too (the intention is not a link with the Tindivanam highway but a bypass to join the Villupuram-Cuddalore-Nagapattinam road), and that any alternatives should not have a negative environmental impact or meet with social resistance, displace people or affect their livelihood. He proposed to call for a meeting in his office with the Project Director and staff from NHAI Chennai.

We updated the Governing Board during their meeting on 8th September and asked for their support with official contacts. The role of our Secretary Mr. Chunkath, who was out of country in July and August, would be crucial in all future steps.

Meanwhile, members of PondyCAN joined HTF in a meeting on 28th July, bringing in a wider regional perspective in relation to the highway. We are confident that through an inclusive process with all stakeholders, the best routing can be found, preserving peace and harmony as well as our vulnerable natural environment. A meeting at the Tibetan Pavilion on 16th August brought together representatives from Marakkanam in the north to Cuddalore in the south, followed by a successful full-day seminar on various bioregional planning aspects in Pondicherry on 11th September. (More to follow in the November issue of *Auroville Today* about this important initiative.)

After a pause of more than a month, suddenly the renewed activity of surveyors in Auroville’s greenbelt in mid-September naturally raised deep-seated concern and anxieties, testing our faith and equanimity individually and collectively.

We have been assured that in spite of such unnerving signs, the highway plan is still in an exploratory phase with many important factors pending. The Environmental Impact Assessment which is mandatory for such a project has clear guidelines, and many of its criteria will speak volumes against the proposed alignment. We are also aware that the reaction of the local population is crucial for the Government, which cannot ignore it. We see the case of Chennai-Salem highway, also under the ‘Bharatmala Pariyojana’, which has been stalled by the High Court.

François was able to obtain a meeting on 20th September with the Principal Secretary of the Prime Ministers’ Office in Delhi. Three of us met with him to bring to his attention the highway issue, and highlighted many unique aspects of Auroville, “a beacon for the world” in the words of the Prime Minister. We also met two other Secretaries in the same Office, including one who, as a former District Collector of Villupuram, knows Auroville intimately. All these meetings were very positive, and the work continues.

Ultimately, the external threat of this highway – in the words of a former chairman of Auroville International, a situation of ‘all hands on deck’ – is also a leverage to accelerate our inner alignment to the ideals of Auroville: an effective human unity, and being at the service of the divine consciousness. Every challenge we are facing now forces us to go deeper inside and work within and among ourselves, with sincerity, humility, gratitude, perseverance, aspiration, receptivity, progress, courage, goodness, generosity, equality and peace.

“We must learn to rely only on the Divine Grace and to call for its help in all circumstances; then it will work out constant miracles.” *The Mother*

Summarised by Aravinda, a member of the Highway Task Force

Winds of Change

Following Jorge Ayarza's presentation on Makerspace at Youth Link a couple of months ago, we spoke to him about the makerspace concept, the Open Source movement and access to renewable energies, that are radically transforming the world as we know it.

Auroville Today: When did you come to Auroville? Tell us about your initial years here.

Jorge: When I first came to Auroville 9 years ago, I worked at CSR and at the Earth Institute. I had been living and practicing yoga in Tiruvannamalai before that and Auroville had attracted me as a place where I could practice karma yoga. The need to work had become stronger and stronger in my meditations, and eventually I decided to move here.

When I first joined the Earth Institute, I had wanted to train and work as a mason but Satprem did not agree. He thought I would not survive the heat and I think he was right! Instead, as I had an engineering background, he requested that I build machines for Earth Institute.

Sometime later Juan from Terrasoul asked me if I would help him build the farm. That's when I transitioned to living and working at Terrasoul to create the infrastructure for the farm. I built houses for volunteers and continue to do infrastructure projects and repairs at the farm.

How did you start building wind turbines?

My interest in wind turbines began in Ecuador with mechanical water pumps. There I also learned to design, build and install small hydropower turbines and slowly got involved in rural electrification projects. I spent some time with Jan Imhoff who was building wind turbines at CSR. Eventually I began building an open-source wind turbine design. In fact, I built my first wooden blades at Swaram, where they make musical instruments – they had the space and the tools in their workshop!

Essentially, the project of building wind turbines was born out of a curiosity and a local need. Several people in Auroville were using solar energy for electricity in their homes. And at certain times of the year their battery banks would get drained. During the monsoon, for example, the production of energy goes down to about 15% of what we usually have. I would hear several people complaining about having no power supply during the monsoon.

So I started exploring wind turbines as a renewable energy source that could complement solar power. In Auroville, I recommend hybrid systems that use both solar and wind energy as we don't have the ideal wind conditions for producing electricity. We have gentle winds that are good for running mechanical water pumps. Electrical windmills, on the other hand, need higher average wind speeds.

One of the first people to install a wind turbine in Auroville was Martanda. He wanted to increase power production at his farm and I suggested that he add wind energy to his combination. This proved to be a successful experiment.

You have been working in rural India spreading this technology over the last years.

I have worked in the renewable energy field for 15 years in different parts of the world. In Ecuador, where I come from, I was involved in a project of electrifying villages in the Amazon Basin with small hydro power systems. Here in India, my specialty continues to be rural development. I feel that this is my calling – helping rural people in remote areas where no services reach. There are approximately 300 million unelectrified people in India. They also tend to be the poorest communities.

I work in the spirit of the Open Source movement. When I built these small wind turbines, they were Open Source design. I wasn't the designer of the machines. The original design was by Hugh Piggot, a Scotsman who published a booklet with his wind turbine design which has become the most popular Open Source design built around the world. This design has been modified and expanded by innovators around the world over many years. Through Open Source, designs and the instructions of how to build turbines are available to anyone today.

How does Open Source impact your work in rural areas?

For one, we don't have a factory that builds wind turbines. Instead we have training programmes that train people to use open source platforms so that they can build the machines themselves and do so at a fraction of the cost of a company manufactured turbine. The Open Source movement enables a farmer or village mechanic to

build a wind turbine on his own. He does not need to be an engineer for this. He only needs interest and curiosity.

We want people in remote areas not only to be self-sufficient in energy but also in manufacturing and maintaining their own energy generating equipment. Currently, we're creating a national network of local entrepreneurs, mechanics and individuals who can do this. Having local technical support systems for renewable energy is essential for its success.

Where have these projects been implemented?

We have been running training projects in areas around Pune, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. These areas have a very good wind resource with significant energy needs. Trainings have been done in Technical Institutes, Ashrams, farms and students have included farmers, electricians, university students, entrepreneurs. All these trainings are done through the Centre for Scientific Research (CSR) which has been a strong supporter of this initiative. A key training centre has been the National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) based in Chennai, which is now building a small wind turbine Makerspace with our technical advice.

The concept of Open Source sounds like it has democratised manufacturing. How does it work?

The spirit of Open Source design is that you make available any intellectual development to the world to use by publishing it on the internet. This means that if you have written a book or built an object or resolved a technical problem, you publish it under a number of different websites. Others, then, have the possibility of building a copy of what you published. Often, they modify it to meet their specific needs. And in some cases, the changes are significant improvements on the original design. The result is that you have a global network of individuals helping you to improve and upgrade your design. *Windempowerment* is one such open source group that specialises in wind energy and its productive applications.

Open Source has made it possible for anyone, anywhere in the world, to access all the information they need in order to build something themselves. On websites such as *thingiverse.com*, you can literally search for anything, download the design and build it free of charge. And this is the point of Open Source. Instead of protecting your intellectual pursuits and trademarking them, you want what you have created and offered to the world to evolve into something else. This global sharing of ideas through Open Source has enabled us to reimagine our world and our cities.

You spoke about Fab Cities at your presentation on Makerspace last month. What is a Fab City?

The Open Source movement, along with the development of Makerspace, has evolved into a larger pursuit of a Fab City.

The city, as it has evolved in the last century, has become a massive consumer of materials and producer of waste and carbon emissions. The Fab City project seeks to reverse this trend by imagining cities as centres of local production so that people, through their inventiveness and resourcefulness, are able to manufacture the products they need within the city itself. Not only should we be able to make everything ourselves, we should also make it Open Source so that others can benefit. The Fab City concept is based on the vision of a global flow of knowledge and communication to support local production so as to make cities environmentally sustainable, affordable and self-sufficient.

The Fab City project is a global collaboration. Cities like Paris, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Shanghai and the state of Kerala are members of this network.

The idea of Fab Cities goes against the flow of globalisation. Globalisation, in economic terms, implies that you build at the place where you can get the biggest amount of production for the least cost. And then you ship it all over the world. In this paradigm we lose a lot. We are reduced to clients, rather than enablers and makers. I believe that retaining and exercising the capacity to make is important. I believe this is a spiritual process also, it is karma yoga.

