

Auville

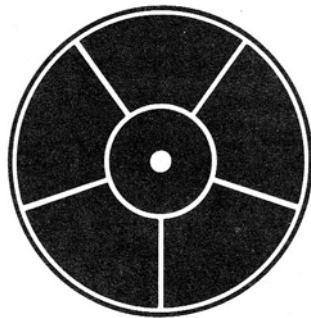
THE FIRST SIX YEARS:
1968-1974



AUROVILLE

The first six years

1968-1974



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DECONDITIONING

There once lived an old man whose wisdom, men said, was like a clean and shining mirror. Many would journey from distant lands, beyond the far mountains, to hear of his counsel. But there was one who could not see wherein men saw his wisdom... and that was his wife. “What is this foolishness,” she thought, “that he is called wise, and by some, a prophet?”

And so one day she decided to hide behind the curtain of her husband’s study to witness the mystery. Later that morning, the old man came and sat down quietly in his study, waiting upon the day. Soon, a knock on the door announced the first callers. “Come, it is open,” he said. The door opened and two heads peered sheepishly into the room. Then one of them entered closing the door behind upon the other.

He quickly prostrated before the wise man and began his tale. “You see,” said the first man, my friend and I had become partners in a business, and we had agreed together to share equally our profits and our losses. Now it happens that for the last two seasons my partner has been ill and unable to work at all. The full labour has fallen upon my shoulders, and I think it unjust to share half with him of what he has not earned. Surely another measure should be found to share in accordance with the burden shared. Do you not agree?”

The wise man sat silently, stroking his silvery beard, and then replied: “That is true.”

Immediately the first man touched the elder’s feet and rose in a sigh of relief, repeating a series of praises as he left the room.

The second man, pale and with a walking stick, entered the study and prostrated awkwardly before the wise man. “You see,” he began slowly, “my friend and I had become partners in a business, agreeing together to share both profit and loss equally. But fate intervened and for long now, I have been ill and suffered much. Yet the pain of this body seems not enough, for my partner, despite our friendship and our trust, would give me less than equal share. Surely an agreement reached should be kept and my suffering not compounded, do you not agree?”

The wise man sat silently twirling his long moustache and then replied: “That is true.”

The paleness seemed to vanish from the second man's face. He quickly touched the elder's feet, rose up forgetting his walking stick, and disappeared out of the room, his words trailing off in the distance... "Now, I understand why men revere you as wise..."

After a moment, the sage's wife threw aside the curtain. "What kind of wisdom is this?" she called, with her hands in the air. "One man comes in and says one thing, and you agree. Another comes in and says the opposite, and you agree. That is nonsense and you are little more than a childish old fool!"

The wise man sat silently, eyes twinkling, and then replied: "That is true."

Auroville. It is more than a city-in-the-making. It is a process, a process of consciousness. The city is its instrumentation and expression, its translation into form.

Through six years that process has emerged – materialised – six years have revealed themselves. They speak plainly – the errors as well as the truths along the way – requiring no spokesman, no interpreters, no priests. Auroville alone is capable of defining itself. And though, as in all beginnings, the definitions are cryptic and at times indecipherable, the language groping and infant-like, still something is there that has manifested. The same seed which conceals the tree discloses it.

This is an attempt to graph that elusive process, to transcribe its actions. Each will see its own Auroville, affirm his own correspondent truth, detect his own failing, unearth his own symbolism. The educator, the artist, the environmentalist, the planner, the social scientist and the physical scientist, the man of the city and the man of the country, the man of works and the dreamer, the materialist and the seeker of truth. And to each the old man will smile knowingly, and nod: "That is true."

Savitra

28 February 1974

GROUND AND BACKGROUND

There should be somewhere upon earth a place that no nation could claim as its sole property, a place where all... could live freely as citizens of the world...
A Dream, the Mother

There should be such a place. But there has not been. Isolated attempts have been scattered here and there through the human cycle, succumbing swiftly on more stubbornly to their exclusiveness. Generally they have been movements away from rather than confronting, suppressive rather than transformative. Generally they have been sectarian, following some religious or social doctrine, some formula, some path, some way prescribed and preconceived. But they have, in their rough and primitive translations, represented a persistent dream of man – a dream which the child in him has cherished and the old man denied – a dream of a utopia.

Through the past, the old man seems to have dominated. Utopia has come to be equated with a foolishness, a folly, a fantasy irrelevant to the mundane reality and its all-absorbing demands. But with the present precarious state of that reality – the world, its humanity, its environment and resources it is no longer a matter of semantics but survival. Utopia has become an imperative.

In mid-February of 1968, Vincenzo, a young Sicilian living at Promesse (vide Communities) was asked to do the marble mosaic for a lotus-shaped urn to be used in Auroville's foundation ceremony on the 28th. Though he had never done marble-work before (perhaps it was assumed because he spoke Italian?), he accepted the challenge. During the next two weeks, he had cut 13,000 pieces, fitting the puzzle together the evening before the 28th. The following day, children from 124 nations and the states of India ascended a narrow spiral at the centre of the unborn city and placed handfuls of earth from their motherlands into the urn, while Vincenzo, exhausted by his labour, slept.

Auroville had formally emerged, a laboratory for the conscious evolution of a city and the dwellers of that city. The field of this working encompassed the components of education, collective organisation (government), environmental integration, socio-economics, art and culture, architecture, health and nutrition, industry and agriculture, in the context of a living urban-agrarian system. Presently, some 300 inhabitants from six continents (vide Appendices, Census Data) people the more than twelve seed-communities. An embryonic global township.

In the person of the Mother, under whose guidance the Sri Aurobindo Ashram evolved, is found the lever that precipitated Auroville's birth. The initial apparatus utilised to set Auroville upon its own momentum has been the Sri Aurobindo Society, a functionary of the Ashram. As the instrument for establishing Auroville as a non-profit, tax-exempt entity, the Society has also served in the earliest stages, prior to the presence of an internal organisation, as a first stable framework, both legally and economically, through which basic administrative tasks could be handled. It was the agency that brought Auroville under UNESCO sanctions (vide Appendices, UNESCO Resolutions 1966, '68, '70) and the vehicle for grants and contributions thus far through UNESCO, the Government of India, foundations in West Germany, America and Canada, and individuals in India and abroad.

The Society however, is not a policy-making organ for Auroville or those who inhabit it (vide Government). Its role is that of sponsoring body and will continue to function in this respect proportional to Auroville's transitional capacities, receding in accordance with an emergent internal initiative. Decisions evolve from within Auroville as does the organisation of individual and collective disciplines, rather than arbitrary imposition from without. This is a basic element in the theme and fabric of Auroville's experiment.

It should be clear that Auroville has no way. The way is in the making, defining itself through its efforts as it goes along.



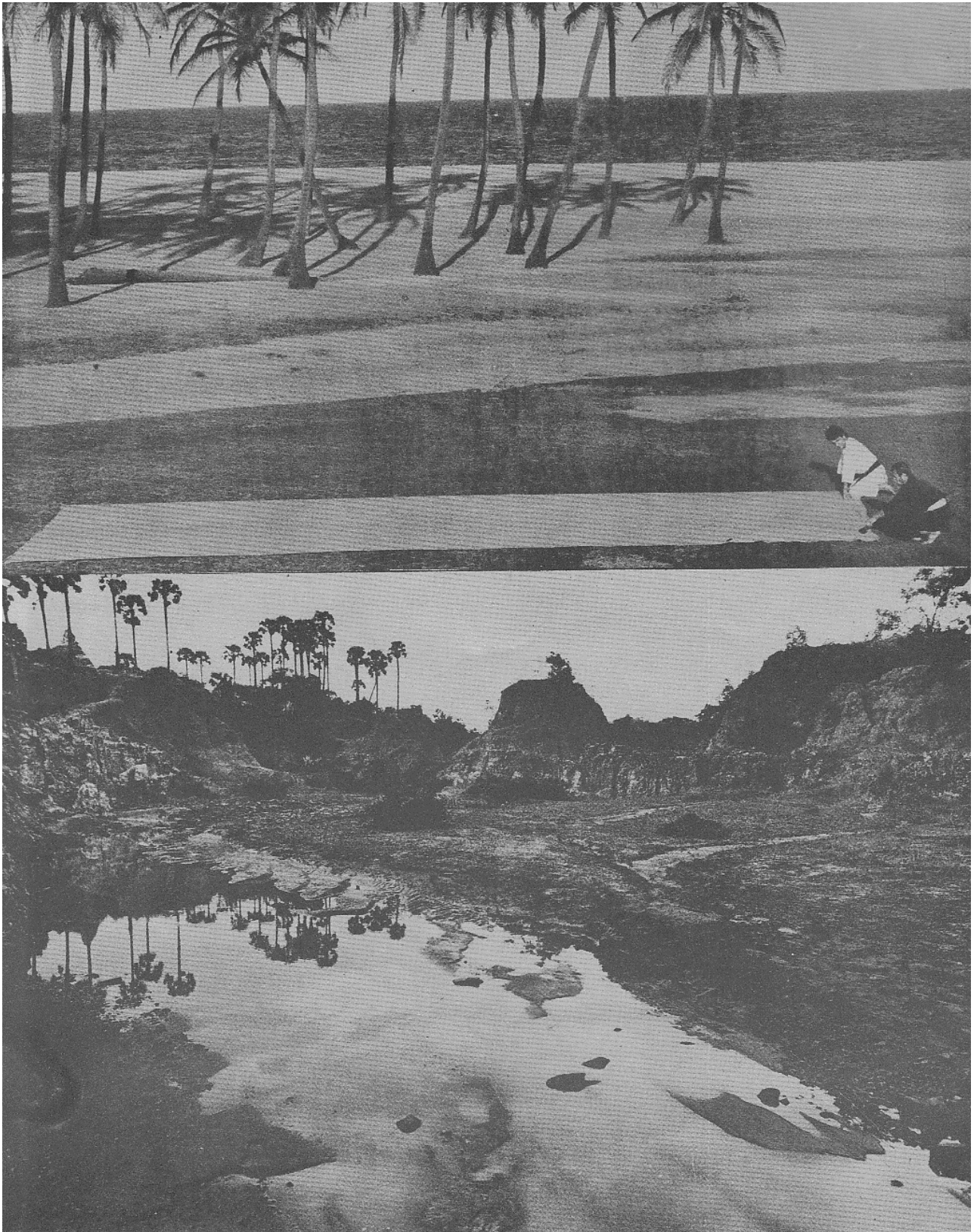
SET AND SETTINGS

Auroville is sited upon a plateau along the Bay of Bengal on the southern coast of India (vide Appendices, map). The proposed land mass extends six kilometres in diameter, to be comprised of a central township area surrounded by an encircling Green Belt of 6,000 acres (vide Ecology, Alternative Environments).

The terrain, wrinkled by gullies and ravines, is a sandy loam, rust-coloured by the clay upon which it is built. The indigenous vegetation is largely twisting jungle brush, punctuated by palmyras, coconut palms and scattered clusters of tamarind, neem and banyan trees. The climate would be described as humid-tropical, modified by a prevailing wind off the sea. The temperatures range from a monthly summer high of 30.3° C. (86.9° F) to a monthly winter low of 24.4° C (75.9° F) with extremes of 41° C. (105.8° F) and 18.4° C. (65.1° F.). (figures based upon 1972 climatic data provided by Auroville Meteorological Station)

The immediate physical setting lies amidst a number of Tamil villages (vide Auroville and the Indigenous Population, the Tamils), which in turn rest within the larger context of India, a developing country experiencing critical shortages of food and fuel and the disappearance of its forests. India, a land fragmented in a myriad of tongues, materially ravished – a diminished shadow of its once spiritual greatness, sustained only by the sheer strength of its soul.

Why India? Why not a more stable Western environment? Aside from the more profound implications, three practical reasons present themselves: firstly, were the experiment which Auroville represents to be initially attempted in the West, it would immediately undermine one of its fundamental themes, global integration. It would be inaccessible to the average Asian, certainly the villager, eliminating half the world and reducing the attempt to an exclusive social and economic grouping. Secondly, situated in the West, vulnerability to corruption – commercialism, faddism, extremism, – would be much greater, threatening and distorting the potential for a true evolution from within. Thirdly, precisely because of Indian predicament, a metaphor of the world's intensities, it is perhaps most in need of an alternative model.



COMMUNITIES: THE SCATTERING OF THE SEEDS

In the early days, visitors and newcomers would arrive, scanning the vastness incredulously, looking for the buildings. Interesting how one images a city as only buildings. They had been told they were coming to Auroville. This was Auroville, wasn't it? But where were the buildings? Where was the city? The City was still inside. This was not that kind of city where the builders are contracted, the structures put up, and the inhabitants neatly enter the finished product. Here the form would follow, or try to follow, the consciousness. The inner City had to come together, to clarify, before it could materialise outwardly. That seemed the new urbanism. Otherwise, Auroville would simply be a repetition of the same myopic process whereby man creates unconsciously later to suffer the consequences of his actions. Auroville did not wish to be an elaborate and ornate tomb.

The following traces in some rough chronological order, the emergent process of a city trying to find the way. Though the written expression can focus only on one point at a time segmenting the communities, portraying them in isolation to one another – they must be seen as a simultaneous and interpenetrating growth.

Promesse.

Promesse emerged in February of 1967, a year before the inaugural date of February 28th, 1968 marking Auroville's birth. Both spatially as well as temporally, it stands on the rim between two worlds. Situated at the southwesternmost periphery, Promesse borders the Pondicherry-Madras Trunk Road which welds it to the world outside and to the past.

Strengthening its inheritance of the past, Promesse was fashioned from an abandoned British customs station, cast upon a base already existing. The living quarters represent a fusion of traditional dwellings and pioneer outpost, a main compound of interconnected units and a small group of prototype huts. Water provided by a deep borewell and electricity were present from the beginning.

Though a community, there is more a residential than communal flavour. Each housing has private bath and kitchen facilities. The latter has discouraged a collective dining arrangement which had for a time existed. There is also no common room or meeting place. It has probably been the children playing together in the open spaces surrounding Promesse, particularly the huge banyan tree behind, that has been the cement and given the strongest sense of community.

The threshold of Auroville's frontier has been the threshold of its children as well. Since June of 1967 when Auroville's first son was born, the maternity clinic at Promesse delivered the first Aurovilians until August 2nd of '73 when the Health Centre at Aspiration opened. The three maternity units have since been converted to other uses: one, a photo lab and graphic studio, the second, a residence, the third an architect's drawing office.

Most of the work done in Promesse has been directed outwards to other areas of Auroville, with only a minimum of energies turned upon itself. As a growing self-dynamism has begun to develop within Auroville's nucleus, Promesse seems to have receded from the mainstream of force – its early provisional role as anchor, ballast, and lifeline outgrown.

Forecomers.

In stark contrast to Promesse's stability and quiescence, Forecomers plunges into the change. In May of 1968, an American couple, who were prepared to make the experiment, jeeped around the wildernesses of Auroville's interior. They chose a rugged 20-acre site carved with canyons and ravines; the landscape, a mass of burnt terracotta clay, sparsely greened with scrub jungle and cashew, silhouetted by slender verticals of palmyra. The first colonizers of the land, Forecomers.

There were no roads to Forecomers. Access was through fields. The first month, Bob and Deborah commuted cross-country from Pondicherry each day to build their storeroom. With no water, they used puddles in the canyons to mix the cement. By June of 1968 they inhabited their storeroom as temporary living quarters. An artist and a ballet dancer set amidst the wilds, a somewhat anomalous image.

Water, then as now, became the first imperative. The digging began for the first borewell. During the interim, it was necessary to bicycle four miles each morning to Promesse to haul water by tin, in-sighting the importance of Promesse's early role. By the second month water was reached. In keeping with the experimental nature of Forecomers, it was decided to use plastic pipe exclusively as casing to line the borewell shaft. It cracked and the shaft collapsed. Four more sisyphian months.

With things sunken to a low point, they happened across some damp places in the canyons and uncovered a natural spring. With a hand-pump, they forced the water upward 30 feet and overland 300 feet to the first garden: cabbage and sesame. Three workers were hired, one, a young boy named Tandapani, who became Auroville's first "student" and the symbol of its meeting point and friendship with the Tamil world. Tandapani and Sellakanna, a second worker, lived together in a hut built near the storeroom.

In August of '68, a Canadian named Gary arrived and made arrangements for a second borewell. Three now shared the small storeroom quarters.

The drilling began in October and by January 1st of '69, a diesel pump was chugging up water at Forecomers. During this period, Bob was terracing and bunding 15 acres of fields for a first crop of green manure followed by a second of ragi and cambu, local millet-like grains. With the liberation of water, the garden expanded with corn and soya, and slowly Forecomers was growing much of its food needs.

The summer of '69 brought with it a devastating drought and insect plague. Of 4,000 casuarina and 100 flowering trees planted, half survived. The three forecomers, determined to maintain pure organic farming, spent days chopping garlic, chillies and tobacco leaves for a home-brewed pesticide. Throughout the region, even where strong chemicals were sprayed, only their gram crop (lentil-like beans) survived the caterpillars.

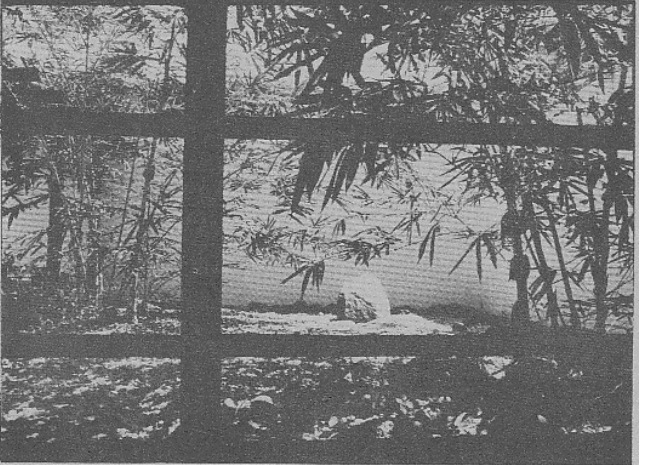
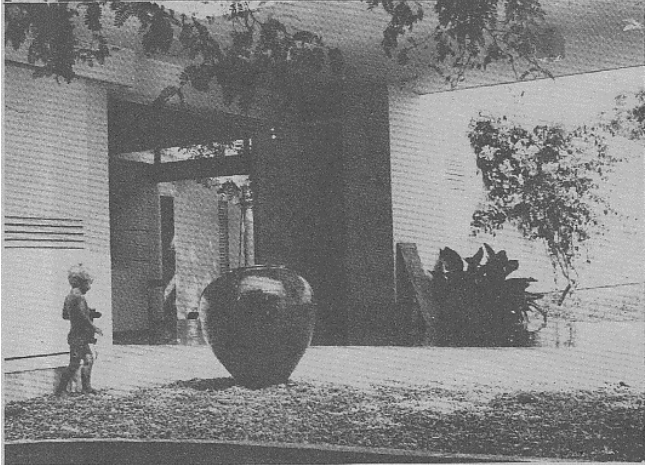
With the increased labour force and the supplement of a bullock team, Bob and Deborah built a kitchen and living area, leaving the stone-room to Gary. This began the phase of constructions during which some 14 assorted structures arose, experimenting in forms from various organic building materials. The roofings and frames were invariably keet, a combination of thatch, woven palm leaves and bamboo.

As the flurry of constructions eased, towards the end of '69, Bob began a period of painting while Deborah staged the first theatre piece, "Praise", in the canyons of Forecomers. This represented Auroville's first collective activity, bringing together its early populace from the few scattered settlements.

In early 1970, Bob began constructing a huge dam in the canyons. Deborah had returned to the States for a time and Gary had left. Francis, another American who had just completed his house at the Centre, opted for Forecomers to help supervise the project. Working on information provided by the Department of Agriculture, the triangular-shaped, earth, brick and plaster dam took seventy workers forty days to build and stood 60 feet wide at the base and 19 feet high.

With the dam's completion, attention turned more towards agriculture. A second borewell had been installed. Not long after Deborah's return in June, she painted a pair of large earthenware jars – commonly known as kujas and left them on the granite pillars beside the dam to dry. That evening the skies opened and a flash storm unleashed torrential rains throughout the night. In the morning, Deborah was concerned that her kujas might have broken. Bob went out to inspect and found the clay jars intact but the dam washed away.

The rubble from the dam was salvaged and recycled for the construction of the theatre and art studio, later to become the algae studio. The granite pillars were removed and a new 13-foot dam designed by Bob and Francis, was erected from hollow blocks made by themselves through various experiments of earth, earth and bitumen, and earth and cinders. The dam still stands.



1	2
	3
4	5

1. Deborah at Foucomers pouring water into a kujia, 2. inside the spherical sleeping chamber, Foucomers, 3. Francis' house, Foucomers, 4. Auroson at Auroson's Home, 5. Interior garden at Promesse

By the end of 1970, 13 people were living in Forecomers, an intense period. Bob produced 10 canvasses, and Deborah choreographed “The Artist Before the Dawn”, a dance-drama woven around a long narrative poem. Besieged by exhaustion, Bob and Deborah left for the States on March 6th, 1971, not to return until February 2nd of 1973.

The responsibility of Forecomers fell upon Francis. Construction had just begun at the Centre on the Matrimandir (vide the Centering of the City). Because of available space and housing at the time, Forecomers opened allowing people to stay who were engaged in the construction. It was a difficult and unsettling period. Those who came were mainly transients. Forecomers was in between.

On May 5th of ‘71, a huge dust storm levelled the theatre tower, Bob’s house and seven trees. Minou, an American girl who had just arrived in April, built her house on the site where the theatre had stood. Bob’s house was rebuilt by Joss, an Australian who later founded his own community. Slowly a new direction began to congeal. Trees. In an attempt to retard the enormous surface runoff from the monsoons, tests were made with trees. More than a few trees were needed. A nursery was required. Tim, Dr. Tim Rees, a British hydrogeologist from the Auroville Centre for Environmental Studies, did the geological survey (vide Ecology); and in October of ‘71, Success Tree Nursery began as the first reforestation unit in Auroville.

Since its inception, Success has provided, 4,000 flowering seedlings to other areas of Auroville. Early in ‘72, experiments were made as to which trees would survive with the least amount of water yet provide the proper root structure to hold the earth and check further erosion. In March, a windmill pump was installed supplying 2,500 gallons a day to irrigate the nursery and an adjacent fruit orchard of 150 trees. With the emphasis on trees established, the remainder of ‘72 was applied to field crops of ragi, peanut, gram and sesame.