Do you think that Auroville already has some of the attributes of a Fab City?



Jorge at the Open Source 3D printer built by him and his team in TerraSoul, Auroville. This is currently the biggest 3D printer in India

Yes, Auroville is a good example. We started as a community, in a place with nothing but just barren land. The second blessing was that there was no money. The pioneers were forced to do as much as they could with as few resources as possible, which continues to this day. Auroville has carried forward that spirit of empowering those who make and do, those who are creative. We are doing many of the things that are aligned with the principles of Fab City, though not in an organised way with the rest of the world.

You have a Makerspace here in Auroville. What is this?

A Makerspace or a Fabrication Laboratory (Fab Lab), as it's known in some parts of the world, is a space to make, to build. It could be a mechanic's shop, a class room or a kitchen, but with one distinction – a Fab Lab uses advanced technologies in the form of digital technology, computer controlled machinery that make precision in manufacturing possible. A 3D printer enables us to manufacture objects or components that are impossible to create using traditional methods.

Let's take ceramics as an example. Several potters in Auroville create beautiful, functional objects. In spite of the availability of clay and people who understand the material, however, we cannot make ceramic ball bearings or a ceramic toilet because a toilet has complex parts that require precision manufacturing. However, if we could 3D print these parts, then, with the right kind of clay and firing ovens, we could build our own design of low flow toilets instead of buying toilets that consume large volumes of water.

Digital technologies are important because they bridge the gap between what is typically a cottage or small industry run in a traditional way and the big manufacturer who makes precision parts with advanced technologies. The implications of this are tremendous! They have democratised manufacturing, making it possible for individuals to produce anything they want at an affordable price. I've visited factories in people's kitchens and living rooms where they're making extremely complex parts at a fraction of the cost of what they would buy in the market. This is the new industrial revolution. It's called Fabrication 2.0. In combination with open source, this has revolutionised the possibilities of innovation and production in fields as diverse as health, energy, housing, fashion and the arts.

What have you been building at the Makerspace here?

First of all, we have built open source 3D printers. This has taken 2 years and a lot of experimenting and fine tuning. Now we have the largest 3D printer in the country. We also built a computer-controlled mill that works by chipping away at wood and light metals.

The work that we're doing currently at the Fab Lab here is in ceramics. We want to design ovens, roof tiles, flooring, toilets. We are also experimenting with recycled plastics. This is proving to be quite challenging as the quality of plastics can vary quite a lot. Nevertheless, we are trying to recycle PET and Polyethylene bags.

The 3D printer has taken our wind turbine project to the next level. Now, a farmer or village



Close-up of the printer



Precision building in three dimensions – the printer in action

mechanic can build a CNC or 3D printer following Open Source designs, which enables him to automate the fabrication of blades while doing the other things he has to do. And this is a universal machine that can produce parts for other things – parts of chairs, flooring, tiles.

We want to start training young people in Auroville in 3D modelling on a computer. Digital technologies are the basis of Makerspaces and we need people who are familiar with these technologies in order to innovate. We also want to invite creative people, artists, to collaborate with us in order to experiment with materials and develop new ideas. If we want to build a house solely from local materials, for example, we need people who are willing to drop many conventional notions of design and think differently.

Our goal in the not too distant future is to 3D print affordable housing in Auroville. This is important if we are to grow this township. Having more people will have a multiplier effect. Not only will we need more houses, we will need more working spaces, more facilities, more equipment and furniture in schools. And if enough people follow the philosophy of the Fab City, produce and buy locally, we have multiple benefits of creating more jobs, controlling our carbon footprint, reducing toxic waste and enjoying objects that suit our specific conditions. We, in Auroville, already do this in a number of ways. We produce our own furniture, food, cheese and paper, amongst other things. The beauty of Auroville is that we are partially already in this flow.

What would Auroville need to do to join the Fab City network?

Joining the network would require a community decision and a commitment from the governing body. The big benefit of joining the network is that then we would start linking with other Fab cities and projects around the globe. We would share our projects with them and vice versa. This would connect Auroville globally; it could be the next step for us.

In the meantime, we are exploring ways of building networks to reach and train more people in wind energy. In Nov/Dec we are organizing the largest small wind turbine conference that brings together 15 open-source trainers from around the world with a specialty in building small wind turbines by hand or using advanced manufacturing processes. NIWE is funding 80 global participants that can come for one month to be trained. If they come from developing countries they will be fully funded by NIWE and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The conference will be held in Chennai and we will spend 10 days building equipment and 4 days in conference proceedings. Several Aurovilians and volunteers will be participating in this event. We expect around 300 global and Indian participants at this event which is co-sponsored by Windempowerment, a UK NGO that also promotes open source wind turbines.

From an interview by Anusha

Auroville: the antithesis of yoga?

Aurovilians are not fooled by those chirpy visitor blogs that enthuse over the greenery, eateries and laid-back lifestyle of Auroville. Most of us know this is not an easy place to live. Every day we are pushed up hard against the sheer physicality of existence. The heat, the dust, the noise, the garbage, are very much in our faces, between our toes.

There is the daily struggle with flat tyres, broken pipes and erratic power supply, as well as more existential threats like, for some of us foreigners, the ever-present Damocles Sword of visa withdrawal or, on the community level, serious challenges to Auroville integrity, of which the proposed six-lane highway is just the latest example.

Everything here, and not just the iron laterite soil, seems to resist. It takes aeons to get planning permission for a parking shed; our famous community process, which involves endless meetings and three-day selection processes, rarely gives a satisfying outcome; the best-laid plans to improve our economy or decision-making often drain away into sand or have very different outcomes from those intended.

It can be argued that life in the big cities is far more challenging, what with the pollution, crowding, violence and poverty. We are insulated from this. But here there is an additional dimension, and that is the daily battles Aurovilians are waging within themselves as they try to change something within and do work in a different spirit, that of *karma yoga*. This is difficult enough in itself, but what makes it even more challenging is that this is a collective yoga. This means, as Sri Aurobindo pointed out, that this is *not only an individual battle, it is a collective war waged over a considerable country. (The individual) has not only to conquer in himself the forces of egoistic falsehood and disorder, but to conquer them as representatives of the same adverse and inexhaustible forces in the world. Therefore, he concludes, his Yoga has much more of the nature of a battle than others.*

Of course, we should beware of dignifying all our ordinary challenges as Kurukshetra-like battles in which the future of cosmic evolution is at stake. And not all Aurovilians are doing an intensive *sadhana*: it is possible to live a relatively comfortable life here if one has the means to insulate oneself from the irritations of daily existence and is content to merely skim the surface (as one Aurovilian gnomically put it, "the intensity is equal to the receptivity"). Nevertheless, the combination of both physical and inner chal-

lenges in Auroville exerts such a pressure that it's not surprising that many, perhaps most, Aurovilians live on the edge, and that the constant pressure sometimes explodes into rudeness, dogmatism and conflict.

It's a paradox. Mother stressed the importance of Aurovilians doing the yoga, so one would have expected her to have ensured the most propitious conditions. These, one would assume, would include a modicum of comfort, security and quiet. But here we have none of these. In fact, as one Aurovilian put it, "the special thing about the collective life of those who are there to change themselves is the crazy multiplication of struggles." In other words, to filch the title of a book by Jocelyn Shupack, in Auroville everything seems to be 'the antithesis of yoga'.

So why is it like this? No doubt, our personal failings play a significant part. After all, we have been assured there is a 'sunlit path' for those who adopt the right attitude. However, what if these seemingly adverse circumstances are exactly what many of us need to hasten a radical change of consciousness?

Certainly, the outer turmoil of life here forces us to go deeper, to discover the real source of guidance and peace within. But, more than this, this yoga deals pre-eminently with the transformation of matter. So it's entirely appropriate that in Auroville we are drowned, immersed, in matter in its rawest form.

But matter, as Mother discovered through her work on her body, is very hard to transform. It's dense, stubborn, intractable. It's that element in us which is the most *tamasic*, the most resistant to movement, change, and so it requires harder blows to wake it up.

Hence the utility of what Ram Dass referred to, during his visit to Auroville, of a yoga of the market-place, where our feet are kept constantly close to the fire.

This is more than a metaphor. For a distinguishing feature of this yoga is that we work with it directly in our bodies, both individual and collective. When a new highway wants to plough through Auroville, it's felt as a physical wound; unresolved issues in other parts of our being frequently erupt in the physical dimension, while, as one of our experienced body workers observed, a spate of similar injuries or illnesses in the residents often reflects an imbalance in the wider body of the community.

But what about that other collective process which we gripe about so much, the one that consists of endless meetings and disappointing out-

comes? Here, too, we may discern a yogic utility. For in a non-hierarchical, consensus-based society where we are constantly forced to deal with each other, we are given the opportunity to knead one another, to knock off the rough edges, even to break each other down, so that we can begin to open to something else.

As to the failures of our collective process and best-laid plans, they are there to remind us not only not to settle for less but also that to change anything without first changing our consciousness is, as Mother pointed out, a 'vain chimera'.

Frequent failure is also an inevitable concomitant of the extraordinary freedom we have to make experiments and pursue individual paths. The deeper reason for this freedom and apparent wastefulness may be that Mother is waiting for us to exhaust all other possibilities so that we will finally recognise and turn to the true path (an approach she said she was allowing in the Ashram concerning those who wanted to forcibly 'uplift' humanity).

And then there is that other, pervasive pressure to which we are subject here. "As for me you know, I don't believe in external decisions," said Mother in 1970. "Simply, I believe in only one thing: the force of Consciousness exerting a pressure like this (crushing gesture). And the Pressure keeps increasing..."

It's a pressure that confronts us constantly with our own shortcomings – as one Aurovilian put it, "the more sincerely we aspire to reach that goal, the more we are put with our noses on to our own imperfections" – and with the exact circumstances necessary for each of us to make both individual and collective progress.

Mother explained, "There will be all the frictions, contacts, reactions, all that comes from outside, as tests, exactly on your weak point, the most sensitive spot. Here you will hear just the word, the phrase, that you would not like to hear, and people will make just the gesture that would offend you. You will find yourself repeatedly in the presence of a circumstance, a fact, an object, it matters not what, just that thing among all that you would not like to happen. And it is precisely that which happens, and happens more and more, because you do not do your yoga for yourself alone, you do the yoga for everybody, without knowing it, automatically."

But the key clue as to why the circumstances of Auroville are arranged as they are may be the one provided by Mother on December 13th 1969, when she told Satprem,

"There's only ONE way, it's for the ego to go

away, that's all. That's the thing. It's when, instead of an "I", nothing remains there – completely flat, you know like this (immense, even gesture without a ripple) with a sort of...not even expressed in words, but a very STABLE expression of, "What you will, what you will"...Really with a concrete sensation that this (the body) doesn't exist it's only "made use of", as it were, and there's NOTHING but That. You eventually see it, you know ...a vision of this IMMENSE Force, this IMMENSE vibration pressing and pressing and pressing ...and then the world wriggling about underneath (!) and the thing opening – and when it opens, that enters and spreads....

It's the only solution, there's no other. ... The image is very clear of all this humanity clinging and climbing striving to catch like that, but actually not giving itself – it wants to take! And that won't do. It has to nullify itself. Then something else can come, can take its place.

The whole secret is there.... Ultimately, that's the most difficult: to learn to disappear."

And 'disappearing' is particularly difficult for those of us with a Western background for we have been brought up to worship at the shrine of individualism. Isn't this precisely why the yoga of Auroville is so often akin to a 'test to destruction' rather than a sunlit path? Because, given that we are such stubborn material, it is only when the sense of the ego is crushed out of us that we are able to surrender to the new force that is "pressing and pressing". And my whole action is like this: a PRESSURE on them to make them abdicate the little person. Until it abdicates, the work cannot be done.

And so we come to one of the central paradoxes of the Auroville experience. On the one hand, it can be extremely uncomfortable, even distressing, to submit to this elemental, even brutal *sadhana*. On the other hand, many of us would not want to be anywhere else and even, in our more conscious moments, feel intense gratitude for the opportunity of being put through this wringer.

Why? Because here we are confronted with something we feel is irreducibly 'real', something which continually challenges us to strip away our superficial selves, all our personal and cultural baggage, and become more 'real' ourselves, more true to our deepest Selves.

And while there are many difficulties, these also serve to accentuate, throw into high relief, the sheer beauty of this place, the profound peace of the Matrimandir, and the courage, commitment, generosity and love of fellow Aurovilians.

Alan

INTEGRAL YOGA STUDIES

Auro Vidya Retreat inaugurated

The Auro Vidya Retreat, a branch of the Pondicherry-based Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research (SACAR) directed by Dr. Ananda Reddy, was inaugurated at its location near Auroville on September 9, 2018. The new centre is located in the Sri Meerambikai Garden development on the Old Auroville Road, directly opposite Felicity community and near Gaia's Garden Guest House. Speakers at the inauguration included Dr. Ananda Reddy, Dr. Karan Singh, Shradhdhavan, Carel, Dr. Prema Nandakumar, and Dr. Sampadananda Mishra. The Retreat, with its finishing touches expected to be completed in two to three months, will be opening its doors near the start of the new year. Set in a plot of mango trees, one of which stands in the centre of its open hall, the Retreat will provide a venue for higher education activities for Auroville and the region. As Dr. Reddy explained, it will focus on Sri Aurobindo studies in different forms such as online studies, physical classes, seminars or retreat programmes on the weekends.

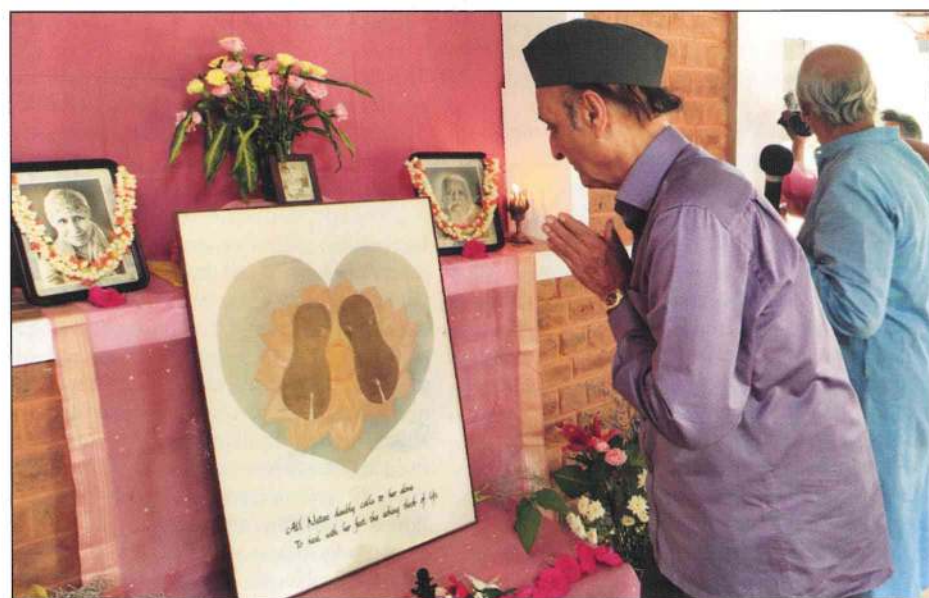
Ananda Reddy recalled that it was Dr. Karan Singh who had four years ago encouraged him to go ahead with the Retreat Centre, saying "You complete the building, we will see how it works". Dr. Singh inaugurated the building by lighting an oil lamp and a ceremonial unveiling of the charan of the Mother, her feet as represented by the soles of her sandals, which had also been unveiled during the

inauguration of SACAR by Nirodbaran on 29 February 2000.

Dr. Karan Singh began his brief talk by reciting Sri Aurobindo's poem *Rose of God*, which he mentioned has a certain liturgical quality. Recalling Ananda's father Madhusadan Reddy, a respected scholar and devotee who had planned to build a big University of Tomorrow in Hyderabad, Dr. Singh expressed appreciation to the Reddy family for their dedicated service to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, including Ananda's sister Chhalamayi, who for many years has run a school based on Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's principles in Hyderabad, and Ananda who started SACAR in Pondicherry and now this Retreat Centre near Auroville. Dr. Singh indicated that he has been emphasizing the need for higher education in Auroville, and he hoped that formal links could be established

between the Retreat Centre and SAIER, the Auroville education organisation. He expressed his hope that Aurovilians would take advantage of the higher educational opportunities of the new Auro Vidya Retreat, and noted that Ananda and SACAR have much expertise in providing higher education.

Shradhdhavan in her comments recalled how the Mother had invited Ananda Reddy, a graduate of the Ashram school, to work in Auroville education when the Aspiration school opened in December 1970. She had worked with Ananda at the school then, and over the years they have had many interactions in their common aim "to spread the understanding and appreciation of Sri Aurobindo's vision and teachings." She also noted how Ananda had been the first to start giving classes at the keet hut that would eventually become Savitri Bhavan, classes on *The Life Divine* which continued for many



Dr. Karan Singh at the unveiling of the charan of the Mother

years during which time the first permanent building was competed and inaugurated by their "dear elder brother Nirod-da." Shradhdhavan welcomed Ananda's return to Auroville with the upcoming completion of the Auro Vidya Retreat and soon an office and regular presence at Savitri Bhavan.