In February of ‘73, Bob and Deborah returned from America, the same month that the tractor arrived. Through their research in the States, they intended to introduce certain ecological alternatives. A dominant theme of their research involved a new food form: algae. Corollary aims concerned energy alternatives: solar, wind and methane.

During this period, Chamanlal, Dr. Chamanlal Gupta of the Auroville Centre for Environmental Studies, had applied for a Government grant for a proposed Eco-house integrating various ecological principles organic housing designs and materials, alternative energy systems, waste recycling, food. alternatives in a living unit. In the meantime Bob and Deborah attempted to incorporate each of these processes in a preliminary form into their life style.

They chose a remote area of Forecomers beyond the windmill and across the canyons, working from a house left by a German named Stefan. With two palmyra trees as supports, they built a spherical sleeping chamber which rests suspended upon an axle joining the two trees. The sleeping platform itself remains stable, supported by the axle, while the outer globe-shaped frame, covered by a skin of solid cotton

duct interspersed with cotton mesh, can be revolved in accordance with the positions of sun, wind, rain, and view.

Simultaneously Bob began experiments with algae. What had once been the art studio now became the algae studio. Beside it stood the large circular tank containing the algae culture (vide Ecology, Algae). In early '74, subsisting solely on algae and indigenous grains, Bob with a solar-reflecting cooking device replaced most of the needs served by his clay, wood-burning stove. In process is a wind-driven electricity generator based on a design from an ancient Chinese horizontal windmill.

While the explorations with algae were proceeding, the work with trees was intensifying in other areas of Forecomers. In October of '73 a portion from a reforestation grant permitted the planting of four and a half acres of casuarina pine, 400 flowering trees and initial experiments in scrub Jungle to provide ground cover for the severely denuded land. By now the original 20 acres from which Forecomers arose had grown to 100: 30 acres of cashew groves, 20 of scrub jungle, 25 for crops, 5 for the building area including the garden, 4½ of casuarina, the remainder unusable canyon land.

In late '73 and early '74, a young American named Charlie began extensive studies and experiments with compost and mulching, essential for the transformation of a soil almost lifeless. The goats had come and a rope bridge traversing the canyon completed.

The present eight inhabitants are all Americans (vide appendices, Census Data). Through all of its progressions, Forecomers, as with the several other "on-the-land" communities, has maintained a certain simplicity of life style. It still has no electricity and light is provided by kerosene lantern. As the first of the communities to colonize the interior, relying solely upon the capacity of its inhabitants to build from within, Forecomers establishes a certain cyclic pattern which each of the successive self-generated communities traces in its own variations. What may be called the pre-water and post-water periods.

Auroson's Home.

On a Sunday morning of June 25th, 1967, the first child of Auroville was born, Auroson. The following year his parents, a German and Swedish couple, Frederick and Shyama, chose to build a house in Auroville. Spacious and proper, two-storied concrete, polished stone floors and smooth white walls, verandah and lawn. A departure from the rustic image of keet and bamboo.

Two possible sites: one, a wooded area of banyans on the northeast sector of the plateau where Fertile now lies, the other, a barren piece of land at the crossroads to the Centre. The open land at the crossroads was chosen. "Children and trees can grow together" they were told.

They began first a large storeroom which they expanded upstairs into temporary living quarters. Temporary became two years. In November of '69, the family moved in above the storeroom with Shyama's three children tagging along, curious blend of Swedish-Bengali parentage South African by birth, Aurovilian at heart. A small dwelling nearby housed a Tamil family working with them, while Maestri, Frederick's foreman, lived in a workshed adjoining the pump house.

The work on Auroson's Home had begun the end of June '69. Piero, an Italian architect living at the time at Promesse, had designed, engineered and supervised the construction, a preparation for his work at the Matrimandir. The building was slow and difficult for lack of water and machinery. A cement mixer had to be hauled from the Ashram in Pondicherry. It was not until two years later that the house was completed.

Overlapping this period, others were drawn by the new possibility of individual residences, and beginning in the spring of '72, several smaller versions – and William's tree house – had broken ground. Auroson's Home had become Auroson's community.

The 23 acres have slowly greened enclosing a small rose garden. Eucalyptus and casuarinas line the entry road. And the children have transformed the small reservoir tank under the windmill pump into a swimming pool.

Udavi.

In July of 1969, Udavi began as a fair price shop next to the village of Edayanchavadi (vide Appendices, map) to save the villagers the long trek to Pondicherry for goods. Udavi is the Tamil word for "help".

The following year, an Italian named Vijay came and built his house. Adjacent to the shop, he began a food and dry goods depot, from which items purchased in Pondicherry or produced in Auroville could be distributed to the different communities. This continued for quite some time until Vijay left for Fertile. The idea has since been refined and reincorporated into what is now referred to as the Central Food Distribution (vide Towards a Non-Economic Society).

In 1970 Udavi began providing milk and bread to the 200 village children five years and under. Later this was replaced by toasted gram, a highly nutritious local bean. During this period others came and went and two multi-storied keet and bamboo huts were built along with a vegetable garden and banana grove.

Through a grant from a German organisation in August of '72, Auroville was able to provide Edayanchavadi with a system for drinking water. Guy arrived from France about this time. His interest was to concentrate on working with the villagers. With the support of Nata, an Italian from the Ashram in Pondicherry, Guy initiated Auroshikha – Bengali for "inner fire" – the incense works in July of '73. Employing eight girls who roll the sticks and eight boys who package them, they produce as much as 20,000 incense sticks per day.



Producing the incense, Udavi

Only the finest natural oils and powders are used, with no synthetic ingredients. Guy himself constantly experiments in the laboratory with new compounds and resins. The most recent is an extract from lemon grass. Export orders have come from America and various European countries, as well as cities in India. The profits, along with sustaining the work, enable the continuance of the nutritional program for the village children and the establishment of a small dispensary affording medical treatment twice weekly to the villagers.

Hope.

Hope was established in 1969 within the acreage of Auro-Orchard, Auroville's first agricultural experiment (vide work: Industrial and Agricultural). Original plans envisioned a large residential village-complex, however this seemed out of place interfering with the Orchard's free growth, and so was abandoned. Only a first unit of four huts was completed, followed sometime thereafter by a compound of two family quarters a short distance to the east. These echoed the familiar architectural pattern of the triangular thatched huts in Aspiration.

Thus far, Hope seems to have served in most cases simply as a point of entry for those awaiting residence in other communities, a sort of Auroville "halfway house". As a result, it has had a somewhat transient personality. Being situated however in the Orchard, it has also been a natural learning environment for apprentice experience in organic agriculture. Over the years, a small stream of Aurovilians have passed through Hope to start their own farming and forestry unit in other areas of the Green Belt.

Aspiration.

Vincenzo, who had been living at Promesse, returned to Europe with plans to organise a caravan of workers who would be attracted by the possibility which Auroville represented and willing to participate in the building of an advance colony, Auromodèle. Through French radio and press interviews, a small group formed. At midnight of August 15th, 1969, the caravan of 15 left, all French except Steven, an Australian, and Krishna, a Moroccan. Even the few who had some insight into the spiritual-material tautology of Auroville, who had sensed its evolutionary implications, had no idea of the crucible that awaited them – in a more ancient tongue, the tapasya.

After six weeks of arduous journey, the assemblage arrived at what was to become Aspiration. It was October 2nd, 1969. Joined by some few others, they numbered 25. It was a mixed Aspiration.

Immediately after their arrival, the winter monsoons began. Living in the first available huts, the work progressed with extreme slowness. Constructing the initial stage of 36 huts which anticipated the aid of the residents, became protracted, bogged down in the mud outside and inside. Time frames had changed.

This was the first collective working – the first collective unit as opposed to the scattered individuals and families present in other areas of Auroville at the time. It was not only the primitive struggle with the terrain and the elements an opaque wasteland fired by an acid sun – but the deeper struggle within and with others. The exterior scene reflected the interior.

It was no longer a collection of fragments isolated individuals with isolated problems. The walls had broken down that protect and divide one from another. No matter how far one tried to retreat into his hut, there was no recess far enough. Turn around and there it was, perhaps the common error of this period was that one thought he was coming to a place where he could continue to trace his path reclusively as he had done before, close the door and leave the world outside. But the outside had broken in and refused to budge.

“What happened to all my progress [my precious progress]? What happened to the little person I used to know [my precious person]?” All had vanished, the past was levelled. “Perhaps this talk of human unity was more than I had bargained for? Perhaps it was more than talk? [Oh to run back inside the security of my small familiar self again.]” But that was not to be, no turning back in Auroville.

This was the surface rendering. But in fact, it was not as if all individual progress had been obliterated, but rather transposed abruptly into a new process which would begin a new progression. That had given the sense of levelling. An embryonic group consciousness was in birth, and it was as if all were starting again. A Larger being was in their midst – a collective being. His strides were much longer, lumbering, his infant rhythm slowed to imperceptibility; because when one changes the dimensions of space and size, one changes the dimensions of time proportionately. Yet this apparent slow motion concealed an intense acceleration.

Knowingly or not, with or without consent, the widening overtook them. For Auroville represented a transformation of society a transformation of a collective consciousness – not just an isolated change of individuals here or there oblivious to the world and its destiny. The implications were clear: No one could take a step forward without everyone taking that step.

Varaddharajan and Syamala, a Tamil couple, had come followed by a German group of six or seven in December of '69. The trickle grew, but the jarring descent prompted the same primeval questions. “Why am I here? What am I supposed to do?” There was no information counter to answer these.

The old trappings – the mechanical models and rigid moulds of organisation – were left behind. There was no one IN CHARGE. But an organisation was necessary. A true organisation, evolved from within, organic, corresponding to real needs, open. But how? The how was in the doing. In the process lies the discovery. In the question lies the answer. And so the various makeshifts began and were tolerated and the early chaos – which even in later periods revived as a reflex and reminder – was borne and justified in this light.

Two connecting huts were converted temporarily into a dining room and kitchen until the cafeteria was completed in February of 1970. Cooking duties were arranged in shifts, the responsibilities shared. An attempt was made as a first exercise in communal work to line the clay road slicing along the canyon to link the community with the main beach road. Aspiration lay upon a plateau overlooking the sea.

Some three months after arriving, Vincenzo began the workshop later to be known as *Toujours Mieux*, “always better”, – across the barrens from the cafeteria. Only a sole tamarind tree was visible above the squat huts huddled together against the vastness. A brown on brown tableau. With equipment brought in the caravan from Europe, the workshop began forging the coloured metal cappings for the thatched roofs. Skull caps to shade a blazing sun. Then the production turned to contoured metal chairs for the cafeteria and soon roof clamps for the Last School.

By December of 1970, the population had increased to 65 and the cultures diversified. Europeans, North Americans, Asians, Australians, and the village of *Kuilapalayam* next door. The polyester unit working from a temporary shed had already completed the first rows of moulded roofing elements for the experimental roof of the Last School. They lay stacked like monoliths from some alien culture in a field adjacent to what was to become a sports ground.

The second phase of sixteen family huts had commenced by the year’s end and entered its completion stage in March of ‘71. Whereas the first smaller huts formed square-shaped individual living area linked in twos by a galleyway, bath and toilet facilities, these were substantially larger enclosing three interior sections, a galley and private bath. The architecture remained consistent, however, the same bolted wood-frame construction set on low, sloping brick walls. The same pyramid shaped thatched roofs, draping in long, protective eaves over the window areas.

In mid-December of 1970, the workshop was usurped, moved farther along the canyon, and metamorphosed into another kind of workshop, “school”. From caterpillars to butterflies. Thirty-five children had gathered to explore Auroville’s first educational experiment. Some from Aspiration, some from the other Auroville communities, some from the villages, some from Pondicherry (vide Education).

Aspiration’s own cafeteria was not equipped to handle the increase. As a result, a new cone-shaped kitchen emerged from January of ’71 beyond *Kuilapalayam* and adjacent to the thatched dispensary, to serve the children’s needs. This began the variation of food styles, offering mainly Indian dishes in contrast to Aspiration’s European preference. The evolution of the kitchens, particularly in the larger communities, has proven to be one of the most difficult works in Auroville. In the present environment, persistent energy is required to maintain organisation, hygiene and sanitation. The proximity to the village weighs heavily and one cannot progress in isolation to the other.



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1. Mali at Utilité , 2. miscellaneous huts,
3. pass at Pitchandiculam , 4. view of Aspiration huts through a porthole,
5. general view of Aspiration , kindergarten in foreground

By February of '71, Toujours Mieux had taken up vehicle repairs, Jean-Claude had assumed responsibility for the electrical circuitings, a small woodwork unit had formed, and the printing press was operating. As the complexity grew, a Welsh American accepted the responsibility of coordination. The foliage also had begun to thicken, covering the bald spots. The first plantings of casuarina, eucalyptus and flowering trees had reached shade height. And the first earth diggings from the Matrimandir had been hauled by the Unimog and fashioned-into curved mounds intertwining the huts. Turf was cut during weekly expeditions to a nearby lake to carpet the earth forms. Contouring the monotone of the landscape enriched the aesthetic and left the topsoil less vulnerable to the plunder of the monsoons.

Flowers were beginning to break through the cracks of the carapace, and the huts which once stood out like sentinels against the gloom softened, absorbed in their environment, their shaggy heads camouflaged in creepers. The sole tamarind tree was no longer monarch of an empty countryside. On October 6th of 1971, down the sloping plateau where Aspiration meets the invisible worlds of Auromodèle, the Last School emerged. It was the first in a series of educational complexes – After Schools, Super Schools, No School – marking the slow materialisation of Auromodèle and the even slower dematerialisation of [school]. Auromodèle represents the formalisation of a process begun in Aspiration.

By November a young Englishman had begun the attempt to integrate the landscape and a small nursery broke ground. This period also noticed the growing frequency of electrical failures, either due to revision of underground circuitries on local power station incapacities, foreboding the Great Power Failures to come. One became accustomed to rationed water and dinners in darkness.

A sudden fire on the 7th of March, 1972, swept through the thatch-construction workshop destroying the structure and most of its contents, including two of the vans from the original caravan. Purged of the past, Toujours Mieux would lay the foundation stone for its new quarters the first of the following year.

In November of '72, spurred by a pump failure, the Aspiration cafeteria, and what was the school kitchen now became the community kitchen as well. The atmosphere of the old cafeteria had reached an impasse, and there were hopes that the disproportionate number of administrative workings still being performed several miles distant in Pondicherry could occupy it. But on December 5th a devastating cyclone tore through the community kitchen, flattening the nearby dispensary and a towering keet gymnasium on the sports ground. Back to the old cafeteria. It would be several months before the community kitchen could be resurrected.

For several days following the cyclone, there was no electricity no water, and bread and bananas became the staple. The wind-driven rain had, found its way into the tiniest crevice, but with the exception of some hair-raised huts and a deflowered landscape, Aspiration weathered the siege. Auropolyester had a wet entry into its new building.

The industries and services had slowly gained momentum. By 1973 a maintenance workshop was functioning later annexed by a hand laundry. A crèche had organised and the bakery had begun to evolve the first of its multi-grained biscuits and sour-dough loaves. Across the small bridge spanning the ravine, the handmade paper unit entered production on the 24th of April. But through the spring and into the summer, the industries and inhabitants learned to weave a path through a power shortage that reduced supply to 40% and less.

At the beginning of the summer, Aurofuture – a group of architects and draftsmen involved with the planning and design of certain formal structures, particularly Auromodèle filled the vacuum of the cafeteria. They had left their drawing rooms in Pondicherry to come one step closer to the reality. In the heat of August the Health Centre, long a mirage, opened.

By 1974 the caravan of 15 had grown to 125. Five continents compressed in an acre. The opposites and contradictories of the earth juxtaposed, wrestling fiercely towards some global resolve. Among the tumult, awaiting the moment when opposites exhausted embrace as complements, the Tamarind Tree had found a kingdom.

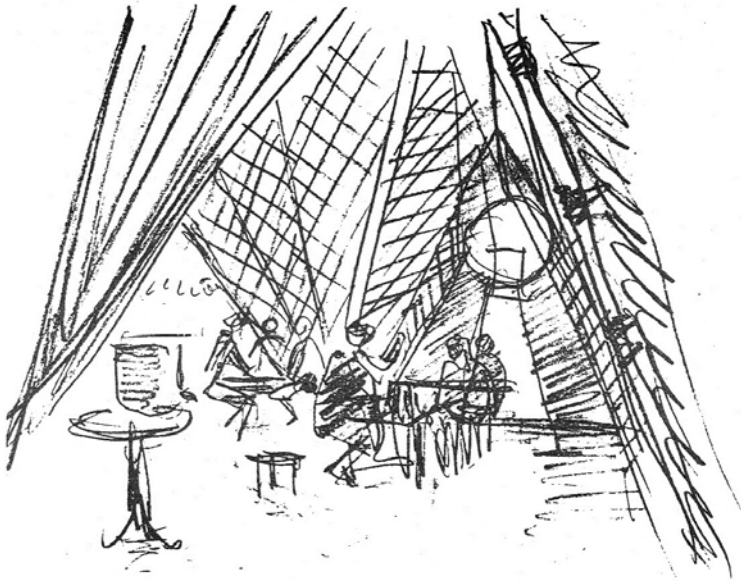
Peace (Centre).

Through late 1968 and early '69, a young Canadian girl and several Americans settled at various places surrounding the Centre. They remained for longer on shorter periods, during which some trees were planted, but the Centre's focus had not yet arrived. Most of their simple housings still stand, occupied by new residents. The area came to be known as Peace, and this was its prologue.

It was here that the land had made its offering to Auroville in the presence of a wide and ancient Banyan Tree; the world, in the earthen hopes its children sealed within the lotus urn; but now the Aurovilians themselves would come forth to make their offering, and that labour came to be known as the Matrimandir. The Centering of the City.

In the autumn of 1970, the skeleton of a worker's camp emerged in segments: bathroom facilities, a kitchen, and a small hut serving as temporary dining quarters. On the 21st of February 1971, the foundation stone of the Matrimandir was laid, and by the following month construction had begun on the camp. By June the dining room was completed, and in August, the residences as well.

The camp itself, in contrast to the separate clusters of huts in Aspiration, was a single, concentrated unit – the dining area, living quarters, and meditation room being a continuum joined by walkways enclosing gardened courtyards. The walls are of brick construction, and the roof, a series of keet and bamboo waves with low sloping eaves.



By May of '72 the camp and its scattered satellites had grown to 20, and the kitchen departed from its free-style organisation to the more clearly defined system under which it presently operates. But the growing nucleus was drawn not by social affinities, but by the work. They had come to build the Matrimandir (vide *The Centering of the City*).

Aspiration's play of diversity, its exploration of the many, was here counterpoised by a concentration upon a single point an ingathering

of energy toward a sole realisation. The stony of Peace and its personality is absorbed and effaced in that structure which it labours to express and which is its reason for being. The rhythms of the communal person are subtly and inseparably bound to the workings of the Matrimandir, reflecting its progressions and intensities, the periods of concretings, periods of cohesion, of coming together.

Kottakarai.

In May of 1970 a group of 12, largely Dutch and Americans, had collected near the Centre in an area called Silence. A communal coherence had just begun to evolve and a field of cambu planted, when in June of '71, they were informed that Bharat Nivas was to be erected precisely where Silence stood. Bharat Nivas, the house of India, represented the first of the international cultural pavilions (vide *Cultural and artistic expressions*). It was apparent that the construction would put an end to Silence.

The group met to determine a positive solution. They researched a new land site and agreed upon an area in the northwest section of the Green Belt, bordering the "city limits", adjacent to the Tamil village of Kottakarai. They adopted the extended name of Kottakarai, presaging their future role. In the interim period several moved to the Camp at Centre to work on the Matrimandir.

The letter which they drew up in July of '71, defining their objectives, included twelve possibilities: among them, the cultivation of trees to provide for the landscaping of Bharat Nivas, and the development of a number of work projects that could simultaneously involve the villagers – handicraft and industries, agriculture and arboriculture. Of these the first was chosen as the most likely starting point, for the workings involving the villagers would take time to grow organically. It was not to be a social work approach. Ironically, Bharat Nivas, which was the cause of their

uprooting, would provide the initial impetus and focus to begin again. But it was the second reason which would prove to be the underlying significance of Kottakarai.

With financial assistance from Auroville's Central Fund (vide Towards a Non-Economic Society), an American named Daniel began the open well and fencing in December of '71. The water table in this part of Auroville was only several metres deep and the soil much richer. He returned briefly to the States, and in his absence, Constance oversaw the well's completion the following month. The open well has remained the community's sole water source. Large granite pillars were later set in the ground as the posts for a nursery and transplanting shed. The irony was complete when Bharat Nivas informed the old Silencers that it had no need for plants.

A first keet house with raised bamboo floor – later to become the kitchen – had been built by an American woman and marked the onset of a period of construction. She never occupied it and Daniel and his family moved into it in March of '72. The preceding month a Dutch couple named Jaap and Lisbeth began their house, a pressed-earth construction with thatched roof. By May they had completed it when Larry began his dwelling. Constance moved into the village itself in a two-story house which he built. There were no communal dining arrangements as yet.

The afforestation work began slowly with the planting of a number of flowering trees around the "nursery" pillars. It gathered momentum and by the August-September monsoon, three to four acres of pits were dug for the seedlings. By November Jaap had introduced the vegetable garden.

In the fall of '72, Daniel started his new house, but did not shift until the following March. An idea for pottery had arisen because of the need for earthenware, and so a village potter was hired. A house was built for him, but the potter failed and the scheme was temporarily abandoned. After the cyclone, an English girl took up residence in the "potter's house." About this same time, the bullock transport was acquired.

By the year's end, a young Tamil couple, Rajalu and Bhoomadevi had joined Auroville. After an initial contact with the Matrimandir work, they met Daniel and came to Kottakarai where they built a house in early '73. After a transitional period and some early shiftings, Rajalu and Bhooma settled fully into the life of Kottakarai. A borderline which never existed had been crossed.

Radhakrishnan's contact with Auroville traced back to Silence. In February he established a small library of Tamil-English books, and a place for games and meetings as well. In the evening between six and seven he would teach a Tamil and English class to 20 village children; and earlier, between four and five, he would take them for sports in the grove beyond what has now become the kitchen (vide Auroville and the Indigenous Population, the Tamils).