Ananda and his wife Deepshika have now become Friends of Auroville and the link between SACAR and the Auroville Foundation now awaits to be formalized so that Aurovilians and visitors to Auroville can benefit from the educational opportunities provided by the Retreat Centre and SACAR. As someone who has been long associated with SACAR, I was particularly pleased to see the Auro Vidya Retreat come up practically next door to my home, and look forward to personally collaborating in making a spiritually-oriented higher education available in Auroville.

Larry Seidlitz



The Auro Vidya retreat

The Komali MeDi Clown Academy wins the "YES! I am the CHANGE" 2018 Grant & Accelerator

Helping healing through humour, laughter and love.

Worldwide, the concept of medical clowning [see below] is gaining importance. In Canada and the United States it became a paid profession in 1986. *Clini-Clowns* and *Theadora* are active in The Netherlands, Hong Kong and other countries; *Hearts and Minds* is working in the UK; Australia has the *Humour Foundation*, Brazil the *Doutores da Alegria (Doctors of Joy)*, and New Zealand the *Clown Doctors*. The organisation *Red Nose International* has clowns working in 10 countries in 273 hospitals. In Israel, the University of Haifa has a undergraduate and masters degree programme in clowning therapy and Jerusalem's Hadassah University Medical Center has medical clowns working in almost all of its departments: internal care, surgery, intensive care, same-day clinics, diabetes clinics, HIV-AIDS clinics, rehabilitation, dialysis, day-care centers for autistic children, oncology, neonatal care units, centres for child victims of sexual abuse and psychiatric wards.

But in the rest of the world, India included, the profession hardly exists even though there is sufficient academic proof that medical clowns can

patients need less anesthesia and less pain medication after the operation. In dealing with the elderly, clowning can bring relief in illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, dementia, cancer and Alzheimer. Also the medical staff benefits: there is a decrease in staff burn-out leading to fewer days absence and lower staff attrition, and an increase in overall well-being.

It is in this context that the award of the Indian YES! Foundation to Auroville's Komali MeDi Clown Academy is of importance, as it recognizes that medical clowning can bring a huge difference in the treatment of hospitalized patients. By selecting the Komali MeDi Clown Academy out of 11,500+ initial entries the Foundation showed its trust in the concept and its willingness to promote medical clowning to become part and parcel of the Indian medical profession. Aurovilians Fif Fernandes and husband Hamish Boyd received the award on September 14th, 2018.

What is medical clowning?

Fif explains that medical clowning does not mean merely entertaining children or adults or just putting smiles on faces in a stressful hospital environment. "It is not about dropping by to put on



Hamish (left) and Fif (right) with Dr. R. Venkatesh, CMO, Aravind Eye Hospital, Pondicherry

bring a significant reduction of pain and stress and of feelings of depression and isolation. Research has shown that due to their intervention, hospital patients have shorter recovery times. When medical clowns take part in surgical preparations,

a show. We engage with patients, we share joy with all around us, but our main engagement is to work as an integral part of the medical team. The medical clown often accompanies physicians on their rounds, assists in medical procedures by using conscious redirection strategies such as laughter, pranayama, storytelling, puppetry, music, dance, play and parodying the doctor. The clown may even be asked to advise on therapeutic assessments."

She recounts her own experience working as a therapeutic clown in a hospital in Canada. "I was part of the medical team and when a case was discussed, I would know what was being done and what needed to be done. For example, my presence was essential when dealing with rape victims and their families. The physical examination by the medical team could easily lead to a second trauma, as the rape would be re-lived by the victim, but with the clown's interventions, use of distraction strategies and presence, it became easier for the victim and their family to deal with the whole process. I've observed that many victims I interacted with were not re-traumatized when they left the hospital and often only remembered their playful interaction with the medical clown." Medical clowning, she explains, is a matter of the heart. "Humour deals with cognition, clowning and joy come from the heart. There is no need to understand the language – clowning is about heart connections and the healing of the heart."

The work

The grant of the YES! Foundation – Rs 30 lakhs over a period of three years – is great as a start-up fund but will not be sufficient for the huge task that awaits Fif and Hamish. Their work will involve promoting the concept of medical clowning to the Indian medical establishment; convincing hospitals about the usefulness of having two or more medical clowns on their staff; doing PR work and publishing articles in medical



Who would not want to bite into that lovely red pomegranate?

and other journals; and interacting with large corporates to fund hospitals hiring medical clowns. In addition, for a period of three years, they will train 66 persons each year to become medical clown trainers – the first year in Tamil Nadu, the second in Kerala and the third in Karnataka. This too will be a challenge. Many parents are willing to pay the educational fees for their children to become doctors or engineers, but not to become clowns, as they believe that to be a job for misfits and those who can't get a proper job. A real mind shift within the society will need to be promoted.

The training programme includes pranayama and laughter yoga and the science behind it; academics such as medical anthropology, basic psychology, social work, nursing and working with medical professionals in several areas of medical needs; working with specific groups such as children, aging adults, sexual abuse and PTSD victims, and those with chronic illnesses; sessions on the history and theory of medical clowning; and re-introducing traditional Indian art forms such as improvisation, storytelling, puppetry, *Therukoothu* [a popular folk dance drama of Tamil Nadu] and *Komali* [the village clown or buffoon in Tamil Nadu].

Many of these academic courses will be taught on-line by the experts in that area. Clowning, mask utilisation and puppetry will be taught in classes of 12-14 people for periods of three months, followed by an internship in a hospital where the students will shadow professional medical clowns and, afterwards, will be guided and mentored in their own interaction with staff, patients and their families. An examination will conclude the training.

Providing job opportunities

Fif says that an increasing number of Indian hospitals are open to employing Medical Clowns. However, they may not have the funds to pay for their salaries. "If a hospital has to make a budgetary

decision between buying an incubator or hiring a medical clown, the choice will most likely be for the incubator. But if you compare how many people will be served by the incubator and the clown, the clown wins. The hospital has to evaluate the payback on its investment, helped by the published academic research. It should look at faster healing processes and savings in hospitalization time, the reduced need of medicines, stress levels going down, suicidal tendencies diminishing, and students doing better in their studies. Then they have to find corporates who are willing to provide the necessary funding from their Corporate Social Responsibility budgets and underwrite the cost of the Medical Clowns." She recounts how an anonymous philanthropist donated 1 million Canadian dollars to train clowns in ten pediatric facilities for a three year period. "I was hired under that initiative". During that three-year process, each hospital had to secure their own future funding. This single donation firmly established the therapeutic clowning concept in Canada.

The first steps have meanwhile been taken. Fif and Hamish have started working with the Chennai based EKAM Foundation, the Aravind Eye Hospital in Pondicherry, the Stella Maris College in Chennai and Auroville's Sustainable Livelihood Institute (an initiative of Auroville and the Government of Tamil Nadu. "The Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) and a few hospitals in Chennai and other parts of the country have already shown interest," says Fif, "and we'll soon approach the authorities of JIPMER". They have also been invited to address the medical establishment in a few conferences. It's a promising start.

Carel

The Mission of the Komali MeDi Clown Academy

- ◆ To transform health and social well-being through MeDi Clowning in rural and urban India.
- ◆ To develop and implement an accredited MeDi Clown Training Program recognized by the Government of India and regulatory bodies.
- ◆ To develop job opportunities and a large pool of professionally trained MeDi Clowns in every state, district and Union Territory.
- ◆ To integrate MeDi Clowning into preventative and curative health settings, with MeDi Clowning recognized as a paid profession in healthcare and education by the Government of India and regulatory bodies.
- ◆ To expand and nurture relationships with rural women's and men's groups, healthcare clinics and hospitals, and educational institutions by empowering them to establish sustainable preventative and curative health programs that include funding for MeDi Clowning.
- ◆ To design and deliver workshops, seminars, social and conventional media coverage to educate healthcare and other professionals, government, non-governmental organizations and the general public on the substantial individual and societal benefits of MeDi Clowning.
- ◆ To conduct further research on the impact of MeDi Clowning on health and wellbeing outcomes in healthcare, educational and community settings.



At the Institute of Child Health, Chennai

Mother's foot soldier

Prasad joined Auroville in 1989. He has taught in New Creation School, worked on the Matrimandir and at present manages the construction unit aurOMira which is involved in the completion of the Sunship and Kalpana projects.

Auroville Today: How did you first come across Mother and Sri Aurobindo?

Prasad: I came across Sri Aurobindo because my brother Charles had read Sri Aurobindo's books and told me about him and the Mother. He gave me some books of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. At the time I was only familiar with Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna. I looked at one of these books, it was the compilation *What is Mind?*, then threw it aside.

However, that night I saw Sri Aurobindo in my dream, so I took up that book again and started reading. And that was it; I never stopped. My brother gave me the rest of the books that were with him, then I went to the town library. There I found a cupboard in a cobwebbed corner that was full of Sri Aurobindo's literature.

I was learning to meditate. So I would go to a playground at night and sit in meditation. We were living in Kerala, and these curious people would come and sit next to me and ask me what I was doing. I explained and told them what I was reading and they became interested. So we created a study circle and then, later, a sports circle, women's circle and an educational circle where we taught English. None of us had any money, so we would get up at 3 o'clock in the morning to work in a coconut factory to finance these activities.

I became a member of the Sri Aurobindo Society. One day the postman delivered the Society magazine and at the back there was an announcement that on 8.8.88, there would be a special Darshan at the Ashram. At once I had the feeling that a call was coming to me.

I came to the Ashram and stayed in a guest house but then ran out of money. I didn't want to go away; I wanted to stay until the Darshan day. So I went to Vijay Poddar and told him I wanted to join the Ashram. He said he knew my family situation as we had already been in touch, and asked, 'Why don't you join the Sri Aurobindo Society so that we can support you financially?'. I told him again that I wanted to join the Ashram.

So he wrote a chit to Ravindraj about me. Ravindraj asked me why I wanted to join the Ashram. On the desk in the room where we met there was a small photo of The Mother. I looked at it and had the cheek to say that She was asking me to join the Ashram. He laughed and told me that they were looking for somebody to work on Cazanove Farm, which I think is one of the first farms bought by the Ashram. So I went there. I was accepted into the Ashram in 1988.

I had a great time while I was in the Ashram. I used to have wonderful conversations with Niroda in his room near the Samadhi. Then Nolinida's hundredth birthday was approaching, and as his samadhi was at Cazanove we started making preparations to receive Champaklal and Niroda there. While I was cleaning up the place, I found a treasure: two photographs of Mother and Sri Aurobindo signed by them on Her birthday, Darshan day, 21st February 1933.

I asked Niroda if he would come to my room and invoke the Presence and Blessings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo there. He came. While he was there he remarked 'Look, we seniors are all leaving. It is up to you, the young generation, to take over and continue the work.'

However, I left the Ashram because there were certain rules I could not follow. I decided to come to Auroville. I went to the Visitors Centre and said that I wanted to join Auroville and was looking for some work that I could do. I told them that I could teach, among other things. They advised me to see André at New Creation. He was very welcoming and I began teaching there.

But after a couple of years you became involved with constructing Vikas community. How did that happen?

I was living in Aspiration. Satprem, who was also a resident, was upset at the way things were running there. He felt that we needed to create our own community. So Satprem, Kalyani and myself started the Vikas project. At first we didn't know what to call it, but one night when I was on night duty at Matrimandir this name came floating down like a feather. 'Vikas' means 'expansion', and this has always been a trait that appealed to me. In fact, my childhood hero was Alexander the Great who conquered the world horizontally. Sri Aurobindo did the same thing vertically!

So we started this project and I was the site supervisor. I had no prior experience of construc-

tion work - I had studied for a B.Sc. in which my major was maths and minor was physics. However, I had some training in people management because at Cazanove Farm I was in charge of 30-40 workers. But the fact that I could speak Tamil was the biggest advantage I had in working with the construction workers.

Meanwhile I had begun working at Matrimandir, helping construct the catwalk and stairs that led to the roof.

Then I met a German girl: we fell in love but when she left I began thinking of going to Europe.

What was the attraction of the West?

I wanted to understand the West and why India and the West seem to have difficulty in working together. Also, when I was teaching in New Creation I felt I could not continue teaching unless I had a broader life experience.

Then I got the opportunity to go to Australia with an American lady. I had no financial means, so she said I could earn money there and afterwards travel to Europe. I was not sure whether I should go or not. When an older lady from the Ashram offered me relics of Mother's hair, that was a clear indication for me that the Mother was giving me Her Sanction and Protection.

I found Australia so welcoming. When I was working at Matrimandir, I was looked down on as an economic migrant: I was just another worker and didn't feel recognised as part of the team. But when I arrived at the airport in Australia a police officer walked up to me saying, 'Welcome to Australia, sir.' That was amazing. And then we went to live in a beautiful place called Cairns in Queensland, where there are two world Heritage sites: the Rain Forest and the Great Barrier Reef, side-by-side.

Later I went to West Australia where I graduated from the University of Perth with a degree in film and television. But there is no film industry there, so a friend suggested I become a teacher. I did a one year course in education, during which I decided I wanted to teach aborigines.

Why?

I felt that Australia belongs to the aborigines. We are the guests, and I felt that since I was leading such a great life in Australia I wanted to do something for the indigenous people who gave me this opportunity.

I got a job in a remote school in Kimberley District Western Australia. The Principal asked me to teach maths and computer studies. As I'm Indian he immediately assumed that I would be good at these things!

The aboriginal elders wanted to meet the new teachers. Inherently they don't trust non-aboriginal people because even as late as 1970 the white Australians were shooting aboriginal people for fun. I put together a slideshow where I mixed photographs of Indian adivasis and aboriginal people. Then I asked them to tell me who was who. They couldn't, and immediately they recognised that as an Indian I was part of their tribe. In fact, they gave me the honour of making me a tribal member.

I wrote a letter to one of the successful aboriginal corporations, offering to teach the students by creating multimedia classrooms with smartboard, laptops with wifi connection, data projector and surround sound system and online based curriculum. In 2004 this kind of technology was only entering rich private schools in the cities. The problem is that the aboriginal people come and go: you never know who will be in your class next week. I found that the best solution was the individual lesson plan. I created a programme where students could come in at any time and try a certain level, and if it was too difficult they could easily go down a step until they found the right place to start.

The corporation gave me Aus \$10,000 to set up a prototype classroom. Within two years, with additional funding from the Education Department of Western Australia, the entire school was converted into smart classroom. I can confidently say that it turned out to be one of the most IT-enhanced remote aboriginal schools in Australia.

In Australia I met Tomoko from Japan, who became my life partner. When I returned to Auroville after 18 years with Tomoko and two children we didn't have anywhere to live, so I asked an



Aurovilian architect to help me finish a house in Surrender that had originally been intended for Prema. As the house under construction took longer than anticipated we went back to Australia.

When you returned to Auroville did you feel a different person from the one who had left many years before?

I remember talking to Otto at Financial Service after I came back and he said 'You are different now'. I understood that I was not the same person, that there had been a fundamental change in me. I had left in some disappointment because I had not felt part of this place, but now I felt I couldn't just blame the community for that: it was also something to do with me. At that time my consciousness had not yet developed, not evolved enough. But now I had the necessary qualifications and profile that the community was looking for: I'm deeply connected with Sri Aurobindo and Mother, I can speak Tamil, I can understand the Western culture, and I had the experience of being CEO of an organisation in Australia. So when I came back, instead of being on the bottom rung of the ladder, I was sucked into the major working groups. I was asked to become Executive of the Road Service, then a member of the Land Board and BCC.

You also became involved once more in construction.

The unfinished house in Surrender we live in after coming back here is one of the reasons I got into construction. It is still unfinished, it has already cost 56 lakh rupees and is still leaking after several repair works.

When I returned, I felt that construction in Auroville can be modernised and be made less-labour intensive by introducing new machinery. We also need to create bigger construction companies to develop our in-house capacity in Auroville. I would like to see an Auroville Building Service that would bring all aspects of construction under one umbrella. That was my aim when I started the construction company Aurocreation, (now called aurOMira). We have heavy equipment, as well as masons, carpenters, plumbers, painters and metal-workers. We also have 4 civil engineers and site supervisors and we offer training and employment for about 50 people from the surrounding villages. They all work together which makes it easy for them to coordinate.

You also wanted to set up a central purchasing place and store for construction materials.

It didn't work out at that time because I felt I didn't get sufficient encouragement from the working group, but I still dream that it will happen one day. It sometimes seems as if, when Aurovilians join a working group, they lose all trust in their fellow-Aurovilians. This often seems to be blocking development, instead of encouraging it.

However, there is probably still some preparation I need to go through so that one day She will make me ready. I know I am imperfect, I have all possible weaknesses, but I want to be the Mother's foot soldier. And I'm not afraid to fall down and get up again.

In Australia you worked with the aborigines in order to help empower them. Are you trying to do the same thing with your Tamil workers here?

Yes. My involvement in the daily running of my construction company is minimal. I don't micromanage because I want to encourage my workers to become leaders.