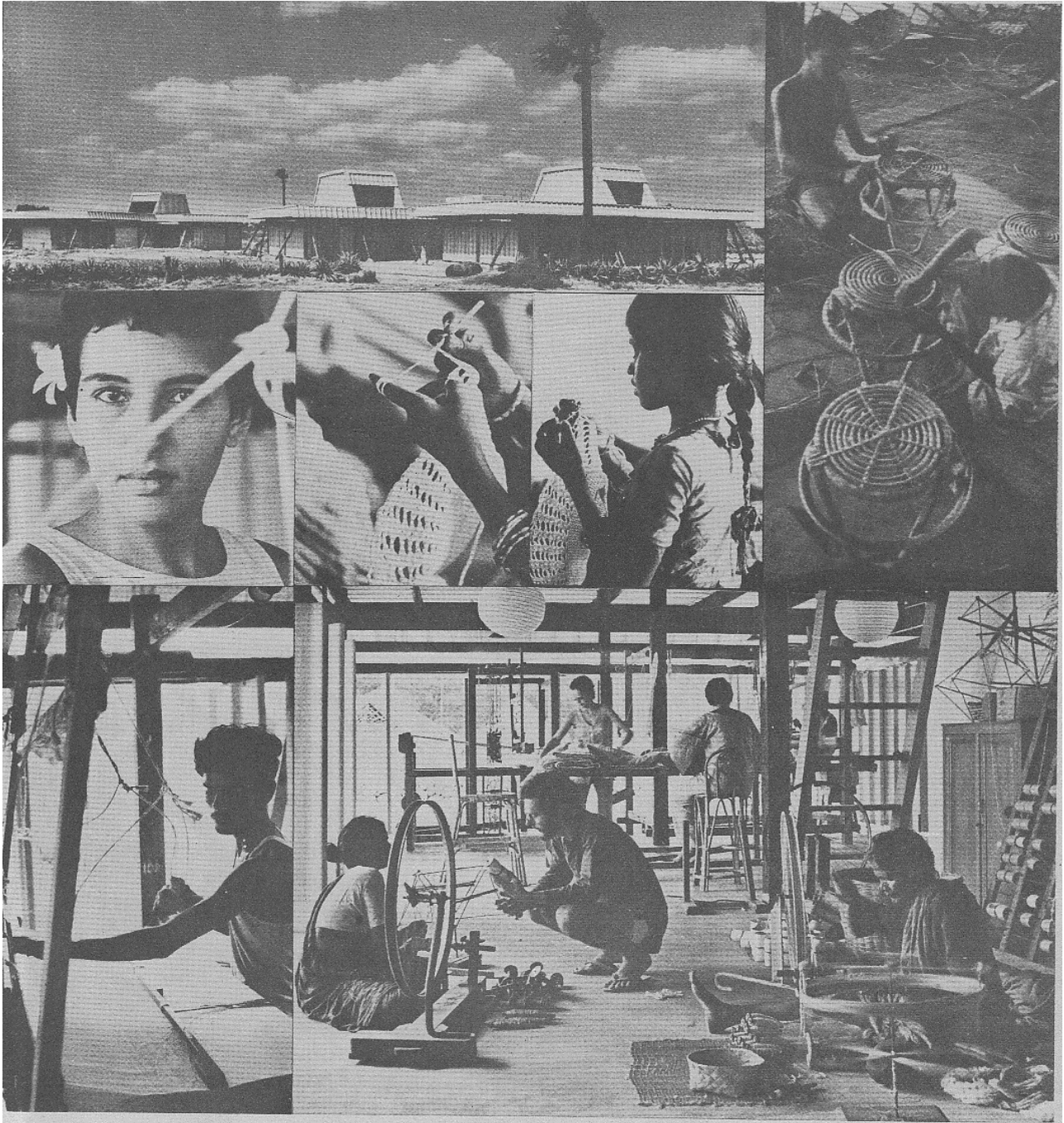
Shortly before the library was started in January of '73, a Harijan villager named Natarajan joined Daniel in his leather craft, apprenticing as a shoemaker. They worked together in the "kitchen" house until the leather workshop was roofed. By the spring, Constance had built a pottery shed before leaving for the Matrimandir Nursery, when Angela came. The shed became her temporary living quarters. Eric, an intermittent resident, had erected a dome near the forest plantings, and together with Larry, they spent the summer watering the acreage of trees.

With the support of Aurocreation (vide Auroville and the Indigenous Population, the Tamils), the work to transform the "nursery" pillars into a leather shop and storeroom became possible. The walls and floors were the traditional village formula of earth and dung, but an error in the roof-slope delayed completion until January of '74. Through late summer and fall others continued to come. Old quarters continued to be converted, modified and re-occupied, new ones built. It was a settling-in period when persons and things were seeking to find their place.

For some time the villagers had more or less spontaneously begun appearing at the "kitchen" house for treatment of various injuries and common infections. An American visitor, observing this, returned the following days with an assortment of medical supplies. With this and some surplus clinical equipment a table and trays – given by Dr. Kamal from Aspiration, Angela followed the movement into the village and in September of '73 established with Radhakrishnan, a small health service in Constance's old house. A short time after, she ceased using conventional allopathic remedies and introduced a natural system of ayurvedic medicines. A small grant from a Canadian organisation has permitted the clinic, the library, the sports, the improvement of a water tank, and the provision of a lunch for village children under six to operate for a year. By October a portion of a reforestation grant from an American foundation enabled the planting of two acres of casuarina across from the flowering forest. Klaus and his family had moved from their residence by the Alankuppam village tank in December to an open field to the north. In the familiar pattern of beginning from nothing, they dug an open pit for water, set up a simple bamboo structure under a neem tree, and with a score of chickens, began the earth-transforming task of treeing barren land. An Italian named Tony inherited their previous situation. By January of '74 two milk cows had arrived and the "kitchen" house which had served as leather workshop had become a kitchen. The community of Kottakarai ate its first meal together unadorned by leather cuttings.

Utilité.

On August 12th of 1971, a Mexican of Aztec lineage; came to settle by the edge of a canyon across the north slope from Auromodèle. His name was Mali and the area of ravaged earth he came to revive was called Utilité.



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1. General view, Fraternity craft-units, 2. Mission,
 3. Crocheting, 4. Crocheting, 5. Cane work,
 6. Worker at the loom, 7. Interior view, Spinning
 and loomwork

Taking up residence in a temporary dwelling under a tree until his hut was completed the following month, Mali traced a familiar journey of long bicycle rides for water in this case, across the canyon to Aspiration. For the most part alone and with no water on the land, the struggle to sustain the first trees and himself was immense. After three months of his largely solitary ordeal, Mali was joined by others. During this period thirty papayas had been planted and the initial acre-and-a-half of land secured. A regular series of common meetings began in the evening to develop a community presence.

The construction of other huts began, varying the theme of Mali's round, pressed earth and thatch housing. By November a well was bored but was not fitted with a pump until June of '72. In December a bridge was erected across the ravine, but in September of the following year, it collapsed. A new steel bridge was forged in the Aspiration workshop and installed on Christmas day of 1972.

The work on reforestation progressed slowly. Twenty-four flowering trees planted over the interior acreage and 20 along the canyon to prevent further erosion. A small fruit orchard of 75 trees and a vegetable garden were established along with seasonal dry crops encircled by 800 casuarinas set as wind-breaks. A bullock team was acquired to serve the hauling and transport needs. Half a dozen chickens share quarters in the bullock shed.

The core of the community has remained small, supplemented by a fluctuating number of visitors and temporary residents, and a work force of from four to twelve villagers. The regeneration of the land has concentrated upon a small acreage proportionate to the means to care for it, consciously intensively – a slow and deliberate progression. Utilité has expressed a special concern for details, for an ordered environment, each thing in its place. The flowering of a point.

Fraternity.

For a period beginning in the fall of '71, a series of cultural events were held opposite the Aspiration community kitchen and the neighbouring village. Their purpose was to permit a freer dialogue and interchange between Kuilapalayam and Auroville through the medium of cultural expression (vide Auroville and the Indigenous Population, the Tamils). As an outgrowth of this movement, a group of Aurovilians met at the outdoor site and evolved a proposal to establish a handicraft centre producing local products and employing local labour. It was on this basis that Fraternity was founded February 2, 1972, across the tamarind grove from Kuilapalayam.

By April a rambling keet and bamboo workshop had been thrown together. The work began with Brian and Sally, an American couple who had come from Pondicherry; Miriam, Swapna, and Palit from Aspiration; Yakim and Helma, a French-German couple who had just arrived; and some few others who left after varying stages. The first handicrafts included embroidery, crochet, and round table mats, involving an initial ten villagers from Kuilapalayam which soon grew to 30.

With a loom present and a weaving master from a nearby village, Yakim instituted the weaving section. Its first product was towels for Auroville Prosperity (vide Towards a Non-Economic Society).

In mid-March, Brian had begun his boat-shaped hut and moved in the end of the month before the roof was on. Miriam had completed her oversized keel structure when Yakim started his capsule dwelling. With no water and electricity to come until later, meals were taken in the community kitchen at Aspiration.

Initially there was a certain element pressing for production, for quantity clouding the original vision of Fraternity. But in July this emphasis passed, and the work recovered its qualitative motive. The handicrafts themselves were only a medium through which a deepening contact and involvement with the Tamil culture could be experienced and shared. And it was in this perspective that the work was to proceed. The early confrontation had become an opportunity for Fraternity to re-evaluate its directions.

At this juncture Yakim's interest in weaving intensified and Brian began his work with the floor mats. By the end of September Jocelyn had come from Aspiration. She and later Miriam entered a weaving apprenticeship under Yakim. A pattern of sections had begun to form, naturally and organically, a weaving section with two looms which later became four, a floor mat section, an embroidery section organised by Helma, and a crochet section under Krishnaveni. Another, section provided the workers with bananas, biscuits and tea, and cloth at festival-times, representing the first of a number of approaches in which material profits would go back either directly or indirectly to the villagers.

In March of '73 a large order for cloth as covering for an Auroville photo diary supplemented the existent market of Aurocreation, Prosperity and a small boutique in Pondicherry. At this same time a grant was received from a German FAO organisation enabling the construction of a kindergarten for the village children, a water system to service Kuilapalayam and Fraternity, and four new work units to alleviate the congestion of activities crowded into the original workshop. Poppo, a German architect living in Promesse, oversaw the design.

The structures were begun in April, the walls a series of movable asbestos panels permitting access and ventilation. Living quarters were above the work units. During the late summer while the construction was continuing, Fraternity integrated the making of Japanese lampshades, and in October, provided a large order of bedspreads for Prosperity. At the end of the same month, the buildings were completed.

By mid-November the work areas entered their new housings, and the temporary kitchen was set up in the kindergarten until the "boat-house" was ready. A recent cane furniture section remained in the old workshop along with the mat work, and were joined by a carpentry unit from Aspiration. Walter, a Belgian overseeing the woodwork, introduced the creation of soma puzzles, stackable boxes, educational toys from matched-wood pieces, in addition to the more utilitarian productions of

furniture, doors and louvers. With the acquisition of a lathe, bowls and chess pieces and other possibilities could be pursued. At the end of the month Andre had also come from Aspiration to begin an electronics workshop (vide Work: Industrial and Agricultural).

In December Rod instituted a small, non-academic school to provide the village children involved in Fraternity with an educational link and another dimension for expression. When Coco and Igor, a German couple, arrived, they followed this further, engaging the children in short trips and explorations as well as art work and language interaction.

In addition to their handicraft and educational work, Fraternity has managed to plant out some 300 flowering trees and 15 acres of casuarina.

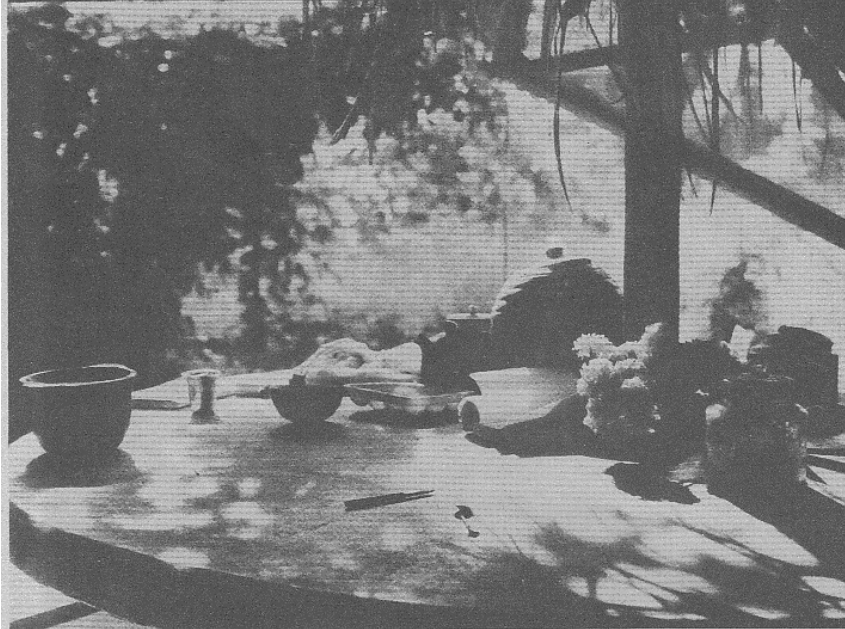
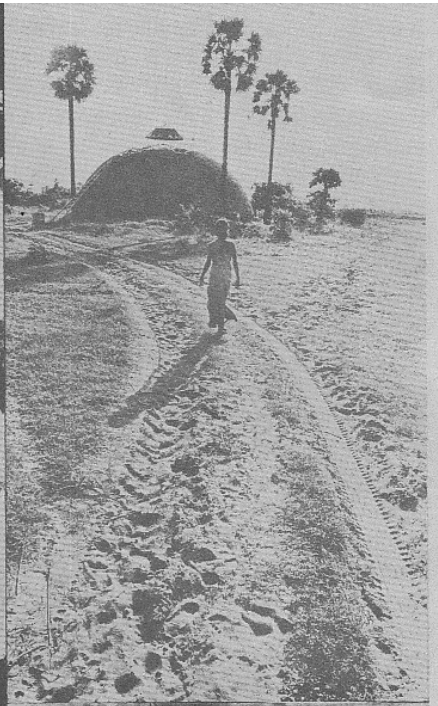
Fertile and Two Banyans.

In July of 1972, an American named Dennis left the Matrimandir Nursery to establish the first of the “forest Communities”, in the northeast quadrant of the Green Belt. It came to be called Fertile, a nucleus for the rebirth of a new woodland. The site, an island of seven ancient banyan trees, is linked to the Centre by a road of sorts, passable in dry weather by bullock cart and bicycle, almost totally impassable in the rains.

He moved into what has now become the chicken house and was joined the following week by Christiane, a French girl from Aspiration. The borewell had been begun and in August, Boris arrived, bringing with him three years experience at Auro-Orchard. By September Boris’ split-level keet house had been finished along with the well, but there was still no pump.

The period between July and October was spent digging and composting 1,200 holes, fencing them from the plague of cattle and goats, and establishing the settlement. On the 15th of October the first tree was planted. With no water on the land, Fertile had to rely upon its bullock cart, to haul water from Kuilapalayam for the first six months. As a result many of the early trees could not survive.

In December Johnny came, an Australian who built and designed all of the keet-formula housings in Fertile and several in other parts of Auroville, more or less initiating with Joss the indigenous architecture of capsules, small, raised bamboo and keet structures resembling tripods. By the beginning of ‘73, Dennis’ house had been completed in the shade of a banyan that had wrapped itself about a palmyra. Later the kitchen was constructed on the opposite side of the tree, and creepers run along the overhang creating a natural canopy.



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1. Children on the roof at Fertile,
2. approaching a dome, Fertile,
3. dining and work table, Fertile,
4. Furojina and friend

On February 21st a milk cow was purchased from the dairy, later traded for a brown Swiss. Rose came but did not settle until May. A half-acre vegetable garden had become the centrepiece of the living area, interspersed with 60 mixed fruit trees and a number of flowering trees. The first year was a struggle to protect and sustain what had begun

By March of '73 a high-pressure pump had been installed on the bore-well, but its intake was too powerful, sucking up sand. It was dismantled and replaced by a smaller and more adequate diesel. Johnny's family came with the coming of the water, and a dome was built but remained unused. In May Dennis began the construction of a new house by an area of plantings several acres to the south. He moved in July, a year after his arrival, and Johnny, Jan and the children re-occupied the house by the banyan. A month earlier Vijay had come from Udavi and settled in a field to the north at one of the three original borewell sites. With no pump, he erected one of the four windmills functioning in Auroville. Irrigation was by bucket.

Fertile had burgeoned rapidly into three areas. By the year's end Rose, with the help of Boris, was prepared to undertake a fifteen acre tract of mango and cashew. A power tiller had been acquired but a water source on-site would be needed. A borewell had been drilled and cased, no pump however would mean hand-watering all day if the trees were to survive. The remains from a grant which enabled a three-acre planting of casuarina provided the impetus, and the pump was installed in March of '74.

From a two-and-a-half acre nucleus, Fertile had expanded to 55:35 acres in fruit and flowering trees, including 3 of casuarina, and 20 in preparation, including seasonal field crops. With a garden, 14 chickens, a cow, and two Himalayan Swiss Alpine goats, the community largely sustains its own food needs.

A short distance from Fertile, progressing upon the same theme, the community of Two Banyans began on the 1st of 1973. George had come from Germany the previous month but the land was not secured until January. With a borewell yielding water by April, four acres of forest and fruit trees were planted and a small vegetable garden underway in addition to some fields of ragi and gram. Jean began his house in November and moved in with his family in January of '74. They were soon joined by Michel from Auro-Orchard, and gradually more acres of fruit and flowering trees were under cultivation.

On a strip of 15 acres between Two Banyans and Fertile, Patrick and Heidi, a French-German couple, have drilled a borewell, established a storeroom and irrigation system and plan to inhabit the area by the coming summer monsoon. This will perhaps serve as the link unifying the land segments into a cohesive unit. For the past several months, Heidi and Patrick have been staying at Fertile as a means of gaining preparatory experience.

Pitchandiculam.

A young Australian named Joss who had reconstructed the community kitchen left for Bombay to meet with a research architect who had developed an organic earth stabiliser of tree resins to replace cement. After returning he surveyed the land to establish a community and chose a site by a “tank” (small lake) between Fraternity and Auroson’s Home. In May of 1973 Joss came with Verakanna, a friend from Edayanchavadi, and three boys from Kuilapalayam who had all worked with him on a previous construction, to settle at Pitchandiculam. The Tamil name, Pitchandiculam, meaning “sage of the lake” derives from a local legend of an old ascetic who lived beside the tank.

For Joss the first work was “greening Auroville”. He built his house of scrap recovered after the cyclone of ‘72 from Aspiration. The walls were made of recycled broken blocks and the kitchen formed round an old stove discarded from the Aspiration community kitchen.

The bullocks came and the cart was put together. A small bullock shed extended from the house, later to become a carpentry workshed and shelter for the village workers who frequently stayed the night. Anticipating the problem of the rains, rubble was hauled to line the entry road and the wadia (riverbed) bisecting the road was cemented.

Almost immediately after arriving Joss began trucking bullock loads of compost from a pit which he had started in Kuilapalayam the previous year. Twenty-five hundred holes were dug and various acreages of peanut, gram and sesame revolved. Eight interior acres were reforested in addition to the existing three of cashew, including more than 50 varieties of fruit and flowering trees, 5,000 casuarinas, and 1,000 eucalyptus. “The best way to work with the villagers is through the land... even more than through constructions ... they are natural complements, the villagers and the land.”

Wells had been drilled by hand in mid-October of ‘73 after a power drill never materialised, but pumps did not appear until March of the following year. Water for plants, constructions and drinking had to be hauled either from the tank or Kuilapalayam. A well-worn survival pattern.

After the first three months, the boys who had come with Joss from Kuilapalayam, left. Gradually friends of Veerakanna began coming from the village of Edayanchavadi. In October of ‘73, Poonaswami, the Assari (carpenter) arrived, and about the same time, Lakshmi, a young village girl. Maikanna, the village drama master, descended bringing with him his music and magic and his epic songs recounting the deeds of this region and the coming of Auroville. The number of villagers, mostly youths, working with Joss grew to seven, often three or four spending the night. After assuming the responsibility for the food distribution and serving as a bullock depot for other projects, a new shed was built in February of ‘74, the vendi (bullock cart) drivers increasing to four.

Joss has sought to create a context encouraging the villager to generate his own ideas, to initiate – to think and feel the freedom to actualise his thoughts. To have that glimpse beyond the formulated existence to build the same hut in the same fashion for a thousand years, to see the same world from within that hut for a thousand years, – and know that there is something more, another possibility, to enter Joss’ epithetical “free space”. The fluid environment of Pitchandiculam with its profusion of changing forms – a small dome here, the next day there, a sheet of yellow glass suspended from a tree transforming its background into various angles of yellow as the wind plays upon it – counters the atavism, arouses the question, provokes the response where none may have been. “Establishing lines of communication through the environment.”

Poonaswami, the carpenter, had begun the foundations of his house at Pitchandiculam. His own design. Malkanna, the explosive music maker, has broken open to one of his own design as well. “Spaces for certain things” are slowly emerging. A common room and kitchen are under construction and a silence house and bicycle repair shop are planned.

By late January of ‘74, the solar steam cooker arrived, following the first of the “Saturday morning ecology meetings” which had begun at Pitchandiculam. In March instruments for recording soil temperature and humidity were implanted with the aid of the French Institute and the Auroville Centre for Environmental Studies to begin charting the agricultural climate (vide Ecology, Alternative Environments). A plan to implement a methane-system, supplied, by the abundance of bullocks, awaits funding assistance.

Pitchandiculam became an exploration of the environment. “To understand what is here ... and use what we’ve got”. The experiments with what is here had begun. Various organic construction materials – keet, bamboo – have already integrated in Auroville’s early theme, but other possibilities remain, the earth, the resins of trees... A deeper look, a biological knowledge, is needed. The engineer must become alchemist.

The Beach Communities.

Over the years along the palm-studded beaches shoring Auroville, three encampments have emerged, interspersed between the fishing villages. The first, Repos, established as a retreat, houses a French-American couple. To the south where the canyon which weaves behind Aspiration opens to the sea lies Near Beach – originally alias as Austin’s Beach after its progenitor. The third, Far Beach, is situated well to the north.

Austin Delaney, an eccentric Canadian and one of the few from Auroville, whose last name is known, began Austin’s Beach sometime in 1970. It is a larger split-level keet and bamboo compound imaging some Polynesian outpost, complete with fence and flags. Though Austin left the following year, his legacy an adventure playground and the “world game” – has been cherished by the children (vide Education). Heidi, a German girl, presently inhabits what is now called Near Beach.