Unfortunately, there is discrimination in Auroville. It is mostly unconscious but the reason I resigned from the Land Board was that some of the Indian members were treating the Tamil workers like inferiors and I didn't want to be associated with that. Of course, you have to look at both sides of the spectrum: some Tamil people have swindled money and have tarnished their own culture. But I've got to know many Tamil people both inside and outside Auroville who are so genuine, so good. The Tamil people have a great culture. Unfortunately many of them are poor. I believe that by giving them the opportunity to achieve their basic needs and a decent life the people of Tamil Nadu will be able to come back to their past glories and gain the appreciation they deserve.

Recently, I asked Shradhdhavan if we could bring our aurOMira workers to Savitri Bhavan for a question and answer session about Auroville with Dhanalakshmi and Varadharajan. The idea was to help them understand better what we are trying to do here in

Auroville and feel interested to be part of this adventure. She immediately welcomed us and there was a very good response from the workers, so now we have a weekly study session there. Then I thought, why don't we sing Bande Mataram together? Because Sri Aurobindo said this is the mantra that liberated India. I felt we needed to invoke this mantra again for more liberation, especially for the people of this land.

You also have an idea to start a new community.

This new direction in my life came last year when I stayed in Golconde for some months. While I was there, I realised that being in a nuclear family is beautiful, but I also felt this limited family structure is no longer really appropriate here in Auroville: it doesn't serve the aims of Auroville. I felt that I can do much more for Auroville by working with some like-minded people in a collective project.

The name of our proposed community is 'Faith'. We don't have a place yet, but whatever land we are given, we will respect the guidelines: if it's farmland we will do farming, if it is forest, we will do forestry.

We are a group of very interesting people who are already inspiring each other. We get up early in the morning to collect seeds of the Palmyra tree and plan to plant them around the International Zone as a border. We also want to have a gift economy, so we are doing research into this and making healthy food for which people can make an offering towards land purchase.

Spiritually, the primary focus of this community is to find the psychic being, and we want to combine this with a collective life. Patricia, one of our members, said what we should be doing in Auroville is creating a gnostic society. This really captured my imagination.

But spirituality must include all aspects of life. In this context, there is a quotation from *The Supramental Manifestation* which has become the template for all my activities in Auroville. Sri Aurobindo writes that, *an outer activity as well as an inner change is necessary. And it must be at once spiritual, cultural, educational, social and economical action.*

So whatever we do in Auroville should have all these five elements - spiritual, cultural, educational, social and economic action. Often, we fail in this: we do educational research but the spiritual element is missing, or we do interesting cultural things but we don't want to deal with the money aspect. I feel it is time to replace in Auroville the commercial model of the West by reviving the communal model of India.

Ultimately, if something is to manifest successfully in Auroville it has to have some kind of relationship to the supramental manifestation, otherwise it will fall apart.

In Savitri there are these magnificent lines:

*A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.*

In Auroville, we need to have that intense prayer so that we will be able to receive the 'king idea' which Mother has shared with us in her Dream and the Charter, so that it can be expressed in living action. For me, this is the key.

From an interview by Alan

Auroville in Mother's Words

There have been a number of compilations of Mother's words on Auroville, most notably a chronological compilation by Bill Sullivan in 1990. The first volume of the most comprehensive one to date, *Auroville in Mother's Words*, has now been compiled by Gilles Guigan of the Auroville Archives.

'Comprehensive' because this includes not only Mother's messages as well as conversations about Auroville contained in *The Agenda*, but also minutes of meetings and other documents pertaining to Auroville during the period 1964-69, as well as notes of conversations with Mother taken by Roger Anger, Huta, Rijuta, Kailas and others. This is important because these people sometimes bring different topics from the ones Satprem brings in *The Agenda*; the practical Roger, for example, was very concerned about organisational matters in the fledgling community.

What emerges is a very interesting overview of Auroville's historical antecedents and early development as well as a fascinating insight into the way Mother 'worked'.

Regarding the history, it is clear that as early as 1912 Mother was contemplating the need "Collectively, to establish an ideal society in a propitious spot for the flowering of the new race, the race of the Sons of God". Two subsequent attempts to realise this – one in the State of Hyderabad and one near the present Lake Estate – did not succeed before Auroville was inaugurated in February, 1968.

But Mother's interest in the present attempt, which began as a project by the Sri Aurobindo Society to launch a new township, was at first peripheral. In June, 1965, she termed it "a small

intermediate attempt". However, she came to see it as a means to prevent a Third World War and later, most profoundly, as the means to help India solve "all human difficulties upon Earth".

In March 1969, she says that "We will strive to make Auroville the cradle of the superman" while in April she writes that "The conception of Auroville is purely divine and has preceded its execution by many years. Naturally, in the details of the execution the human consciousness intervenes."

The problems of that intervening 'human consciousness' were to take up more and more of her time. For example, Mother wanted the city to be finished in a few years, but Navajata seemingly thwarted the possibility of obtaining a major grant from the Ford Foundation that would have enabled this to happen. Navajata also seemed to have been at fault when there was a real possibility of obtaining the land needed for the future city through the support of the Tamil Nadu government.

As for the recalcitrant Aurovilians, a number of people wanted Mother to enforce rules but she always resisted. She explained to Roger that "The essential thing is not to impose rules, but to create an atmosphere that leads towards another way of life." And she reiterated, "The Force is put on all, identical and supreme", a Force that, she said, would ensure that those who should not be there would leave.

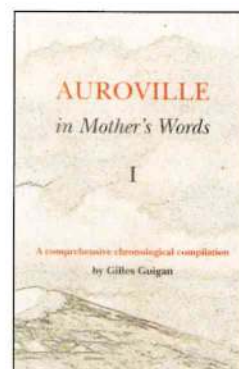
What also emerges from this compilation is Mother's flexibility. While certain messages clearly came from a level which had the ring of eternity, in many other matters she was willing to wait and see how circumstances would arrange themselves. "I want (Auroville) to grow like that, spontaneously, with the full play of the unexpected", she said.

Crucially, she explained that neither the development of the Ashram nor Auroville was the result of mental planning by Sri Aurobindo or herself. "It's the consciousness constantly at work, not as a sequel of what was there before, but as a result of what it perceives every instant."

At times, this caused her to change her perspective. Notably, this happened concerning the role of money and industry in the early years of the project. Originally, Mother seemed willing to allow money to operate within Auroville as long as the consciousness was such, but later she clarified that no money should circulate within the community. Similarly, while private industries seemed to have a place in her earlier plans, later she said that all industry in the township should belong to Auroville and the profits go towards the community.

It's also interesting to see how Mother concerned herself with the smallest details as well as the cosmic dimension of Auroville. For example, there was a community workers' kitchen near Aspiration. Some Aurovilians felt that the money spent on food for the workers could be better spent on other things, but when Mother was consulted, she was adamant: "Once you have started giving food to the workmen, you cannot stop doing so; otherwise you would lose their confidence".

This is a timely and very useful compilation, but a few words of warning. Firstly, not all of 'Mother's' words in this compilation are necessarily Mother's. Some are reported by those who have interacted with her and Mother once said that only the reports of André, her son, could be trusted to



faithfully transmit what she had said. And even when her words are accurately transcribed, as she constantly tells Satprem, they are not adequate to communicate the complexity and profundity of her experiences.

Secondly, there is the danger of people taking what Mother has said in compilations like this and turning them into dogma. Mother herself stressed that Auroville proceeds according to the Consciousness at work, and this changes from moment to moment. The prime need, then, if one wishes to collaborate in the unfolding of Auroville is not books but to identify oneself with that consciousness.

And thirdly, as Mother noted more than once, progress in Auroville is not obvious to ordinary eyes as it "does not proceed in the usual human way". "What human beings do not know about Auroville is we have the support of the Invisible." Consequently, "It (the city) will be built by what is invisible to you".

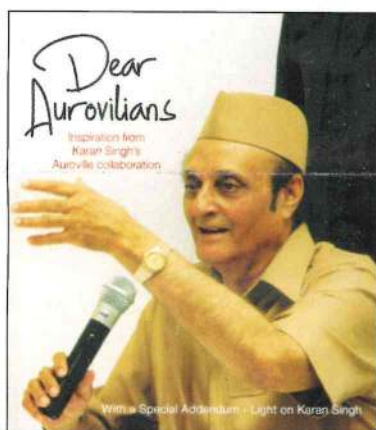
Having said this, I eagerly await the second volume of Gilles' compilation. This volume ends with the first conversations about the Matrimandir. The next volume will deal with those crucial years of Auroville's early development, 1970-1973.

Alan

Auroville in Mother's Words: a comprehensive chronological compilation by Gilles Guigan. Printed at Auroville Press, 2018. For more information contact Gilles Guigan at gillou@auroville.org.in

Dear Aurovilians

During the community interaction with the Governing Board members on September 8th, Dr. Kiran Bedi, the Lt Governor of Pondicherry, lauded Dr. Karan Singh and his work for the country and for Auroville, and launched the book *Dear Aurovilians – Inspiration from Karan Singh's Auroville collaboration*. The book, compiled by Aurovillian Araydeep S. Acharya, is dedicated to all those who, drawing their inspiration from the Auroville vision, worldview and ideals, strive so that, in the words of Winston Churchill, "the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands" and secure, as Sri Aurobindo wrote, "a fairer, nobler life for all mankind."



The 215-page book contains selected speeches of Dr. Karan Singh on Auroville, sections from the interviews he gave to *Auroville Today*, and a selection from his letters, which include his correspondence with Jawaharlal Nehru. In a special addendum called "Light on Karan Singh", we find contributions about Dr. Karan Singh from many persons related to Auroville and Dr. Karan Singh's memories of meeting The Mother.

The book has many interesting historic and recent photos.

Carel

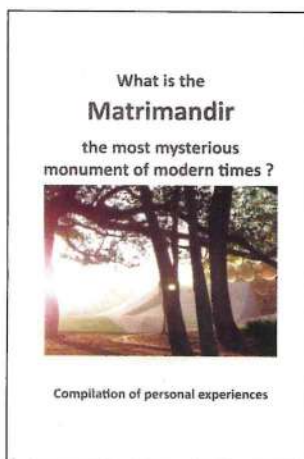
Dear Aurovilians – Inspiration from Karan Singh's Auroville collaboration, published by Prisma. Available from Auroville bookshops and SABDA. Price in India Rs 600

What is the Matrimandir?

Let the Matrimandir be the living symbol of Auroville's aspiration for the Divine.

The Mother

In the 300-page book *What is the Matrimandir – the most mysterious monument of modern times*, author Iris Gaartz presents the personal experiences of 31 residents and guests of Auroville in visiting this building. The interviews attempt to shed light on questions such as what effect the Matrimandir has on the individuals visiting it, on humanity and on the planet. The author herself clearly felt the immense power of the Matrimandir and experienced different stages of intensity when she went close to it, entered it and entered the Inner Chamber. Other experiences are shared by the interviewees, many of whom state that it is the Matrimandir that makes Auroville what it is and that they would not have stayed in Auroville if it wasn't for the Matrimandir. Some interviewees also share their experiences when they were involved in the construction of the building and its gardens.

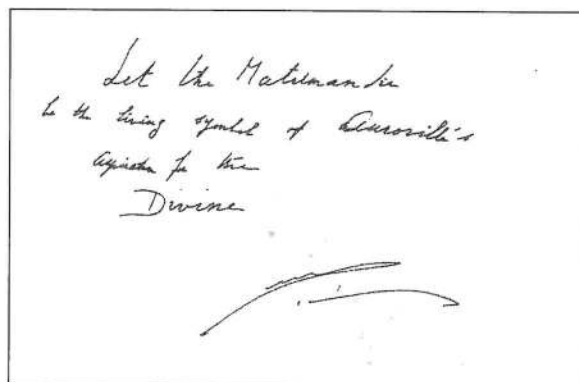


The interviews, writes Iris, "have given me the opportunity to live uplifting moments listening to the very deep, sincere and 'lightful' experiences of people in contact with the Matrimandir ... people talking about the beautiful part of their being, an intimate part that they may not often speak of in the outside world, the one which shines out from their depths."

The 300-page book also has pages describing the various components of the Matrimandir, and carries excerpts from an interview with architect Roger Anger, from *The Journal of the Matrimandir* by Ruud Lohman, and selected chapters from Georges van Vrekhem's books *Beyond Man* and *The Mother* and from Paulette Hadnagy's book *Matrimandir – Vision for an ever evolving concept*.

Carel

What is the Matrimandir – the most mysterious monument of modern times? Available from Auroville bookshops and SABDA. Price in India Rs 450.



The English of Savitri vol. 4

Barely three months after the publication of the third volume of *The English of Savitri* series, Savitri Bhavan has published the fourth volume, dealing with Book Ten, *The Book of the Double Twilight*. After a brief 13-page summary of cantos one and two of Book 9 – *The Book of Eternal Night*, the next 300 pages are dedicated to providing insights and explanations of the four cantos of book ten, *The Book of Double Twilight*.

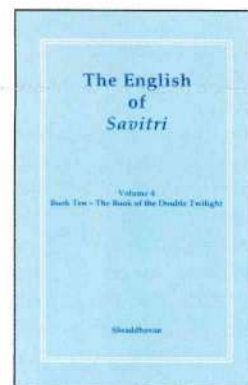
Like its predecessors, the book is fascinating reading, shedding light on passages which I hadn't understood before and creating a better understanding of passages I thought I had understood. Gratitude to the Savitri Bhavan

Team and in particular to Shradhdhavan, whose teaching of *Savitri* lies at the basis of these books.

What more can be expected? Quite a lot. We are looking forward to the publication of Part 1 of book 2 *The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds*, which takes a very large part of the poem, and of books 11 and 12 of the epic's concluding Part Three. Once the series is completely published, Savitri Bhavan will have made an immense contribution to the understanding of the poem and to Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's work.

Carel

The English of Savitri volume 4 published by Savitri Bhavan, 335 pages, available at SABDA and Auroville bookshops, price in India Rs 550.



PASSINGS

Daniel Humbert

On September 26, Daniel Humbert-Droz passed away in his house in Sharnga at the age of 74 in the presence of his partner Komala and friends.

Daniel, a Swiss national, started coming to Auroville in 2003 and joined three years later. Being an accomplished carpenter and handyman, many will remember and miss him for his reliable and considerable participation at events at the Matrimandir amphitheatre, at various schools, Santé services and wherever else he could help out. Friends describe him as a quiet, humble man, dedicated to Auroville's well-being and loyal to his commitments.

In the last year Daniel's health started failing and he was several times hospitalised. Having recently spent two weeks in the intensive care at East Coast Hospital, he became tired of it all and asked to be taken home to Sharnga, where he gently passed away two hours after arrival.

Daniel's remains were cremated at the Auroville Burial and Cremation Grounds at Adventure on September 28th.



The challenges of defining Auroville's economy

In November 2011, a group of about 70 students walked out of Professor Gregory Mankiw's Economics 101 class at Harvard University, protesting against the narrow financial view of economics taught in the course. Nothing as dramatic happened when the Growing Auroville's Economy Sustainably (GAES) team made their presentation on July 14 this year. But there is widespread dissatisfaction about how narrowly Auroville's economy seems to have been defined by this team, at least as presented in this kick-off meeting.

In their presentation, the GAES team used a somewhat unorthodox definition of an economy, saying that it is "a system of organizations and institutions that either facilitate or play a role in the production and distribution of goods and services in a society." It went on to say that in Auroville, "the organization includes the following groups or bodies: AVF, FAMC, TDC, BCC, HRT, ABC, ABS, AVC, WC, GG, FS, Housing, Entry, School Board, ..." Apart from the fact this is an annoyingly long list of acronyms, this definition of Auroville's economy seems to be more about mushrooming committees, boards and panels than to clarify the purpose and function of the economy.

Most of the presentation was centred around Auroville's finances – sources of income, performance of commercial units, income by sector, expenses and maintenances. While all this is useful information, the presentation seems to conflate economy and finances. Financial income is just one small portion of what an economy generates. The assumption is that, if we can grow financially, we will achieve our economic objectives. But what are those objectives? Let's take an example from the external world. If one of our objectives is to reduce inequality, does growing the financial economy automatically reduce inequality as promised by the Kuznets curve? We have enough evidence now to say that this is not how things work. The "growth will solve all problems" approach has been thoroughly discredited. When we say growth, especially in Auroville, we must ask growth of what and for what.

It's hard to tell if we are making progress in the way we think about Auroville's economy. In March 2015, the Auroville Retreat identified the economy as one of the critical areas of progress and listed several goals and actions. The first goal was "to have a sustainable economy with no exchange of money by 2018, both in the sustenance of individuals as well as creating a surplus for the development of Auroville." That was certainly an audacious goal, perhaps drafted in the euphoric spirit of the Retreat. But the direction was clear – we wanted to move towards the ideals of Auroville. The current effort of the GAES team does not seem to share the same spirit of progress.