Far Beach, the most distant from Auroville's matrix, is the only settlement of the three resembling a community. Formed in May of '71, it began as a crafts colony to work with the villagers. Janet, a young Malaysian, started with one girl teaching her to crochet.

Another came and gradually the movement grew into a coordinated working of 60 girls from the neighbouring villages – Kalapet, Chinna-kalapet, Pillaychavadi – capable of carrying on by themselves. This is perhaps one of its themes, to help the villagers help themselves, discover their own creative potential, begin their own units.

In a quick collage of Far Beach's past and present: Gerhardt (now in Kottakarai), woodwork... sculptures, musical instruments, furniture. Dieter and Elvira, dance and movements... candles and bamboo cups. Judith (now in Hope), puppets and jute sandals. Thoptan, (pronounced Top Ten), painting and carved flutes. Aurocreation has provided an outlet for all of these expressions, including the hand-crocheted articles by the villagers (vide Auroville and the Indigenous Population, the Tamils).

Emergent Communities.

To the north of Kottakarai, in the Green Belt, a new community is in process of unfolding. Discipline is its name. A group of seven coalesced and after some months of preparatory research, clarifying purposes, approaches and locations, they selected an area of roughly ten acres merging with Klaus' field. Preliminary constructions began in late March of '74 including the digging of an open well which will serve for irrigation and a cistern for drinking water.

As in the case of Kottakarai, the earth is exceptionally fertile by Auroville standards and the water table easily accessible. For the moment it is only possible to say that the members will enter the process as slowly and consciously as possible and that trees will play a part in that process.

Two movements may be observed demographically at this point: one, an increasing concentration of population and complexity at the Aspiration-Auromodèle pole; the other, a continued emergence and diffusion of small, land-oriented communities progressing in patchwork rhythm. The two movements counterbalance.



EDUCATION

The first principle of true education is that nothing can be taught.

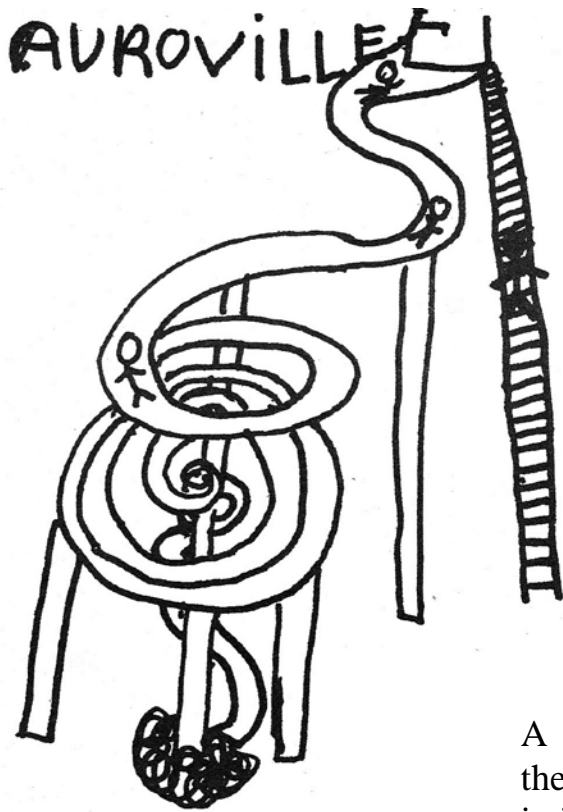
Sri Aurobindo

Education. Where does it begin? In words, one can describe only from a point, sequentially. But what of something that begins from all points – all planes – simultaneously? Two questions arise necessary to establish a context, a perspective, a beginning: what is school and who is the child in Auroville?

The child. Is the term a chronological convenience, a fixed numerical distinction? Or is the child one who aspires to know, to progress always beyond, irrespective of time-sets? And is not the old man one who leaves the stream, who succumbs to gravity, who excuses himself from the quest with his credentials certifying that he has learned enough, that he has arrived? The child is an eternal discoverer. The child is the future seeking to know and unveil itself. The child is a flame. The child is Yes.

And school. Is it a place or is it everywhere? Is it housed in a fragment of time or in every moment? In Auroville both of these processes exist, one embraced in the other: School and its derivative [school]. For Auroville itself is the school, the city itself a boundless educational process; yet within it, there is a point, a finite, a part, a [school]. And how that finite translates, defines the whole, how that part struggles to exceed its parentheses, to widen towards identity, part becoming whole – that is the context, the perspective, the reference in which the thread of events, the sequential description from a point, [school], proceeds. Else the thread is lost and the tapestry undone. For one cannot speak of a new system of education without a new society.

The beginnings of the pre-history of education in Auroville were as raw and stark and incongruous as the beginnings of the city itself. In November of 1968 the ingredients converged among the wilds of the Centre. An American, and a Tamil youth from the village of Edayanchavadi. A room with some ant materials set in a dusty void. Rod and Tandapani. Tandapani which in the Hindi means “cold water” – precisely what Auroville needed at the time. Wide bright eyes, smile, notebook under arm, the child had come. But the movement was not to be sustained, fading with the early prologue of the Centre. It was more a promise, a gesture and a symbol.



In April of 1970 Rod moved to Aspiration and along with Ursula, a young German, sought to recapture the thread. A small nucleus had gathered in a round hut. Tandapani, Ravi and Ramakrishna, two brothers from Kuilapalayam, Hero, Taddy, and Renu, from Auroson's Home, and Michael from Promesse. A progression of paintings, collages and stories, a growing exchange in broken phrases of Tamil and English,

But the consequences did not fully descend until December. Word had spread that Aspiration was to have a school by mid-month, two weeks. Amidst the centrifuge of Aspiration, a school. In two weeks.

A meeting of community members intrigued in the venture and perhaps interested to participate in it, met in a small hut to discuss its implications.

Jobst raised the question which has since echoed the doubts and hesitations of many minds in Auroville: Are we ready? In this case, was Aspiration prepared to integrate a school, prepared to provide an atmosphere and environment for children in its present melange? The reply, itself a question, released the action from the paralysis of thought. If we wait until we are ready, until all is harmonised, perhaps we shall never begin? Perhaps the very reason for the school's sudden entry was to catalyse, to precipitate a change in the community? ... for the two were inseparable. While the talk continued in the little hut, a short distance away the work had begun to convert the old workshop into a temporary schoolhouse.

On the 15th of December, 1970, 35 children had gathered – some from the villages, some from the several Auroville communities, some from Pondicherry – new clothes, flowers in their hair, a sea of question marks. Behind brooded the ten initiates, the [teachers], most never having worked in this relationship with children before. In the late afternoon, they entered the L-shaped thatch arena, sizing one another up. The cement floors were still wet, barely completed the same morning. In some curious and elemental way something remotely resembling a school had begun.

In those first hours Jobst's question hung heavily in the air. The school structure itself was a vast hollow – no books, no pencils, no paper, no spatial dividers. Nothing. Everything had to be improvised, innovated from within as Auroville itself. In the small courtyard between the L, some stray bricks from construction sites had been stacked into three precariously-poised horses. But soon the three unmountable horses were dismantled by the children and transformed into boats. The first activity: brick boats of children crossing to another shore.

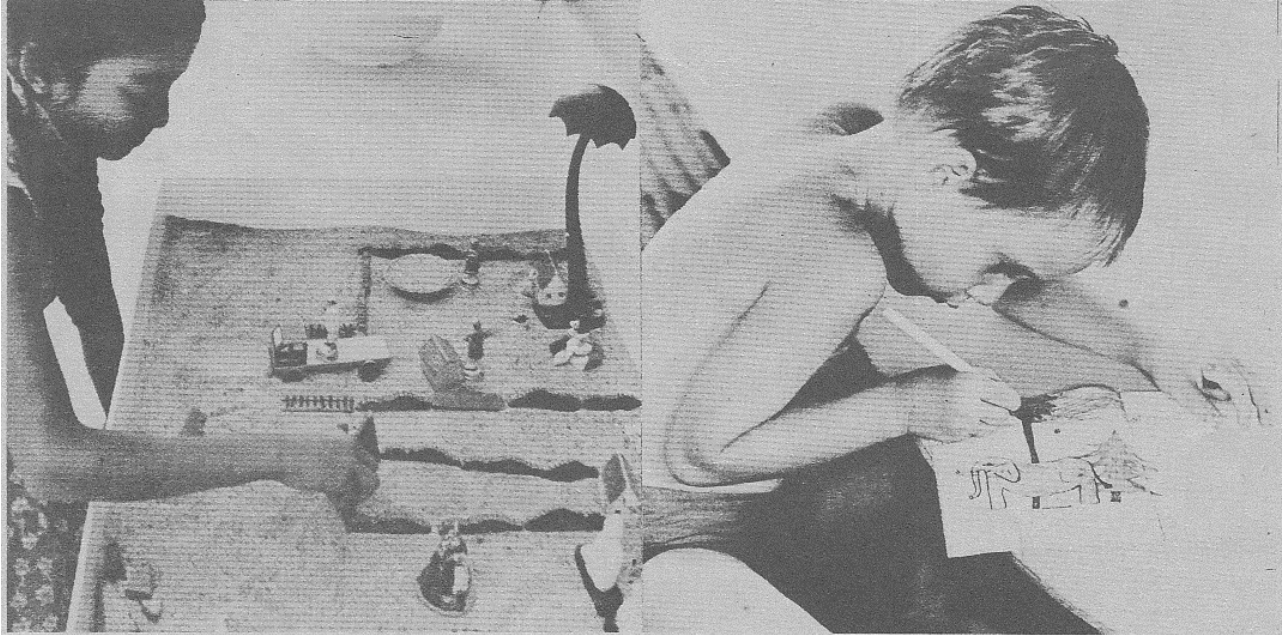
Transport was awkward. The children from Pondicherry, more than half the students at that time, would come via Land rover along the Beach Road, while a VW van would collect the children living in the different Auroville communities, synchronising their arrival in Aspiration at 8:00 A.M. This arrangement continued for some months until a bus was acquired (vide Transportation and Roads). This constituted, one of the first limitations: in the parenthesis of [school]. With most of the children not living in Auroville, an integral and total educational experience could not be established. The fragmentation of space and time still persisted, children being extracted from one environment where new sets of attitudes and ways of being were emerging and returned to another where the past prevailed, the world of adults – a conditional setting where the illusion of school as a place and a time refused to vanish despite the early protests of the teachers (the title is obsolete in Auroville used simply as a common reference). But as the years passed, this condition gradually receded, and with the youth camp presently under construction, the remaining stragglers in Pondicherry will be free to live in Auroville. A society of children.

The first days were explosive. With no organisation as yet evolved – and none imposed – and a vacuous space condensed with a global amalgam children in the same room but in different worlds, French-speaking, English-speaking, German-, Italian-, Hindi-, and Tamil-speaking – what could one say? In what language?

The common language, the simple beginning, was art. All the first mornings, paintings and drawings. But how long could one paint flowers or houses, or trees and suns and fishes? Alain and Gérard, both French, were offering modern math and logic, but it was necessary simultaneously to find a common tongue in which to convey symbolic concepts.

Four languages had been recognised as basic: Tamil, the indigenous language, French, Sanskrit, as the matrix and root of India's fractional vernaculars; and English, as the international medium. But who would teach them? The children spoke more languages than the teachers. Initially then, language-learning was involved in whatever the form of educational medium – art, math, the environment but the most effective means of communication was through the interplay and exchange among the children themselves. After some months the youngest were expressing in three and four languages.

With this scarcity of activities and stimuli, the heterogeneity of the group, and the absence of an arbitrary discipline, the crescendo of energy broke out into a period of release. The children had discovered that they were no longer imprisoned, this was not a school where one was driven to learn, to fit within a behaviour norm. There were no overpowering, no compulsions, no expulsions (could someone be expelled from life?). Respect had to be earned, not usurped. Things had become transparent. The children could see the emperor had no clothes.



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1. children entering Last School,
2. child playing the World Game, 3. Annetta
drawing

By mid-morning the concentration sustained by the few activities dispersed, and bands of children would be off roaming about the countryside, huck-finning the secrets of the canyon, exploring the invisible city, constructing it in the images of their dreams and their adventures. The past conditionings were being emptied, it was a time of unlearning, un-learning so that it might be possible to learn.

The formlessness began to evolve a form, to sort itself out. Slowly through these first weeks and months, an embryo of internal organisation began to emerge, unnoticeable amidst the apparent chaos. Because the new which was growing quietly, subtly from within, was over shadowed by the surface dissolution of the previous system. The destruction, the undoing of the past, obscures and conceals the birth which it prepares. Partitions were set up in the schoolhouse, transposing the nebulous open-space into semi-defined areas of work. Rudimentary language areas formed joining art and maths, and art expanded to include weaving on small handlooms made with the children in the workshop. Ganga, a South Indian woman, had arrived by mid-January of 1971 and began the Sanskrit studies.

During this infant-state of siege, the teachers, their numbers in actuality halved from the original ten, met frequently, often spontaneously, after lunch or dinner – to reassess the directions or non-directions, to discuss difficulties and to map out strategies and non-strategies. Planning was a feeling-out process: if a system did not work, did not correspond to a living truth, it was abandoned. A long series of abandonments, modifications, readjustments. Systems were made for the children, not the children for systems; they were only forms for growth, not moulds. As the teachers came to know they did not know the way, the way came to them, revealing itself step by step.

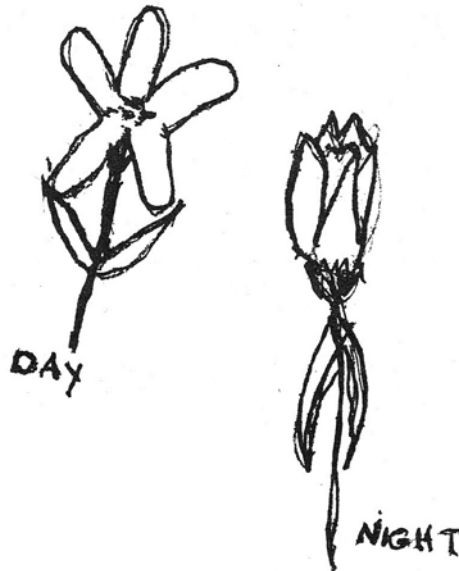
For a period timetables were attempted to circulate the children in some rhythm; but they soon collapsed, premature, unfamiliar with the children's own rhythms. The unlearning was not yet finished. Afternoons were often voids, the organised activities exhausted by lunch-time. In this vacuum, a miniature of man's belligerencies was re-enacted. The European children fought war games against the Asians, the Hindis against the Tamils, upper castes against lower, blacks against whites, girls against boys, east against west. The unlearning was intensifying. After some months, the aggressions subsided, the vestiges of adulteration expiring. The children were tired of playing the adult's games, now they could begin to be just children, one child.

Due to the difficulties of transport, minimal activities, and dining arrangements – the children overcrowding into the Aspiration cafeteria with no alternative to European tastes – a proposal to reduce school to half-day emerged. The proposal was quickly rejected by the teachers, but the children too were consulted. On January 3rd of 1971 the children held their first council and decided the following day to reject the proposal as well. "Who will listen to us, we are only children?" was a thing of the past.

In mid-January the school and Aspiration were invited to Kuilapalayam for Pongal, the village harvest festival. By the 24th the children's kitchen was completed opposite the village, later to become the Aspiration community kitchen as well. In late February, a movement to take groups of children out to other parts of Auroville in particular the nursery and the Matrimandir site – was blocked, under the assumption that it would diffuse energy away from developing the environment in Aspiration itself. Perhaps it was premature, but it would reappear again later.

Physical education had begun but grew erratically. It was originally between three and four in the afternoon, later changing to 4:30 to 6:00. It revolved around simple games – some Indian, some Western – involving the whole school together as a unit. Groups did not begin to individualise until late summer. Early attempts to transform the sports into something “new”, some prototype of hathayoga and rhythmic movement, proved too mental. It was slowly understood that there were no patent formulas for illumined physical education.

On February 21st, 1971, the kindergarten was established. Eliane, a young French mother, took the initiative round thatch hut beside it all started, creating a bamboo fencing, and within it. With the help of Aspiration, the kindergarten children under 3, some from Kuilapalayam.



Eliane, a young French and constructed a the original hut where protective perimeter of building a small pool two others from garten began with nine from Auroville, some

By March other round nearby, across from the dozen teachers and a from Pondicherry. A growing, and soon most of held in the more personal

huts had mushroomed school to house half a young German girl school community was the classes were being atmosphere of the huts.

The schoolhouse had become too unmanageable, too oppressive, and was left for the more collective activities such as the singing before lunch which lasted for a time – songs in Sanskrit, Tamil, French and English as a natural language conveyance. Small groups had decentralised from the mass and environments formed. A tree was planted in the school yard where the brick boats had been.

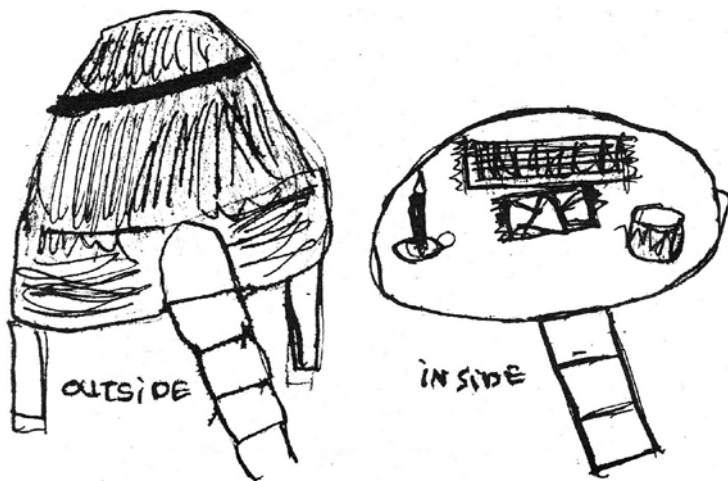
By the end of April Shanti had come, an experienced educator with a Masters in science. A meeting was held in her hut and a new program evolved: Half of the teachers would gather five or six children into base-groups, families, to develop more intimate relations with the children and the children among themselves. From these bases, individual and flexible schedules could then be worked out for each child, coordinated, and the children revolved in their own rhythms among the remaining teachers who maintained specialised areas of study. At each stage, the child was to be consulted in his own growth.

In late May Shanti began the science section in one of the round huts reconverted from living quarters. Some simple laboratory equipment was installed and arranged. This marked the breaking up of the small “school community”, which in its attempt to establish a sense of integrity as a unit had begun to divorce itself from the larger community of Aspiration. Gradually at this time, peeking over the shoulder of Aspiration, the form of Last School began to become more defined, evoking faint anticipations and uneasinesses.

By early July half of the L in the school house had been transformed into a hostel and two more children arrived from Bombay. As the summer progressed the sports program had established a certain consistency. Groups had clarified according to size and capacity, activities increased; a basketball court had been laid – later to be concreted; a keet gymnasium housing judo and aikido, had been erected and furnished with parallel bars, rings, ropes, mats and other basic equipment, a dirt track and field cleared and levelled; volleyball courts framed; and on the near side of the canyons, the following year a rustic football and cricket field bounded with goalposts. Swimming at the beach remained as a collective activity.

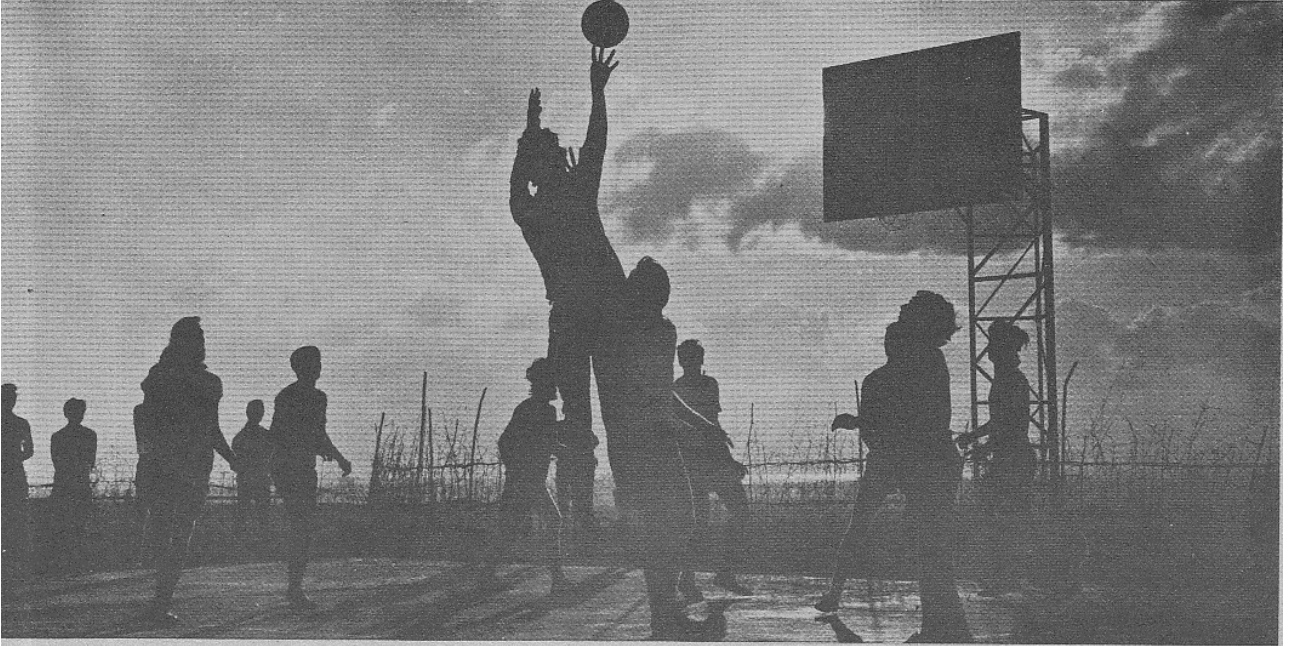
Late in August and early September, the schoolhouse and the round huts inverted roles. The science area, enlarging, moved along with a nascent library and quiet-room to the space occupied by the hostel. The two students living there chose a new site among the round huts and oversaw the construction of their own living quarters. The remaining round huts were soon inhabited by new children, and what had once been a “school community” now became a children’s community.