Money and wealth

John Maynard Keynes, the founder of modern macroeconomics, once remarked that "the difficulty lies not in the new ideas, but in the old ones which ramify ... into every corner of our minds." What are some of these old ideas? Defining an economy in terms of monetary flow alone is certainly one of the hardest to get rid of. This idea of money being central to an economy, or even being synonymous with economy, was formalised in the years after the Great Depression and the Second World War. Understandably, the focus at that time was to get income flows circulating around the global economy.

But what is money? That might sound like a strange question because we are so used to the idea of money. In fact, it's hard to imagine life without money. Turns out, the answer to that question can be quite complex (see David Graeber's *Debt: The first 5000 years* for a brilliant analysis). Put simply, money is a social agreement. It is a marker for what a society considers valuable. So, if a society considers certain goods

and services valuable, it will create a system of money that supports the exchange of these commodities.

But what if a society cares deeply about human relationships? How would we account for that in the economy? Most of us know that Adam Smith wrote *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. What many of us might not know is that, when Smith started writing *The Wealth of Nations* at the age of 43, he moved in with his mother. The wealth of Smith's relationship with his mother does not show up in his magnum opus, the bible of classical economics.

Wealth is not only embodied in assets such as houses and factories, but also in people, in nature and in knowledge. If the purpose of Auroville's economy is not to drive the accumulation of assets but to support a thriving society that regenerates knowledge, relationships and nature, how can we design such an economic system?

Some societies have experimented with complementary currencies. In the Swiss city of St Gallen, people over the age of 60 can earn "care-time credits" by taking care of the local elderly. Helping others with their everyday tasks and giving them company earns these citizens a "time pension" that they can use for care and company when they need it in the future.

Bernard Lietaer, the Belgian complementary currency guru, says that he can design a currency to solve any social or environmental problem. In Rabot, a run-down district in Flanders inhabited by first generation immigrants, he designed a currency called Torekes. Using Torekes, the citizens could rent plots of land to grow food. To earn Torekes, they had to volunteer to clean litter, maintain public gardens and switch to renewable energy. They could also use this currency to travel in public transport, get local fresh produce and buy energy-efficient light bulbs. The result was not just a cleaner district but one that valued the contribution of immigrants to create a regenerative urban space.

The purpose of Auroville's economy

As the GAES team correctly pointed out in their presentation, the structure of a society's economic system is "largely a social and political issue." What this means is that the economic system and associated currencies that are designed for Auroville will depend on our social and political goals. How easy is it to define these goals? According to Amartya Sen, winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, the focus of development should be on "advancing the richness of human life, rather than the richness of the [financial] economy in which human beings live." In another context, he wrote that, "those attempting to guide the economy and our societies are like pilots trying to steer a course without a reliable compass."

Fortunately for Auroville, we do have a reliable compass in the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Sri Aurobindo wrote: "*The aim of its [the spiritualized society] economics would be not to create a huge engine of production, whether the competitive or the cooperative kind, but to give men – not only to some but to all men each in his highest possible measure – the joy of work according to his own nature, and free leisure to grow inwardly, as well as a simply rich and beautiful life for all.*" It is quite clear, at least in my mind, that Sri Aurobindo was not talking about financial riches.

If we are to thrive as a society in a sense of balanced well-being, we must ensure that our economics is aligned with our purpose. Much like traditional Maori culture, we need to combine spiritual, ecological, kinship and financial well-being into our idea of economics. This is not just an old-fashioned idea, but an idea that is critical for our future. Some modern states are setting an example: Bolivia has incorporated *buenvivir* (living

well) into its constitution as an ethical principle to guide the state. In 2008, Ecuador became the first country to constitutionally recognise that Nature, or Pachamama, "has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles."

What next?

During the July 14 presentation, the GAES team did mention that people with ideas on how to "grow Auroville's economy sustainably" will be invited to present their ideas to the community. Based on the timeline shown, these group presentations are scheduled from August to November. No group presentation has taken place yet, but it is possible that at least two groups will come forward in the coming weeks. The first is the Exploring Prosperity Team, which recently circulated a note titled "A structure for a new Auroville Economy." Their proposal is to create two legal entities under the Auroville Foundation umbrella – Auroville Services and Auroville Enterprises. Apart from trying to prevent GST being charged on internal transactions and solve the vexing issue of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the proposal aims to eliminate cash transactions inside Auroville. It also proposes that commercial units contribute their entire cash surplus to Auroville Services. Capital needed for the growth of a commercial unit based on a business plan will be made available from a common fund.

The ideas of the Exploring Prosperity Team are certainly interesting. The proposal does not have too many details. But then the details are likely to emerge only through debate and discussion. What seems to be lacking in this team's approach is a systemic view of the economy as a whole and its relationship to the larger ideals of Auroville.

The Lotus Group's approach, on the other hand, is to propose a framework that encompasses all economic transactions in Auroville. It separates the economy of self-sufficiency in Auroville from the "economy of development." The Lotus Group makes a well-structured argument for creating a local currency that encourages the local exchange of goods and services within Auroville. Their proposal for a Progressive Integral Economy charts a step-by-step course from individual exchanges at external market prices to collective exchanges in the local marketplace.

The Lotus Group's proposal merits serious study and debate. Their 32-page document is densely packed with arguments and charts. But many Aurovilians might struggle to understand the proposal because it reads a little bit like an advanced economics text book. There is a real danger that the excellent ideas of this group will be ignored because they are too "intellectual."

Which raises some key questions about how we can create policy in a domain like the economy, which is inherently complex. Should this be done by a group of elite technocrats? What should be the role of the residents? Do most Aurovilians have the background knowledge to truly understand the advantages and disadvantages of competing proposals? Should it be a case of competition between proposals or should the different teams work together to create a unified solution?

It is also possible that we might be looking at policy-making backwards. Instead of trying to create a perfect policy, perhaps the focus has to be on experimentation. According to Eric Beinhocker at the Institute for New Economic Thinking at Oxford University, economists should "think of policy as an adapting portfolio of experiments that helps shape the evolution of the economy and society over time."

This would mean we will have to be prepared for stumbles, failures and changes of course. But that's not such a bad thing. As the poet Taylor Mali said, "Changing your mind is one of the best ways of finding out whether or not you still have one."

Manas

Governing Board meeting

The Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation met in Auroville on September 7th and 8th. The interactive meetings with Auroville residents were attended to by Dr. Karan Singh, (Chairman), Dr. Prema Nandakumar, Prof. Satchitananda Mohanty, and Dr. Nirma Oza. Mr. Siljo, Director and Deputy Secretary HRD Ministry, who came instead of Dr. Saravana Kumar, the Joint Secretary in charge with the Auroville affairs, attended the meeting on September 8th while Board members Dr. Anirban Ganguly only attended the afternoon meeting of the Board on September 8th.

On September 7th, presentations were made by various groups. In the afternoon, Dr. Karan Singh released the second issue of Bharat Nivas's journal *Bhavishyate* and the book *Chronicling Auroville*, a compilation of articles from the last twelve years of *Auroville Today*. The hon'ble Lt. Governor of Pondicherry, Dr. Kiran Bedi, subsequently released the book *Dear Aurovilians – Inspiration from Dr. Karan Singh's Auroville collaboration*, compiled by Aryadeep.

On September 8th, the Board interacted among others with the Highway Task Force. The resolution of the Residents' Assembly seeking the Board's support that this highway will not be located in between Kulapalayam and Auroville was submitted. Also a resolution of the Residents' Assembly about the absence of the International Advisory Council was submitted to the Board.

Fundraising for the lands

The "Acres for Auroville" land campaign, inaugurated on 15th August 2014, is keeping up its fundraising momentum. In its 4th year, A4A donations financed the addition of 9 plots (13.42 acres) of land located in the City, the International Zone, and the Greenbelt.

Entry Into India refusals

Three Auroville residents have been barred from re-entering India and were sent back to their home country when they arrived at the airport. No reasons have been given. The Working Committee together with the Secretary, Auroville Foundation, is in discussion with officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs to resolve these issues and allow them to return to Auroville.

Inform about blacklisting

In a decision which may be important for Auroville residents, the High Court in New Delhi has decided that foreigners/OCI card holders have to be informed by the relevant officers if they have been blacklisted and their entry into the country will be denied. This may end the current practice where foreigners and OCI holders only discover at their arrival at the airport that they are not allowed to enter India and are sent back to their home country.

World Cleanup Day

On Saturday the 15th September Auroville volunteers participated in World Cleanup Day. More than 600 individuals participated and collected in a few hours 1,983 kilos of litter from Auroville's roadsides and forests: 37 kg of PET bottles, 1,247 kg of mixed waste and 699 kg of glass.

Glass or natural globe?

The Matrimandir executives have replaced the glass globe in the Lotus Pond below the Matrimandir with a natural crystal quartz globe for a 3-month's trial period, and invite feedback.

Subscription information

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