Though initially, the teachers moved by a purist and innocent enthusiasm refused to entertain the notion of a vacation [vacation? That is the old system... Education is all the time and everything one does.], after more than ten continuous months of gestation, they realised that truth translates slowly in material processes. Abstracts became irrelevant. It was easy to live in the mind, but Auroville was here, on the earth. The vacation began on November 1st and lasted until December 15th. A



regrouping of energies, a respite, a time to detach and evaluate. There were no inconsistencies: this too was part of the education, a rhythm of its process.

Just prior to the recess, on October 5th, the structure known as the Last School, long an abstraction', surprised everyone by opening.



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1. Children playing kengari, an Indian game,
2. Aurovillians playing basket ball

It was more a sculpture than a building, with its smooth flowing lines enfolding a small, mosaiced amphitheatre. But for the three weeks between its opening and the vacation, it remained, for the most part, untouched.

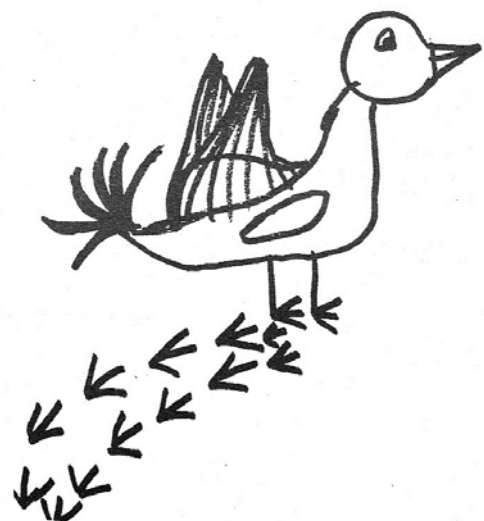
Though during the vacation, Alain was offering modern math principles to the teachers, Eliane developing the kindergarten environment, and several new educators joining the core, the energies focussed upon Last School. How to use it? And with which combination of children?

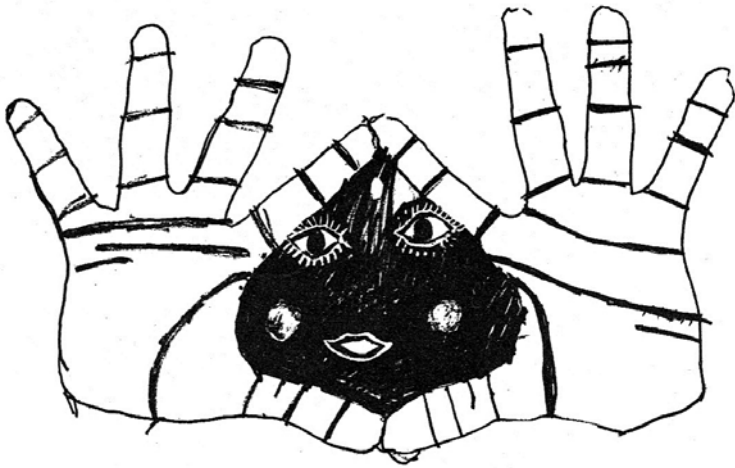
Generally in Auroville it is the consciousness which should precede and determine the form. When the two do not correspond, there is disharmony. But here in the case of the Last School, the design and construction commenced before the school, before the inhabiting consciousness was present. There was as yet no experience – no knowledge from within of needs by which to equate a connespond.ent form – and there were no children on educators to consult.

But it happens that at times this axiom can be reversed, not only consciousness organising form, but form helping to organise an amorphous and embryonic consciousness. Order around oneself conduces order within oneself. The Last School perhaps contained, embodied an intrinsic consciousness which demanded a certain discipline to discover. The building would become the teacher. There was a clean contrast between the informal and transposable thatch-period of the old schoolhouse and the well-defined geometry of the Last School silhouetted on the horizon.

It was decided that the older children would remain in the thatch-school area along with the science section and library and a new spatial extension of translucent cloth; while the younger ones descended upon the Last School. By now in gradations and bursts, the number of students and teachers had doubled – one of the more explosive bursts being the increment of some 15 Tibetan children and a lama arranged through the Tibetan Government. A new unknown.

December 15, 1971 arrived. The second year began and Jobst's question teetered above the Last School. Timetables had again been drawn up for the older students, and sustained, but they proved to be still misprogrammed and knotted. The more free-flowing, improvised activities with the younger children in the Last School soon dissipated into bedlam. The curved, unbroken space, the resounding acoustics, the inviting passageways, within the walls and the tunnelled portholes, the easily-accessible roof with its maze of turret-like elements evoked the boisterous and explosive. An adventure castle. The appropriate environment had not yet been discovered. The gifts of the building, sound and space, had been distorted, and the misuse of their intensities accentuated the error. The very difficulties experienced seemed to suggest,





to disclose the intended use: music, dance, drama. But for the moment, it was still to remain the impenetrable Last School.

In July of '72 the two schools exchanged occupants, the younger returning to the more bendable and resilient, the elder to the more formal. But the movement in the Last School had now entrenched in the opposite extreme. In an attempt perhaps to counterbalance

what it perceived. as the early period of anarchic growth, the educators of the older groups defined a more rigid control; the atmosphere in Last School crystallised. Whereas the first year experimented in a free abandon, the second began its experiment, its departure, in discipline: both reactions. The first, an unlearning process, a disengaging from the past; the second, a mental reflex seeking to impose order and sense mechanically upon something which it could neither comprehend nor control from an inner mastery. The hyphen had yet to be found which joined the two, freedom and discipline, but their sequence was correct. Only through freedom could a true discipline emerge.

Toward late August the formal classes in Last School had begun to calcify. By 11:30, the building was deserted; something was dissonant, jarring, something was being forced. Last School was becoming a [school]. The tension released itself in an open-community meeting held in the amphitheatre of Last School. The solution seemed simple, an idea which had actually appeared in seed-state at the very beginning, deschool break open, integrate the children and the education into the society: flow. A cycle had been completed, or appeared so.

The flashes settled. It was time to determine what opportunities existed for the children in the larger environment of Auroville, and how to realise them. A complex of, weekly timetables was devised and constantly revised to coordinate the individual rhythms and wills of the 50 children ten and over with the possibilities in the Extended school, the city. Simultaneously formal classes – languages, science, math, history, literature – at a point, complemented by learning-forays into the city – agriculture, forestry, crafts, industries, constructions, environment – school and School. Thought and experience. An interflow had been established, a little wider towards identity. In September of '72 the library, with its volumes gradually exceeding 5,000, moved into the Last school.

But the initial outflow after some two months began to recede, to erode. Children had explored the farming environment at Utilité, carpentry at Far Beach, handicrafts at Fraternity, doing-experiences at Auropress, AuroGarage, the architectural office, the workshop, Auropolyester... but it became apparent that deschooling – a state of no school – could not be arbitrarily programmed. It was a life, it had to be grown into to,

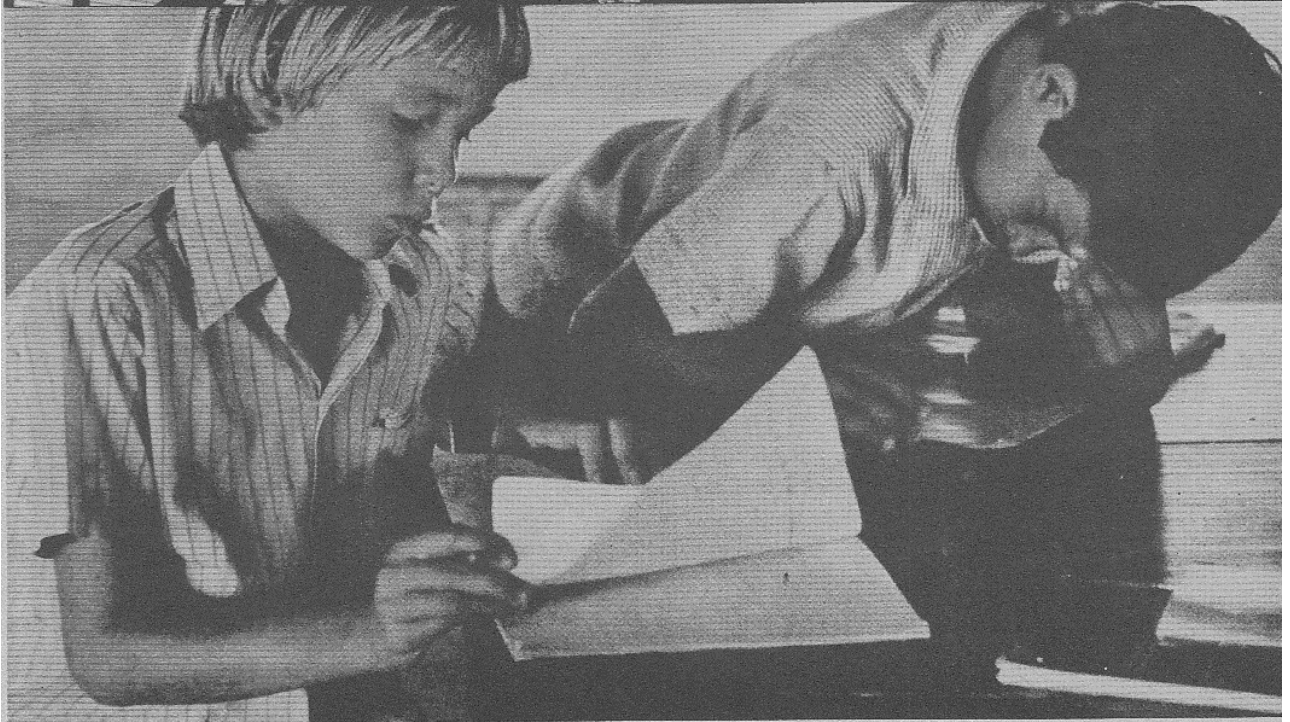
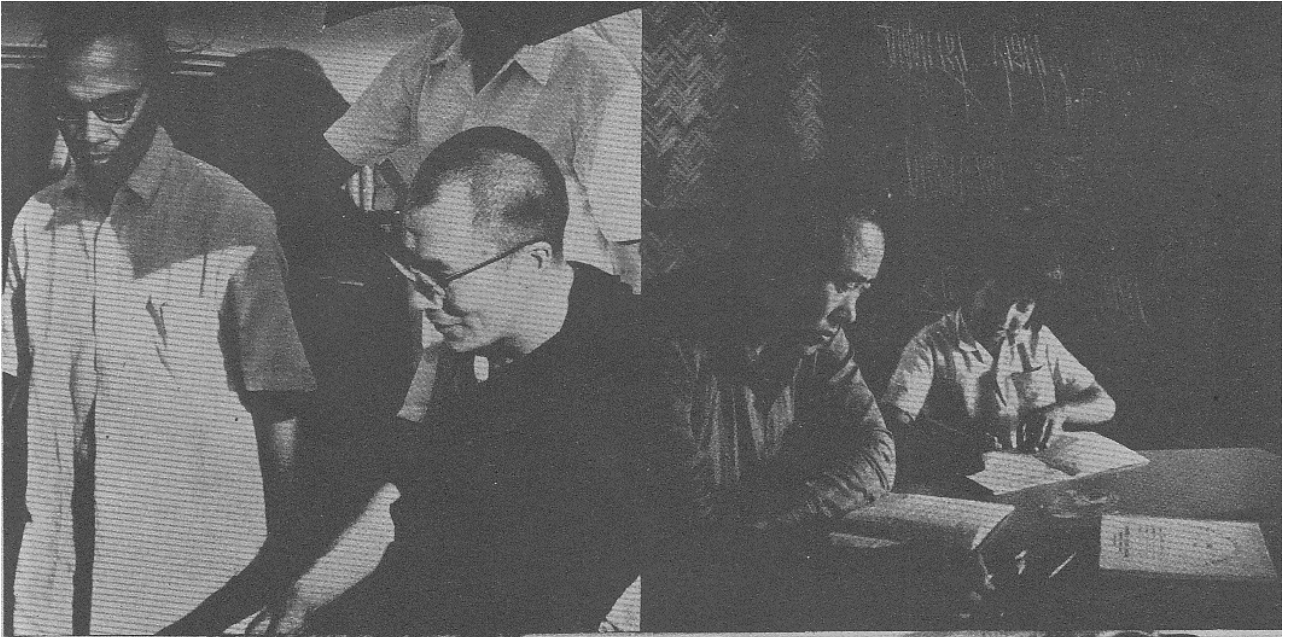
evolved. To de-school the education, one had to in-school the society. It was not something which could be created only by efforts on one side: the community as well had to be prepared to widen itself into an educational environment. Particularly in the industries and services, the situation for a true liaison and dialogue with the children was impeded by utilitarian demands. The early and pioneering labour of the work units – organising themselves, establishing a semblance of harmony under difficult and unpredictable conditions, integrating village workers – had not yet arrived at a basis true and free enough to become learning laboratories for children. Deschooling would not be all-at-once. It would come, it was coming, already in process, but gradually.

The beginning of the November 1st recess marked the conclusion of the formalism in the Last School. During the holidays, the kindergarten, which had grown to more than 20 children, built several smaller huts for specialised activities within its microenvironment. Earlier in the year, it had become an open and shared working on the suggestion of Lakshmikant, a young boy who thought it a good idea for the older children to help.

In mid-November, educators met architects in an attempt to prevent a repetition of Last School construction tactics. A youth camp was planned in a mango grove across the canyon from Aspiration, and the teachers wished to infuse their experience into its design and structure (vide Architecture, Planning and Non-Planning). On December 5th, a cyclone struck, demolishing the temporary health dispensary and the gymnasium, damaging the children's kitchen and the old schoolhouse, strewing the area with debris. It seemed as though it might not be possible to recommence by the 15th of December, but with the aid of the children, the schoolhouse was restored and things reorganised.

With the children's kitchen inoperative, school carried on in half-day schedules through the new year until March 19th of '73 when the community kitchen re-opened. Physical education was reduced to three days a week during this period.

Early 1973 saw a progression and refinement upon an earlier theme of group-systems. The kindergarten had now expanded to 33 children, ranging between two and five, joined by a crèche for the infants on February 19th which inherited the transformed old schoolhouse. The 38 five-to-ten year olds branched out into five natural arrangements; various combinations of boys and girls, Tibetans, North Indians, Europeans, village children, in various settings and base-environments: Derek's hut, Renate's hut, Near Beach, Last School... a series of spontaneous child-determined programs alternating informal basic studies with explorations to the projects in Auroville as well as intervals of embroidery, crochet, painting, musical instruments, Indian and Western dance, drama, and the World Game: a multitude of diverse objects – natural objects, shells, leaves, found objects, created objects, toys,



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1. The Dalai Lama on his visit to Aturoville, Jan. '73,
2. Tibetan student and lama,
3. Children concentrating

symbols set beside small sandboxes in which a child is free to create whatever world he is or wishes to be. The oldest group of 11 to 19-year olds numbered 34 and focussed, in the “TV Studio” an unoccupied keet pyramid near Fraternity, originally intended to house the short-lived video tape project. Their regimen was more directed towards mental pursuits, interspersed with wider contacts in the city vehicle repair, the press, polyester, construction sites, photography, mechanics.

The six-week holidays saw an expansion to 125 children and infants, and a continued material development of the kindergarten with new outdoor toys built in the workshops. Earlier in ‘73, Alain had relinquished his role with the older students to concentrate on the kindergarten which had slowly absorbed most of the original round huts. Over the years the kindergarten has sought to establish a rich and diversified environment and a basic standard of hygiene – an education in physical habits – particularly important because of the proximity to the village, the pull it exerts, and the number of village youngsters participating. Of the forty children in the Kindergarten by 1974, twenty of them were Auroville-born, ten from the village and ten from other parts of the West and Asia.

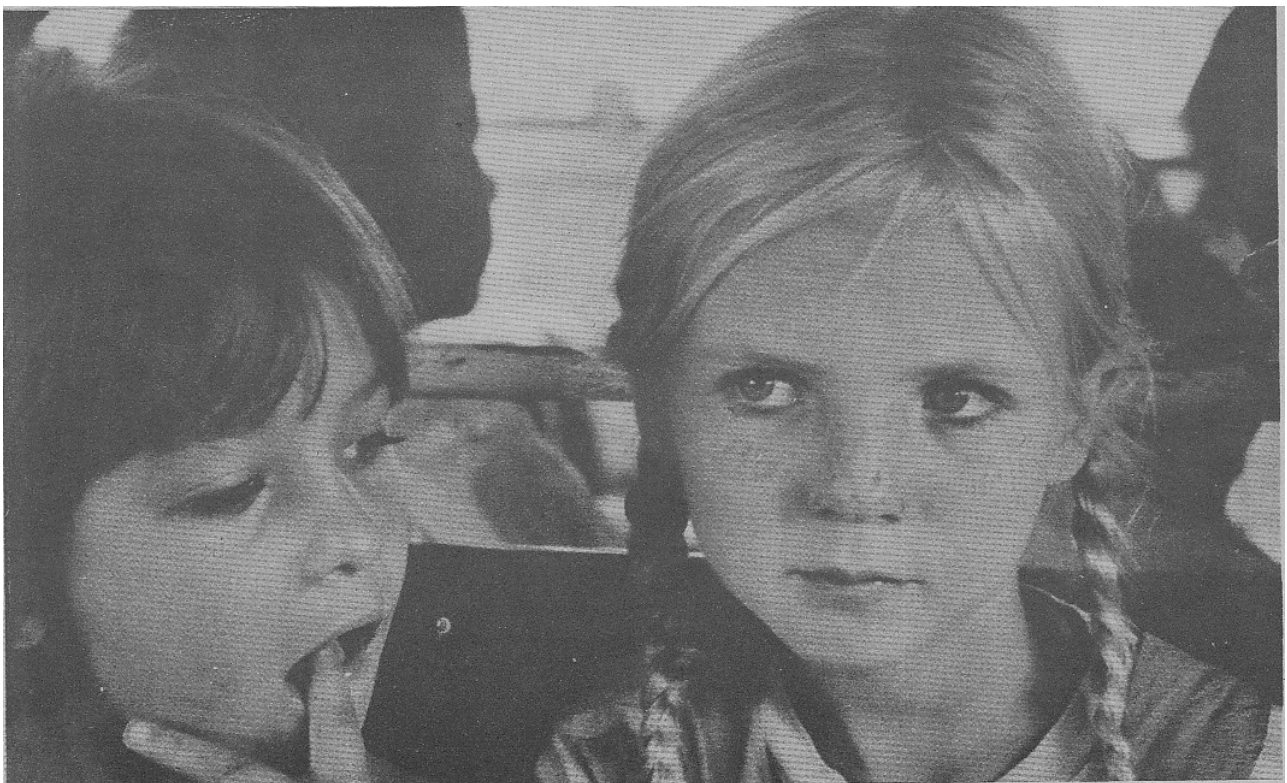
Presently three languages are interchanged, French, the most common, Tamil and English. An informal attendance is kept as a means to “hold the child in one’s consciousness”, and the day proceeds according to his free movement. The mini-environment includes the original round hut which houses the puppets made in Far Beach, and a cupboard where the children leave their clothes while swimming; the outdoor area, with its pool, sand, play equipment, and miniature tricycle paths; the construction-hut: cubes, building toys, puzzles, shapes; the creative area: paintings, collages, folding paper, clay; the library-hut and quiet-room: little tables and chairs, stories, simple beadwork and threading; and the indoor games-hut: dominoes, Montessori. materials, simple reading, writing and counting. The children receive regular medical examinations at the Health Centre, and in January of ‘74, a small hut was made available where the children could eat together in a more harmonious environment.

Since the beginning of this year; the five intermediate-age groups congealed into one larger aggregate based in the Last School. Graphing the rhythm, a rudimentary pattern had formed of differentiation succeeded by a larger synthesis – divergence and convergence – each time going farther out and coming closer in. Shraddhavan, a young English girl has become the matrix of this polygroup, assisted by varying combinations of others.

Numbering 50, there is the apparent clumsiness and difficulty of size – though natural subsets formed – yet simultaneously, the potential of a great intermingling of the earth’s cultures, the experience of learning to be together. A basic pattern revolves around languages three times a week in the child’s mother tongue – English, Tamil, French, Tibetan, Sanskrit and a schedule programmed by the children themselves in a variety of settings. It appeared that Last school had finally arrived at Last School.

Like the visitors who have come and, dumbfounded, asked “Where is the city?”, there have been those, particularly in the earliest periods, who have asked from their conventional milieus and expectations, “Where is the school? where is the learning?” How to explain if they have not caught the thread? How to explain that the children are learning things which could never be taught? How to explain that the scarcity of materials, of “qualified” teachers, was more than compensated by the richness and fullness assembled in the children themselves, their simple interaction uncaptured, uncreatable, by a thousand texts and techniques? Their very presence eclipsing all of the discourses on human unity? Could they not see the School behind the school, the learning and unlearning implicit in simply being and growing in such a global environment? of participating in the birth of such a City? that freed from compulsion and competitive examinations, the children could empty themselves of adulterated motives for learning? that they could become children and learn for the joy of learning in a society whose goals were non-economic, in a city placed at their disposal?

But beginnings are cryptic and difficult to decipher. Renate, a young German mother who shares her house with two village girls, seized the thread with her simple child-like English: “The coming together of all these nations and social backgrounds and that they really get one ... a child rich playing with a village child and that there is no difference... that is really something...”



ECOLOGY

In August of 1970 a proposal to initiate an Auroville Centre for Environmental Studies¹ (ACES) emerged under the impetus of Dr. Chamanlal Gupta, presently a member of the Indian National Panel on Solar Energy. Though ecological principles had been subliminally present in Auroville's early theme, this represented a first coherent focus to evolve a collective environmental consciousness.

Though preliminary consultations had begun concerning some of the first constructions and their integration with the natural system, ACES actually manifested its first project with the Meteorological station in August of '71, made possible by a grant of Canadian UNESCO gift coupons. About this time Dr. Tim Rees, an English hydrogeologist, began his collaboration with ACES. The station, rated Class I, commenced its observations and monitoring of data on February 29, 1972.

ACES is not an environmental lobby or policy-making organ, but rather an educational and research vehicle. A true change in the environment implies a correspondent change in the consciousness which inhabits it. This is Auroville's methodology, and an enforced or coerced set of laws would only bring about a temporal and symptomatic change, not a radical cure of the cause.

As a result mistakes have been made, particularly in the earliest stages of growth – traditional sewage systems in some of the communities, less than optimal pollution-preventives in some of the young industries – before an environmental consciousness had begun to diffuse. Auroville had formed from a microcosm of the world as it is. There was no miraculous or instantaneous leap; the past was still present and overlapped with the future. But with and because of this knowledge of one's limitations, scales have been kept small and flexible to minimize and isolate the impact of errors. The learning experiences are real, the changes and readjustments coming from within. It is in this way that Auroville consciously builds upon itself, upon a living base of its own growing experience.

¹ Listed in the World Directory of Environmental Organisations, ACES has established research contacts nationally with the Indian Institute of Technology and the National Committee on Science and Technology, internationally with Brace Institute and CSIRO.



1	2	3
4	5	6 7

1. Sunflowers at Utilite', 2. new pine forest,
 3. Francis potting seedlings, 4. protecting the
 trees from animals, 5. Larry and Blooma watering
 at Kottakorai, 6. Seedlings at Success Tree Nursery,
 7. pine

A series of ACES meetings began in Pondicherry in April of '73 and grew into a counterpart movement of Saturday morning open ecology meetings at Pitchandikulam in January of '74. The functionings of ACES and the actual implementation of ecological workings, can best be seen in four interrelated areas: alternative environments (micro-climate), alternative energy and waste recycling, alternative foods, alternative housings.

Alternative Environments.

In the South Arcot District of Madras State where the realisation of Auroville is being attempted, fossilised trees stand witness to the luxuriant growth of forest and vegetation that once covered the region. Centuries of misuse saw the earth ravaged of her greenery, unable to reseed her forests due to the voracious foragings of untended livestock. With the surrender of her ground cover, the earth lay bare before the sun and the monsoons which swept away the feeble remains of topsoil and humus towards the sea, leaving a crust of sandy loam. A precise index of the soil degradation is evident in the size and number of canyons and ravines that furrow the landscape.

Despite her organic poverty, the earth tenaciously struggles to reconstitute her plant cover with the coming of the rains. Could this labour be realised, it would assure the physical stabilisation of the soil; however, the continual assault of local livestock reduces the effort to naught and the situation deteriorates year by year.

The fulfilment of Auroville presumes a restoration of the environment to its lost harmony and beauty and a return of the earth's natural fertility and fruitfulness. Through the conscious approaches of reforestation, biological agriculture, and conservation of water resources, the wealth that has been wrested from her can now be regenerated and replenished – the repayment of an ancient debt, long forgotten, between man and nature. In the larger sense, this transformation of the ecosystem would eventually evolve a new and correspondent microclimate.

Reforestation...

The mass of this renewal process will occur in the Green Belt, a 6,000-acre band of proposed forest land and parks encircling the central township area as a climatic buffer. Since the initial beginnings of Success tree nursery in late '71, and the first of the forest communities at Fertile in July of '72, many thousands of forest and flowering trees have been planted out in scattered islands of land. The outgrowths from these scattered points and others to join them will eventually touch and mesh like interlinking pieces in a puzzle.

The reforestation (vide Communities: Forecomers, Fertile, Kottakarai, Pitchandikulam, Utilité...) has proceeded along two lines: planting trees outright into the land, and preparing the land gradually through the cultivation of scrub jungle. This second method, though slower, is more in keeping with an integral and graduated transformation of the land, establishing a first ground cover of indigenous, drought-resistant shrubs in which other varieties of trees may be later introduced. Several years of continuing experimentation have begun to show which species of

trees will grow best in the varying climatic and soil conditions of the Auroville plateau. In February of '74 devices for recording the bio-agricultural climate were implanted in the soil at Pitchandikulam through the assistance of ACES and the French Institute of Pondicherry.

Aside from the natural consequences of wind and weather modification, the more immediate impact of reforestation concerns erosion prevention. The extending root-systems will knit the soil against further disintegration, texturing its absorbency for greater water retention, while the leaf-systems will break the plunderous intensity from the monsoons into finer mist.

Biological agriculture...

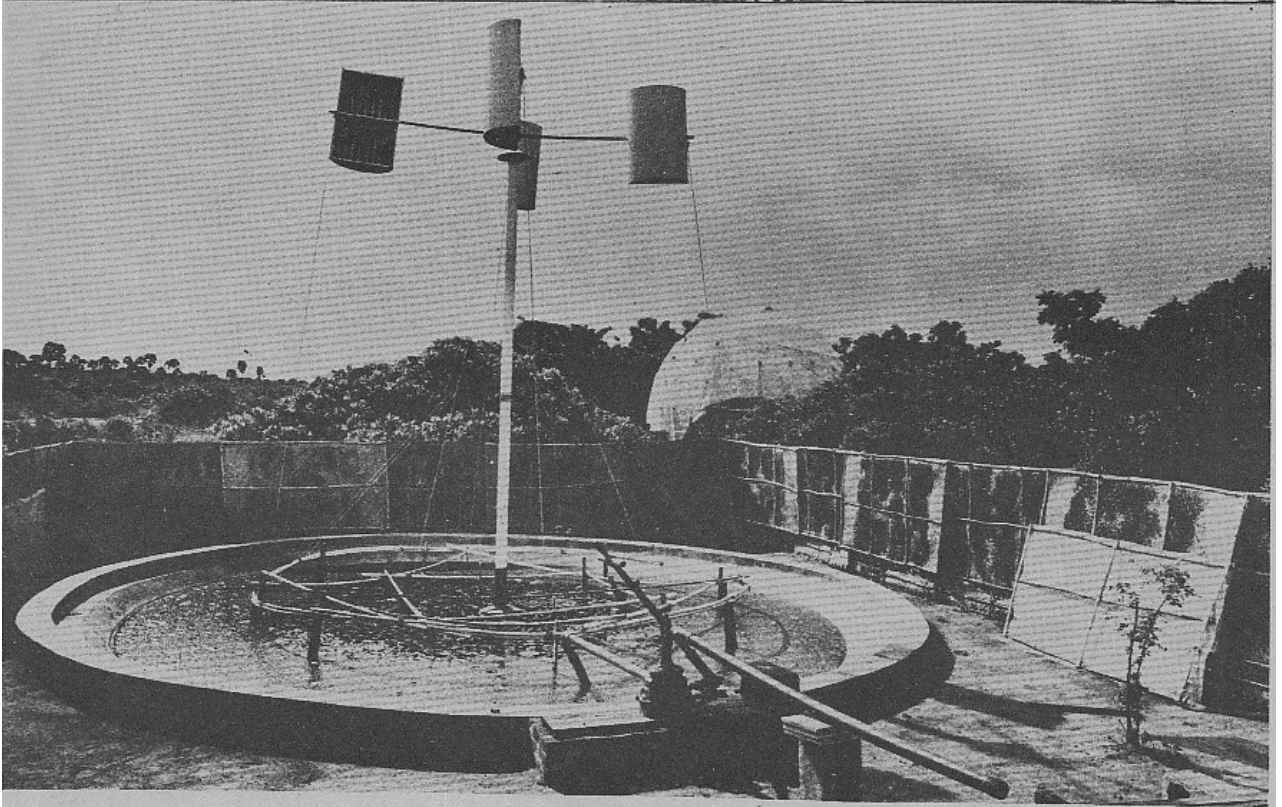
Closely allied with the reforestation is the application of organic methods of cultivation. Particularly in tropical regions, the earth must be protected from direct exposure to the sun to prevent the process of oxydo-reduction, sterilisation of the surface layers of the earth. The soil is a living organism.

A biological systems approach to agriculture is being employed as a means to revive a fatigued and lifeless soil. Though the sizes of the agri-units vary from half-acre community vegetable gardens to the sixty acres of Auro-Orchard and the larger expanses of Annapurna, an emerging farming system (vide work: Industrial and Agricultural), the principles are similar: the infusion of organic materials to regenerate the equilibrium of the soil, the presence of bullocks or cows to provide manure, and the lining of fields with trees and groves as soil-stabilisers, windbreaks and systems' complements. An extensive research in composting and mulching techniques has yielded a diversity of variations.

Conservation of water resources...

Over the years a number of borewells have been drilled, yielding between 600 to 3,000 gallons per hour depending on their depths, which range from 150 to 350 feet. The average water table depth is 50 to 80 feet, but in some areas of the plateau, shallow enough for open wells. Due to the generally impermeable nature of the stratified tertiary and cretaceous deposits underlying the Auroville plateau, good aquifers cannot be expected. However, near-surface, sandy and gravelly tertiary strata exist over the whole area, and preliminary studies indicate that a near-surface water table could be built up if infiltration from the dense precipitation (1,000 m), mainly during the monsoon months, could be increased.

Beside the significant effects of reforestation, only minimal measures for water conservation have been implemented because of limited means: simple bunding and terracing of fields, conscientious water habits, and synchronised plantings with the rains. But a co-ordinated program to optimise water resources has not been possible because of lack of funding. This would include an extensive series of bundings and terracing of slopes and check-dams in the canyons to retard the enormous surface



1. Windmill pump at Abri,
2. Algae tank with wind-driven
stirring device, Foucomers

$\frac{1}{2}$

runoff during the monsoons. Devices to measure the amount of runoff could be implanted and a number of test wells bored near the beach to reclaim the water washing back into the sea prior to the point of salt-water intrusion. In addition to water-retention, it would be possible to sink borewells to the deeper water-bearing layers so as not to exhaust the already depleted surface aquifers. If successful, these measures would have important consequences for a considerable portion of Tamil Nadu state.

Alternative Energy and Waste Recycling.

With the present planetary levels of pollution, fossil fuel shortages, and the unreliability of local power supplies, Auroville has slowly begun to implement simplified alternative energy devices. Four windmill pumps are presently operating in different areas of the Green Belt, and a wind-driven electricity generator is in process at Forecomers. Based on an ancient Chinese design of a horizontal windmill, the structure is being assembled from recycled materials: scrap iron, an old car alternator, cycle wheels for gears, and a second-hand storage battery. Several solar-powered units have been introduced in Auroville, designed, assembled, and installed through ACES: a solar water heater in Auroson's home; two solar cookers, one a reflector-type at Forecomers, the other a steam system at Pitchandiculam, and a small research still. A waste recycling system for methane generation is in design for the first stage of housings in Auromodèle, and a smaller exploratory system for Pitchandiculam awaits funding.

Alternative Foods.

There is an equation between man's technology – his social forms – and his physiology. Man's present diet consumes enormous areas of land, technology and natural resources. On a planet experiencing a severely limited life-support system and a burgeoning population, traditional methods of agriculture hold little hope. Between two and twenty acres are required per person per year, the smaller figure based upon vegetarian diets of the Asian villager, the larger upon meat-eating habits of the West. Through the cultivation of algae, it is possible to drastically reverse these proportions, supplying three hundred people from one acre, releasing a commensurate amount of territories and energies, perhaps metabolic as well.

In mid-1973, Bob began his algae research at Forecomers. He had been intrigued by the above relationships and the subtler effects on body functioning. As the primal vegetable source, algae has sustained through the process of evolution as the cell most sensitive to light, most rapidly photosynthesizing light into matter. Its medium rather than earth is water. The experiment began with a test-tube of spirulina received from the University of Delhi. The initial attempt sought to duplicate laboratory procedures established in Japan and America; however, in the course of the experimentation, it has discovered that the chemical-based solution could be replaced by an organic counterpart of urine and seawater, increasing the urea and nitrogen content of the medium two- to three-fold. This, coupled with a series of primitive, hand-method modifications to eliminate the sophisticated and highly technical level of algae cultivation, made the process more accessible.

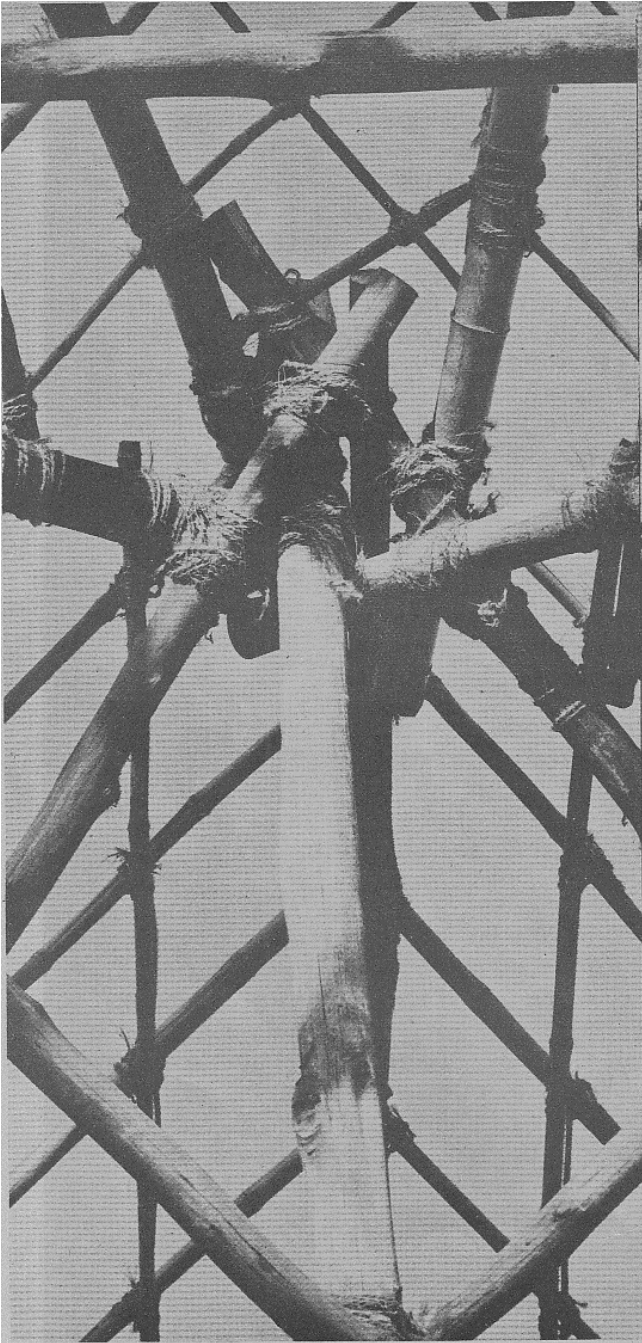
A cement basin, 23 feet in diameter and 3 feet deep at the centre, was constructed. as the algae tank where the culture multiplies for harvesting. A horizontal wind device, especially designed for low velocity and high torque, was installed at the mid-point of the tank and rigged to wire mesh propellers which stirred the solution. This constant circulation permitted a greater aeration process and exposure to sunlight, increasing the production two to six times and doing away with the need for a closed environment circulated by machine pumps. Beside the algae basin are three small auxiliary tanks. When sufficient quantity has accumulated, the contents of the large tank are hand-pumped into the smaller basins where the algae, deprived of its nutrients, settles to the bottom. After the settling, the water can then be recycled back into the main tank. The thickened bright green residue is then put into big plastic drums which are sealed for 24 hours further depriving the algae of media and oxygen, completing the decanting procedure. It is then washed in buckets of fresh water and set to dry outdoors in bins, this settling and decanting replacing the centrifuge previously required for harvesting and separation from the media.

The culture is examined weekly by microscope to determine when the tank needs to be cleaned. It was observed that the original strain of spirulina failed due to the extremely high pH of 9.5 – which discourages contaminants and pathological bacteria – and was overtaken by the local strains of chlorella and schesmedesmus.

Nutritionally, the present algae is a vitamin and mineral rich protein concentrate, requiring only a carbohydrate supplement to provide a complete food. The local dry crop grains – ragi and cambu – satisfy this deficiency, and together with available seeds and nuts, seem to open new dietary directions. Though Bob has been maintaining this diet since the end of August 1973, a recent “algae kitchen” experiment has emerged with two volunteer groups of Aurovilians to determine its effects on a wider scale. The groups of six one at Peace, the other at Aspiration-Fraternity – began in staggards of mid- and late-April, to last for 30 days. During this period, logs will be kept to record the experience.

Alternative Housings.

Though a formal proposal for an eco-house was submitted by ACES to the Indian Government in 1973, Auroville has integrated biological housing materials since its inception. Most of the constructions derive from palm-thatch, bamboo, and matted straw – all indigenous to the region with a number incorporating pressed-earth walls and floors from the inexhaustible red clay on which Auroville lies. A small portable sleeping sphere has been developed at Forecomers of a waterproof cloth skin (vide Communities: Forecomers).



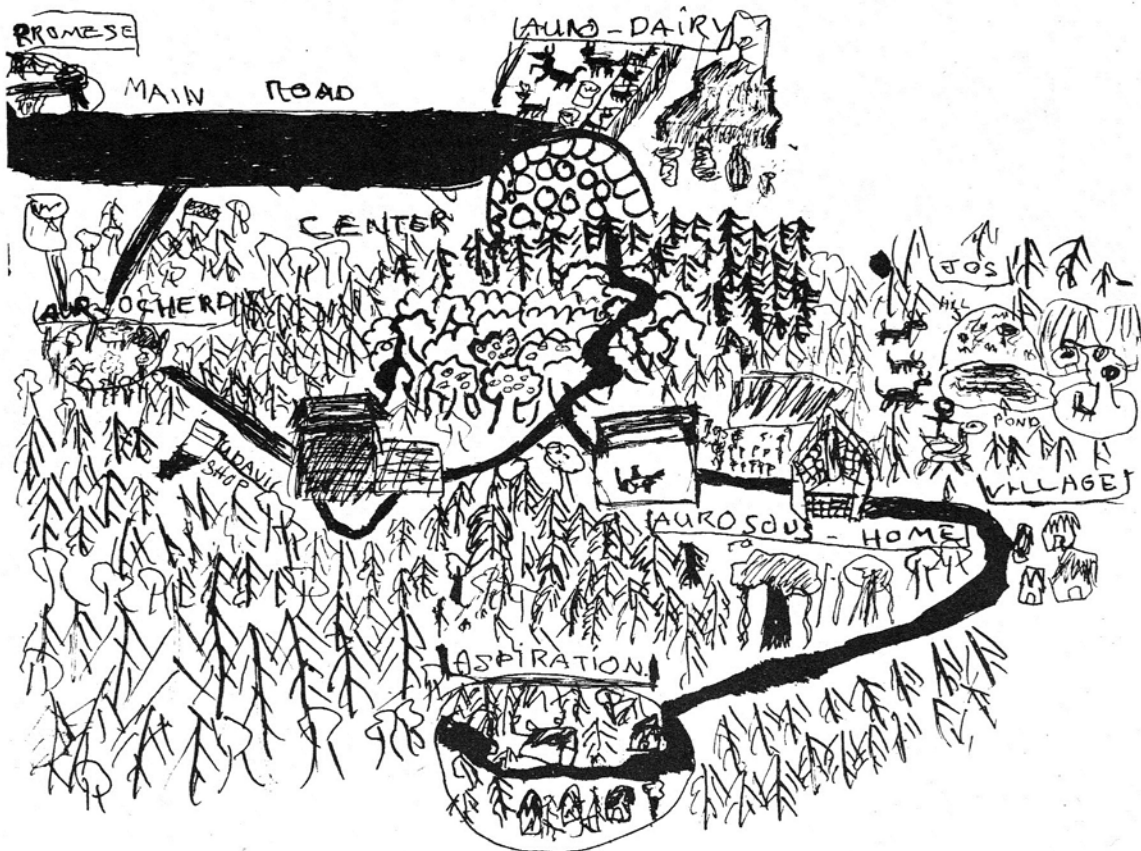
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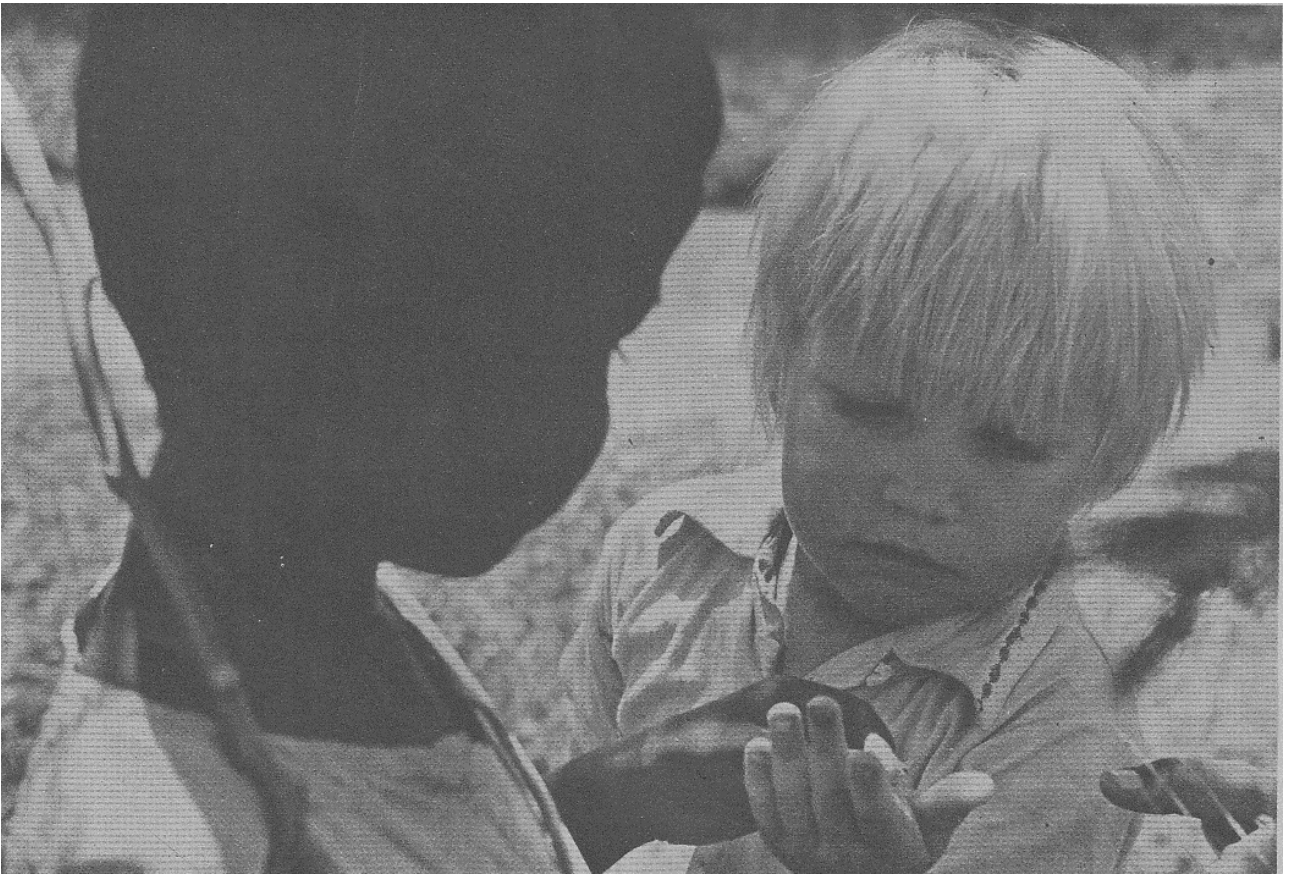
1. Wood and bamboo skeletal structure,
2. exterior of the sleeping chamber, forecomers,
3. a 'capsule' at Pitchandicutan

As yet, they represent only a primitive beginning, but nevertheless indicate a departure from the exclusive reliance upon an increasingly costly, consumptive and confining process of concrete. Random experiments have been made, particularly at Pitchandiculam, with organic stabilisers – extracts with various tree resins and roots.

It is a matter of discovering what is here, what is already present in the environment, and applying it within that context. With Auroville's evolutive and protean quality, it will be necessary for its physical forms and structures to be flexible and adaptive in order to move with and express rather than constrict and impede that change. As the stress for more habitations increases, and the permanence of concrete becomes in most cases more limiting, a continuing refinement and exploration of alternative materials is inevitable.

I think Auroville is a good place to live and I don't want it too modern and I think there should be more trees in Auroville this is what I think it should be.





AUROVILLE AND THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, THE TAMILS

The land upon which Auroville rises is the habitat of one of the earth's most ancient peoples, the Tamils. Some twenty-five villages lie within or tangent to the sphere of Auroville's proposed development, a chiaroscuro of ages past and future. Two world's encountering one another, those who have come to Auroville and those who are already there. But the intensity of contrast did not imply one group of "haves" and one group of "have-nots". There was not one group of those who knew and one of those who had everything to learn. There were two groups of have-nots who have everything to learn.

And yet the pasts of both groups were still present. Some from the West still bore the vestiges of their civilised concepts of "progress" and "development" that Auroville could have as well been planted in Denmark or Colorado and that the native peoples were just primitives along the way. But the reminder was there, clarifying perspectives, setting her children in their place: "Those in contact with the villagers should not forget that these people are worth as much as they, that they know as much, that they think and feel as well as you do. You should therefore never have an attitude of ridiculous superiority. They are at home and you are the visitors."

The Tamils as well carried their impressions, perhaps much deeper. The invasions, the days of subservience to the white man were not so far behind, and colonialism still lingered, alive in the faces of the old men who have known its slavery. They see themselves defined as cheap labour and nothing more. "...Auroville's love for us is a trick. They are all thieves like the Government. How can they like us?" "It may be slavery again, as before, because they find us black, ugly and poor." No true contact is possible until this past is effaced; certainly words will only compound and confuse it. It is a matter of becoming and letting that speak for itself. Slowly the fear and distrust will expire, forget their reasons, and the children, who have nothing to forget, will help us remember. "Auroville... I think everybody likes it. I like it." "Previously the white men were cruel. Now they look nice and quiet."

Work as the Medium.

Work, working together, seems to be the first common language. The hyphen between Tamil and Auroville. And significantly so because the changelessness which has been Indians preserver has been its destroyer as well. In the spectrum of some 50 Auroville projects, roughly 1,000 or more villagers are now employed. According to Boris at Fertile who works with five villagers on the soil, "We have everything to learn before initiating... they expect regular work... decent conditions... and that's a way of relating. To push anything on them would disturb whatever harmony exists. Why we're here? for sure they understand it's not to make money –the mangoes, it's

as much theirs as ours. They have such a simple view...if you try to change anything too quickly, they become suspicious.”

Constructions as the media...

With the more familiar keet structures and village-formula houses dotting the cityscape, it has been the Tamils who have shared their ancestral expertise with the citified apprentice-Aurovilians. But in the several more complex and formal structures requiring a technical knowledge for execution, the educational process was reversed. At the Matrimandir, some 70 to 90 villagers are working with a score of Aurovilians, the carpentry and bar-bending done by the Tamil craftsmen, the emplacement and construction done jointly with the Aurovilians. The work itself becomes a field for learning, new skills, new materials, new possibilities to explore on both sides. One becomes familiar with another’s culture through work, through their building techniques and structures.

The Amphitheatre-work surrounding the foundation urn pursued this same theme more deliberately. Ruud, a Dutchman and product of the process himself – never having handled scaffolding and steel before the Matrimandir – entered the beginning of the Amphitheatre construction in January of ‘73 and describes the working: “... only one or two Aurovilians have been involved, working with an average of 120 Tamilians. It is so worked out that more and more was understood and done by them. Some educated boys learned to handle theodolites and measuring tapes and to read the drawings, got into the supervision, and now work out with the leaders of the different groups the whole system amongst themselves. It has now become a structure with which they can identify and towards which they have come to feel a responsibility and love. An experiment was carried out by the involved Aurovilians to see whether, without their being continuously on the spot and checking the labourers, something of a new spirit of work could emerge, not aimed at pleasing the boss or just earning money, but at identifying oneself with the aim of the project, to work for perfection, for the joy of the work.... This inner change takes a while; but only then could Auroville begin to be built.” Following the thread, Ruud has taken up the construction for the first of the Indian State pavilions at Bharat Nivas (vide Cultural and Artistic Expressions, Bharat Nivas).

Michel, a young French architect engineering a cinder-block construction, expresses the two experiments proceeding simultaneously, work as an educational process with the materials, and an integration process among the workers; “the site is a place of education around materials and processes utilised in the construction. Our aim is to establish a ‘nivellement d’autorité’ (a levelling of arbitrary authority), giving each one the opportunity to develop his capacities... to see disappear the hierarchy of those in command and those who execute, not for the sake of the hierarchy which is not bad in itself, but because of the rigidity of its structure which ‘scleroses’ each one’s possibilities and carries along a mechanisation of the work.... The education has its centre in the work itself ... The walls have no importance, it is the spirit in which they are built, for we are not constructing habitats, we are constructing the consciousness of a harmonious life on earth.”

ABRI.

Abri, which means “shelter”, was initially founded on the 1st of 1973 as a garage for heavy transport, but gradually evolved into its right working as an informal, multi-purpose building cooperative for village workers. Made possible by a grant from the German FAO, its philosophy was to provide a secure and guaranteed employment – a labour pool – for villagers engaged in various Auroville construction sites, assuring that they would not be fired after a work was completed. It would also assist in the building of houses for the workers employed. This collective labour-force could then respond more effectively to demands as well as coordinate itself with other projects and with the seasons, i.e., road work done in non-agricultural seasons.

In addition to a consistent team of workers, numbering presently above 75, Abri would purchase bulk supplies of construction materials establishing known quantities of labour and stock, minimising costs. Structurally, Abri houses eight living units for workers above the hardware and stock rooms, flanked by office space and two workshops, one mechanical, the other for wind-water implements. Beside the complex is a hollow-block unit for precast structures, provided with water by a windmill pump. In addition to the miscellaneous functions of construction work, water implementation service, transport repair and maintenance, there is an overlapping worker-training program in the mechanics workshop.

Land as the media...

Perhaps as Joss has said, the land is even a more natural medium for communication and exchange. The same dialogue is present, Tamilians teaching Aurovilians and vice versa. Many of the agri-based communities have gained their experience in local agriculture from and with the villagers. On the other hand, the large organic unit of Auro-Orchand has been a laboratory in bio-intensive farming for a number of Tamil workers and their families.

Some of the smaller Auroville communities have begun more intimate experiments reciprocating land to the villagers rather than money in exchange for cultivation. An example of this developed at Kottakarai in late '73: “Agriculture is an important medium for true contact between Europeans and Tamils and for creating an ‘Auroville way of life’. At present the settlement at Kottakarai has about six acres under dry-crop cultivation. The actual work of cultivation and harvesting has been accomplished with people hired on a daily wage basis from the village. Village people often give advice and encouragement for successful cultivation. This year an arrangement was made, rather ad hoc with a family from the village whereby they would cultivate about one acre of Auroville land, keeping the crops for themselves, and in turn one member of their family would serve as the necessary watchman for all the fields, both ‘theirs’ and the other acres. In addition they have repaired eroded areas on the edge of the field. The expenses for cultivation were borne by them. So far it has worked remarkably well... but the most important thing is that we have grown much closer together... unadulterated by an ulterior motivation or either side.” Recent changes in Indian land lease policies, however, have forced suspension of these exchanges for the present.

TAMIL ECOLOGY.

Ironically, in a country which, for the most part, has never left the village, the consciousness and relationship with the natural environment has largely been reduced to a utilitarianism. The cattle and goats are left to graze wherever they will, ravaging the countrysides, the tree is valued for its kindling, and the simple farmer, enamoured by western models of “progress”, proudly whiten their fields and themselves with massive doses of chemical pesticides.

It is impossible to speak of transforming the earth of Auroville while the adjacent village field succumbs to chemicals. There is one ecosystem that binds them both, and it cannot change if both do not Change together. It is a matter then of re-injecting a green-consciousness into the villager, broadening his gaze beyond the plough furrow, making him aware of the implications of reforestation and the disasters of denuding the land. But it too does not come with words.

As Fertile, a reforestation community, relates: “The planting of forest trees seems to most villagers rather strange. Long-range effects – halting of erosion, retention of ground water, shade, etc. – are not easily explained in the vocabulary of 25 words or less that we share with the villagers. Besides... if you plant trees everywhere, where you gonna grow crops? How you EAT?... Eventually if the trees... do have a beneficial effect on local conditions, the relationship between our work and village agriculture will be obvious. For the moment, it is not obvious at all.”

In a somewhat more humorous accentuation of the same theme, Francis of Forecomers approached the village farmers with patient explanations: “I went to them and explained that they have less land than their fathers and, their fathers have less land than their fathers... and that’s because of erosion... would they please stop cutting shrubs along the canyons and let us plant trees?... They thought I was absolutely crazy. One day I even chased a farmer and his wife off their land... they still see Auroville as a large corporation and themselves as small farmers and they don’t want anything to change, because in the past, movement – change – means loss.”

Art as the Medium.

India’s accumulated inertia, grown hereditary has dulled its senses and put its vital to sleep. To the villager, music cannot be loud enough, food cannot be spicy enough. Auroville’s presence can perhaps serve as a catalyst awakening something sedated under ages of somnambulism, helping the villager to rediscover his folk-soul, his creative impulse, his finer sensibilities.



Aurocreation...

The latter period of 1969 and through 1970 saw a steady inflow of Westerners; the contacts between the Tamils and this curious assortment of newcomers was passing through its feeling-out stages – tentative and clumsy, nervous smiles. It was clear that Auroville was not a missionary work dispensing alms and ideologies to the poor.

During this early exercise of acclimating to and fascination with each other's worlds, Lisa, a young Dutch mother, began tie-dyeing in her house with a Tamil woman and her children. A local UNICEF representative happened by one day, saw Lisa's gift, and took her for a tour through some of the Tamil villages. In one of the Village schools, a group of 30 girls displayed an eagerness to learn crafts. Lisa responded, offering to meet weekly with them.

For months she would bicycle to the village, packed with raw materials purchased from a little pocket money – paper, pencils, scissors, glue, fabric, threads. They would collect in a dirty cow stable provided for them, shared by the local sports club. The initiation seemed hopeless. The work was sloppy, dirt-stained, and exhausting. Working with designs for embroidery, Lisa discovered that “they could not enjoy doing a purely creative act.” They required constant guidance, unable or unwilling to exert their own imagination. To survive and persevere, Lisa had to find a certain detached humour in the situation. Aside from the apparent futility in the working, her health began to drag from the weekly exposure to head-lice and worms, and often she would return to find pants stolen from her bicycle by local gypsies.

But it went on slowly evolving, slowly increasing in work and women, and some first pieces were able to be sold. Another Aurovilian joined Lisa, sharing the work, bookkeeping, and purchasing raw materials. Communications were growing and the young girls were beginning to recover one of the geniuses of their culture, “the intelligence in their hands.” The kolaums (street mandalas), symbols, colours and symmetries, the geometries, rhythms, and original feeling for elemental forms began to re-emerge. “We used to give them cloth with drawings and a colour scheme with matching thread. (At home, we tailored those into dresses, bags, wall hangings, etc.) Later on the colour scheme dropped as they developed good taste in their own compositions.” This traced the crude, prefatory movements of what in July of '71 came to be called Aurocreation, a matrix embracing all creative craft-communication in collaboration with the Tamils.

The increasing number of girls interested strained the already awkward arrangement of working in the village and selling in an old house in Pondicherry. Through a grant through a German FAO group, Lisa was able to rent a large house and verandah in October of '72, where a training and production centre could be established for crochet and embroidery. By the end of the first year, the numbers had swollen from the original 30 to 100 village and city girls.

The change of atmospheres also brought correspondent change in attitudes: there was an enthusiasm to keep work neat and clean and the results were beautiful. “Eighty percent was sold immediately and always orders would come in, more than we could manage or accept as we carefully avoided to do mechanical work; each dress or blouse is always hand-drawn and individually executed. We never trace or copy anything. In that way the concentration and attention to work is always at a summit, always new and progressing.” To meet the demand, a non-commercialising outlet, organised by Jocelyn in the form of a boutique and export trade, became a focal point for all the creative expressions in Auroville as well (vide Cultural and Artistic expressions).

“Just recently for the new year (1974), we held a contest; they got paper and pencil to draw any amount of kolaums (original street drawings... endless variations of geometrically built-up-designs). We had prizes for everybody... there was so much enthusiasm and self-confidence that we progressed to the next step, they themselves got fabric, had to choose the colours of their liking, and compose or transfer the drawings on paper into a cushion cover. Now we have a collection of original Tamil folk art. We praise them a lot and encourage their inform talents, and appeal that they are the artist and can do always new and nicer patterns.

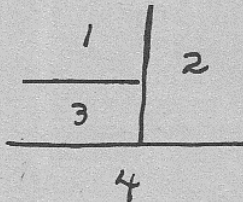
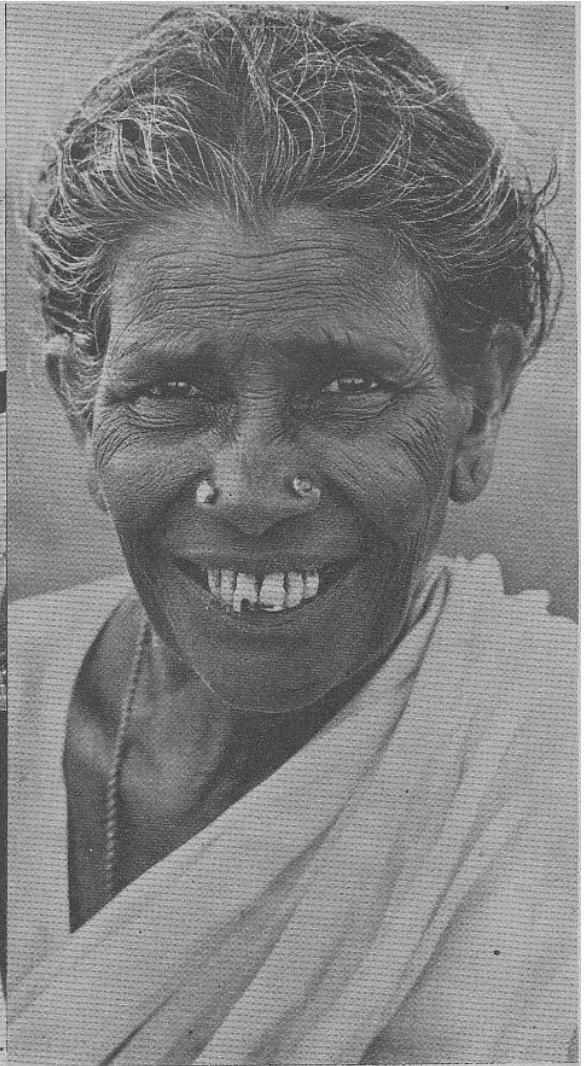
“To me, this seems for the moment, the true direction. They are still lazy to imagine what to do next and prefer us to draw everything and fix colours, etc., but gradually they could develop their own workshops in various places, follow their own methods of work and bookkeeping with a main distribution and sales centre at their service and for security.”

Villages.

Of the score of villages interspersing the immediate landscape, five seem to be most directly related to Auroville: Kuilapalayam, Edayanchavadi, Kottakarai, Alankuppam, and Pettai (vide appendices, Map).

Kuilapalayam...

Kuilapalayam is atypical of other villages in the region in its single-caste composition. Its population is roughly 1,500 living in some 250 mud-hut constructions. The community is made up solely of Hindus from the caste of Vanyas – the labourer class – with no Brahmans or Harijans (untouchables). Its social structure is governed by two aspects, the Nattanmaikarars and the Panchayats. The Nattanmaikarars represent the traditional system of rule in this area of Tamil-Nadu. They are more or less derivatives from the rule of village elders. Kuilapalayam has five Nattanmaikarars, chiefly responsible for resolving village disputes. They are neither legal nor elected agents, but rather constitute a moral body. Their power has gradually deteriorated as people have begun to question their wisdom in the light of recourse to legal solutions and the courts. The Panchayats, on the other hand, are a legal body of elected officials empowered to levy property taxes, oversee village roads and sanitation.



1. working together at Madrimandui workshop,
 2. Ama, 3. mason plastering,
 4. village beach sequence
 hauling the boat

Kuilapalayam was an isolated village before the coming of Auroville – no roads, no access to communications. Since the emergence of Aspiration, which rests adjacent to the village, a number of changes have opened Kuilapalayam to new possibilities. Roads have been laid permitting movement of goods, water outlets have increased from one to 14, a dispensary and health centre have been freely placed at their disposal, more than 100 of the villagers have been employed in Aspiration's small-scale industries, forty children are fully integrated in Aspiration school, between 75 and 100 village youths aged 6 to 16 are engaged in organised sports and given milk and nutritional supplements, and the 50 children below five are provided with immunisations and daily nutrients. A kitchen has also been operating near the village since December of '69, serving lunches to many of the Tamil workers throughout Auroville. Fraternity lies just across the road from the village (vide Communities: Fraternity).

Edayanchavadi...

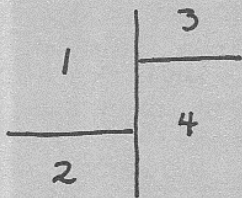
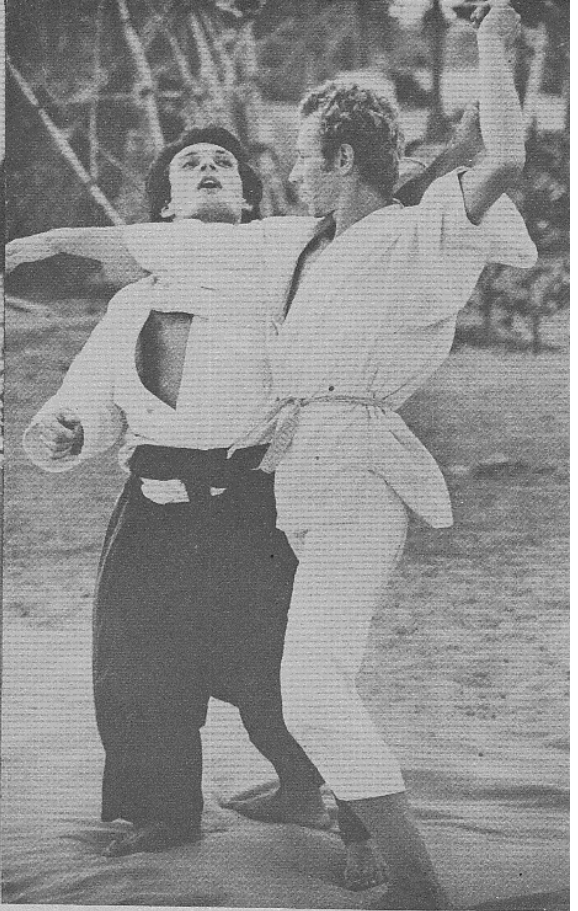
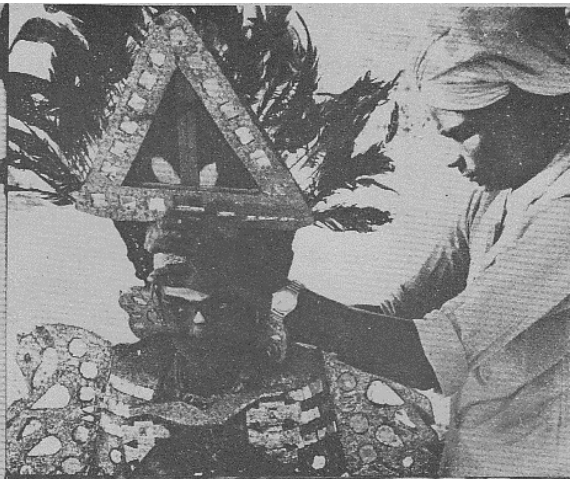
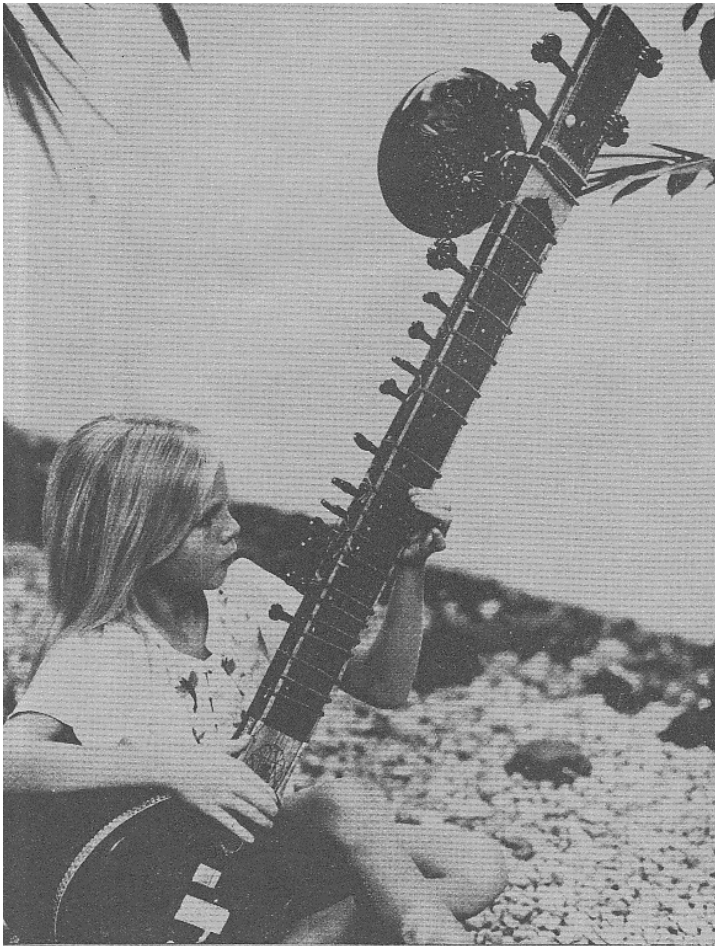
Edayanchavadi was perhaps the most hostile of the villages in the beginning. Through the establishment of water facilities and Udavi, a colony on the borders of the village with its fair-price shop and later its incense production, medical clinic and children's nutritional program, attitudes have begun to change (vide Communities: Udavi). The initial fears and antagonisms of first reactions have largely dissolved.

Kottakarai...

Angela, a member of the Auroville settlement beside the village, describes the process: Following their discovery of a first aid kit in our kitchen, "the children from the village would come in with sores of some kind and ask for bandages... One day a visitor from New York came by just when a small baby was treated. Its whole head was badly infected...the next day he was back with a full bag of medicaments, bandages, etc., asking what else we might need.. And he came with all that the day after. Then it seemed obvious to all of us that the time was ripe to move into a two-story house which belonged to us in the village... Now it is an almost real-looking little clinic... Radhakrishnan, who helps a lot in the clinic, is able to observe how it has become a focus for changes in the village, especially in the relationship between the villagers themselves and people from the Harijan (untouchable) colony, which is situated right next to it..." (vide Communities: Kottakarai).

Alankuppum and Pettai...

These two villages, located next to one another, are closely involved in Auroville's growth. Almost all of their employed men, women and children are working in and with Auroville, largely in the construction sites at the Centre. As a result of the growing rapport between Aurovilians and their village co-workers, a "Tamil-Auroville Kalacharam" was established in Pettai in January of '74. "Kalacharam" in both Tamil and Sanskrit means "culture". It will serve as a small educational centre and point of contact within the village, counter-parting the villager's contact within Auroville. Janet, a young Canadian, has pioneered a crochet and embroidery class in the homes of several village women, hoping to establish a training and work centre in Pettai.



1. Nathalie practicing sitar,
2. Anubien teaching Indian dance in Last School,
3. Costume for drama at Pitchandikulam,
4. Judo, Andre and Jean-Claude

CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Since the very earliest expressions of Auroville, the child and the creator have been present. The first inhabitants of the interior were a painter and a dancer. With the rich blending of Eastern and Western cultures, a variety of art forms have indigenously emerged despite, or perhaps intensified by, the demands of a pioneering existence.

From the first dramas in the canyons and terrain of Forecomers – “Praise” in 1969, “The Artist Before the Dawn” in 1970 – a stream of plays and dramatic pieces have unravelled in different settings, some outdoors, some in the Amphitheatre of Last School, each composed, choreographed, costumed. by Aurovilians. Each has been a community experience freely mingling a world of children and adults, actors and audience; the last being a French playlet staged in early ‘74 – “Who Stole the Children of the City?” Occasional poetry readings have also been offered, the most recent, a series of French pieces in the school and a dawn-recitation in English and Tamil under the Banyan Tree on Auroville’s birthday.

The diversity of cultural presences has provided a remarkable field to explore music and dance. Numerous instruments scale the harmonies of East and West – hand-tooled bamboo and metal flutes, sitar, table, guitar, recorder, – in both folk and classical styles; dance moving in both Indian and European rhythms. Recitals, along with recorded music are given from time to time, more often spontaneously. The children have a unique opportunity to appreciate and learn the global performing arts, to develop syntheses and departures of their own.

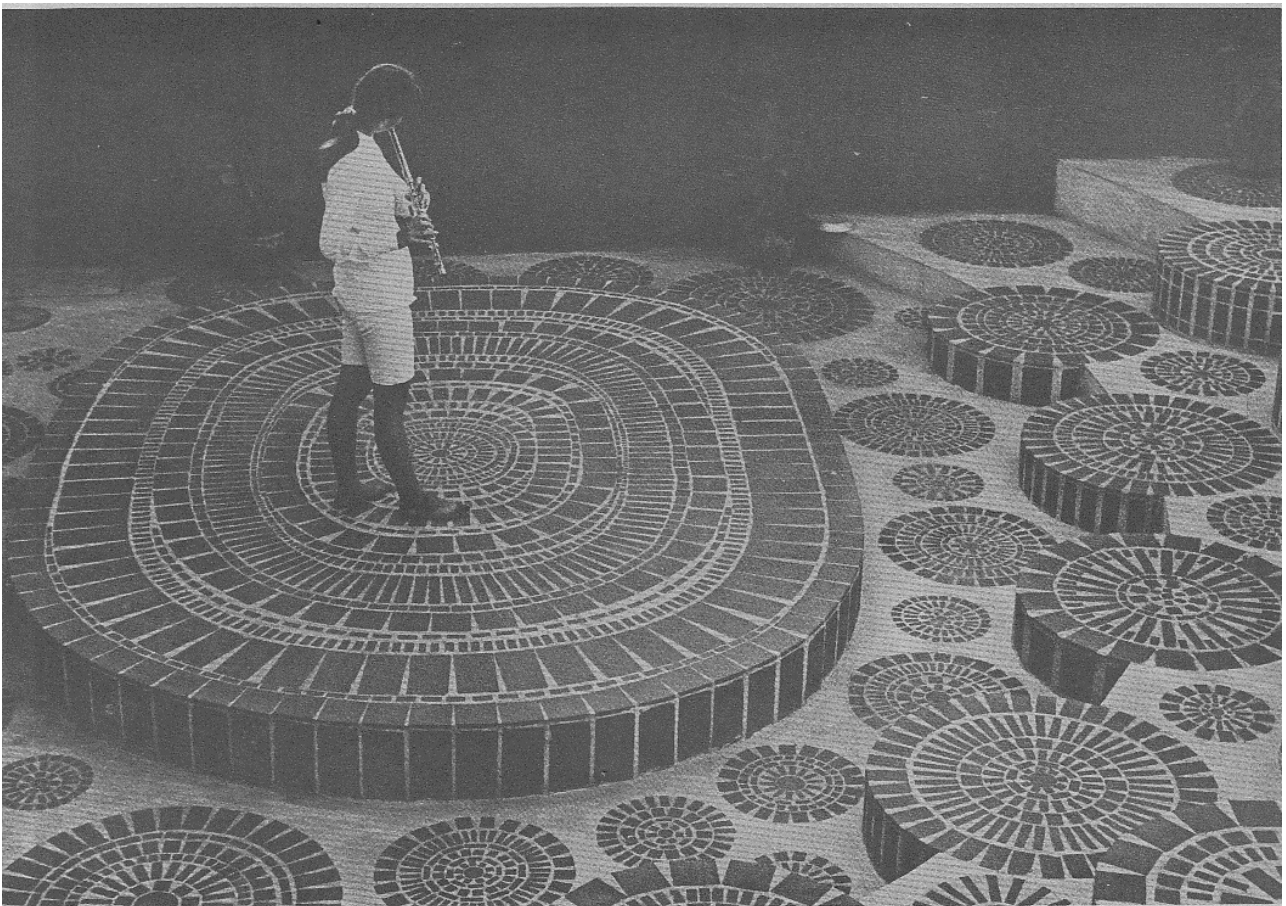
Crafts and folk art are likewise dispensed; leather-craft, woodwork, clay, plastics, candle-making, weaving, crochet, embroidery – flute-makers, puppet-makers, shoe-makers, mat-makers, toy-makers, the softer arts of painting and drawing, and the more technical as well photography, graphic design, silkscreen. A microcollage of man’s creativity.

In addition to the multitude of environments built and unbuilt which house this cultural spectrum, two structures in process have been especially designed for this purpose; mandala, a planned complex of integrated units on the slopes of Aunomodèle and Bharat Nivas.

Bharat Nivas.

Within the vacancy of the International zone (vide Architecture, Planning and Non-Planning), a first construction began to arise in the summer of '71, Bharat Nivas, the house of India. Bharat Nivas represented the first of the world's cultural pavilions, seeking to express the soul-forms of its motherland – its literature, language, art, dress and taste, its music, dance, and theatre, its unique and innate creative rhythm. There is something that is India, that expresses its Indian-ness, just as there is something qualitatively American on French on Japanese or Tibetan. It is that quality which Bharat Nivas wishes to express and convey tangibly, to become a pure instrument evoking and manifesting the true India. Whatever the form on actual process of emergence, these cultural repositories will be the vehicles of the many nation-souls, the preservers of cultures whose integrity is threatened with corruption and extinction such as Tibet – an educational arena where the child will be able to establish contact with the full play of the world's diversities and its underlying unity.

With completion of the restaurant and auditorium, work began on the first four of the 19 state pavilions of India. Funds provided by these first states – Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Mysore and Uttar Pradesh – enabled Aurovilians to assume responsibility for the constructions which commenced on February 28th 1974.



WORK: INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL

Work would not be there as a means for gaining one's livelihood, it would be the means whereby to express, develop one's capacities and possibilities...

A Dream

The growth of Auroville has implied, and necessitated the development an instrumentation capable of actualising, realising and sustaining, the ideas, possibilities and needs inherent in the city-to-be. This instrumentation would constitute the workings and actions on every level from planting trees to bricking walls, from bending bars to sowing seeds, from weaving cloth to threading roads – a continuous and progressive research. Within its collective infancy, a primal nucleus of low-technology industries and agriculture have emerged to forge and feed the city.

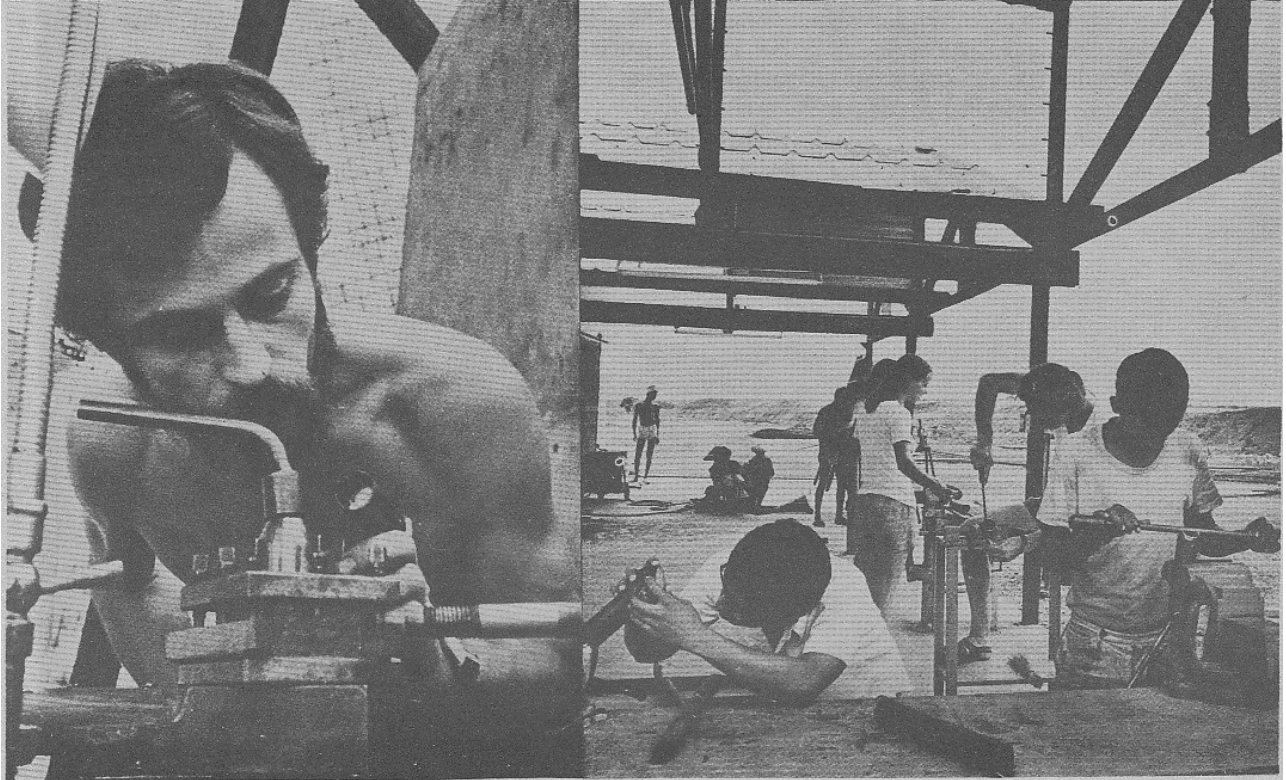
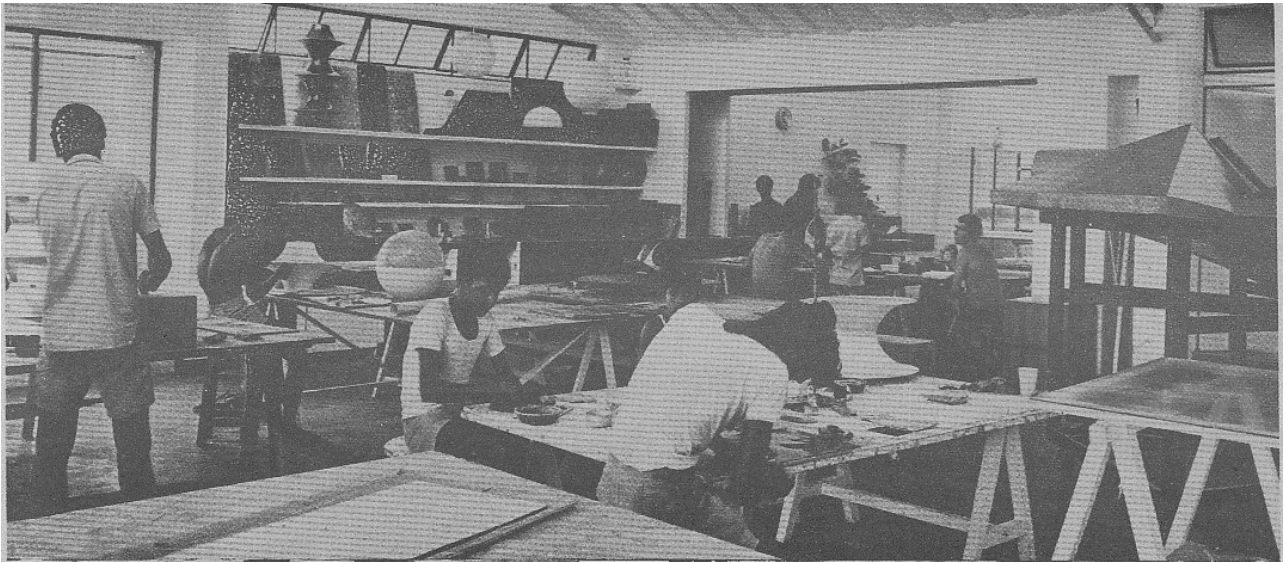
Industries and Services.

The initial industries surfaced as outgrowth and adjuncts of the communities and projects themselves, most located in Aspiration. However beginning in 1974, the first or the work units entered the proposed industrial Section of the township (vide Architecture, planning and Non-planning).

Toujours Mieux...

On late 1969-early '70, Toujours Mieux began as the first working unit in Auroville, functioning as the Aspiration workshop. With machinery caravanned from Europe, its initial labour was the construction of metal roofing caps for the huts and roofing clamps for the elements of Last School. Housed in a temporary-keet shed, Toujours Mieux vacated when the school organised in December of 1970 and moved to a larger keet workshop towards the rear of Aspiration. Operations expanded and revolved, including a vehicle maintenance and repair shop, a welding unit, and, for a period, a carpentry unit. The electrical workings for Aspiration were also coordinated for a time in the workshop.

But attitudes became increasingly elitist, and the atmosphere in Toujours Mieux began to corrode along with the iron. In March '72, a fire swept through the workshop destroying everything but a few hand tools. Vincenzo, who founded the workshop, describes the significance of the fire: "The old age was destroyed.... we were attached to many things... like junk... the old team of people thinking themselves the only people working in Auroville... so closed, so aggressive... but after-the fire, this nucleus was destroyed also."



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1. Inside the workshop at Europolyester,
2. Jean working at Toujours Mieux,
3. metal work at the Madrimandei workshop.

For a time after the fire, there was a void; but with the encouragement of a man from Madras who offered an advance to replace the machinery, Vincenzo along with Jean decided to start anew. They took a bank loan, finalised the design for the new construction, and laid its foundation stone on the 1st of '73. In the interim they began work immediately, welding and assembling the wire-dome skeletal structure in the small maintenance workshop that had been erected nearby.

While the construction work was proceeding on the outside, work had already begun within the unfinished frame of Toujours Mieux. The scheme proposed at the time of the bank loan was to engage simply in metal and structural work, however an idea prodded Vincenzo to consider building a prototype leather-buffing machine to display in the Leather Fair to be held in Madras January 7th of '74. Previously these machines have been available only under export from England. In three weeks, the day before the Fair the prototype was completed, the workshop collaborating with Claude, an Auroville draftsman. Its entry in the Fair was a totally unexpected success. One hundred and twenty-five orders for the buffing unit were received, of which 30 will be done directly by Toujours Mieux, the remainder under license and final approval by Toujours Mieux.

From a conventional plan for a metal workshop, Toujours Mieux found itself thrust into a whole new and unforeseen direction of research work and prototype development. It now has plans for six different kind of prototype machines for the leather industry in India, including an electric measuring device to be produced conjointly with Auroelectronics. Then the blueprints will be sold and the machines manufactured elsewhere on a royalty basis under license from Toujours Mieux.

Auropolyester...

Jean-Pierre, a young Frenchman experienced in polyester and fibreglass work, undertook the responsibility of fabricating the polyester roofing elements for the Last School. Beginning in a primitive thatch shed in 1970, the scope of the work continued to expand into various decorative items lamps, tables, chairs, screen-panels, outdoor light casings, – until it was necessary to find new quarters. Production had increased for outside orders and in October of '72, through a bank loan, Auropolyester entered its present complex.

The raw materials, the resins, catalysers, fibreglass, and mica are all purchased in India. The mica, used in mosaics, is a stratified mineral which layers into burnt golden chips when fired. This mica mosaic work, set in clear plastic forms, branched into an area of its own, – Aurodecor – and now functions in a dome beside the original unit. Twenty village boys are employed in the mica work in addition to the 35 villagers involved in the polyester. For Jean-Pierre, the involvement is more than employment. “We try to have a deeper contact as a kind of family...but it is difficult to combine production with the ideal. It will take time but it will come.” Within the perimeter of Auropolyester a banana grove has emerged.

Auopress...

As the need for publications and printing facilities grew, a press was established across from the polyester unit in February of '71. Housing two letter-press machines, the printing unit has published variety of books, journals and a brochures in several European and Indian languages, servicing both orders outside and within Auroville. A small vegetable garden fills out the area behind the building.

Matrimandir workshop...

Michael, a young Englishman who had gained construction experience in the initial stages of Bharat Nivas, established a keet workshop in September of '72 adjacent to the Matrimandir to meet its growing need for machine maintenance – vibrators, mixers, handtools (vide the Centering of the City). But with the evolving complexity of the construction wonk, the workshop soon outgrew its simple quarters, inheriting a dozen power tools and a new, expanded cinderblock and asbestos building. It designed and constructed its own furnishings, and. in addition to overseeing the multiple spheres of work concerning the Matrimandir – welding, barbending, production of scaffoldings, shutterings and tubular support-frames – it also serviced miscellaneous needs in other areas of Auroville, including the construction and assemblage of two trailer wagons for the reforestation program.

Auroville Bakery...

Annexed to what had been the Aspiration cafeteria, a small “research” bakery produced its first trial biscuits and buns in February of '73. The oven was provided by a grant from a German organisation to help supplement the nutritional program of the villagers. The multi-grain biscuits were a formula of ragi and cambu (local millets), whole wheat, rice flour and gram (pea) flour; the buns, whole wheat. The need for breads in Auroville had grown with the progression of kitchens, and through various combinations, a whole wheat, sourdough and later a yeast bread developed.

In February of '74 the production of buns ceased temporarily because of the rationing of wheat and the increased demand exceeding the capacity of the small oven and wonk space. Presently the bakery is supplying 160 kilos of biscuits per week – many on export to other cities in India – and 48 large and 16 small loaves of bread daily. Due to the wheat quota, a third of the bread dough is ragi. The bakery hopes to be able to enter less constricted quarters in the Abri co-operative as funds become available.

Auroville Handmade Paper...

On the 24th of April, 1973, a handmade paper unit began operations in a large complex across the Aspiration ravine. Handmade paper is a common cottage industry in India. The Auroville process involves a number of stages: the raw material is cloth – tailor and hosiery cuttings – or in the case of thicker articles, such as file covers, gunny sack. The cloth cuttings are then finely chopped into cloth dust in a rag chopper. This dust is then placed in a boiler and bleached to remove all grease and dirt, beaten in a beater until it has been reduced to a fine pulp, to which chemicals for colouring, opacity, and ink fixative are added. This finished pulp is then placed in cement tanks until ready to be spread evenly over woodenframed wire-mesh moulds.

The raised frames permit the water to drain from the sheet of pulp. These sheets are then layered with felt to enable their removal from the frame without falling apart, and then piled, to be put into a hydraulic press which squeezes out the desired amount of water. Finally, the “papers” are taken separately by hand and dried on a line, after which they are finished and trimmed and, in some cases, marbled.

Auroelectronics...

In October of '73, a small electrical research laboratory and workshop formed. In early '74, Auroelectronics, as it came to be called, took up quarters in a wing of the Fraternity crafts sections. In the spring, it developed a prototype for an electronic metronome – “Metrotop”. The spherical instrument, housed in a rosewood cabinet, behaves as a metronome when the lid is in an upright position, and when the sphere is revolved, placing the lid in a face-down position, as a tuning device incorporating printed circuitries and uni-junction transistors with no moving parts, the unit is impervious to climatic fluctuations and maintains a high stability of frequency.

Takshanalaya...

Takshanalaya both in the Sanskrit and Tamil means “woodworking unit”. On the 28th of February, 1974, it began operating in a large open-spaced cinder-block and asbestos structure as the first of the production centres in the Industrial Zone. Presently employing some 75 to 80 workers from the carpentry caste of the surrounding villages, it emerged as an outgrowth of the experience which Ben, a young Dutchman, gathered during the construction of the Centre Amphitheatre. The work for the moment is mainly intra-Auroville, – shuttering and furniture for Bharat Nivas and Auromodèle, miscellaneous furnishings – however negotiations are in process for furniture orders in other areas of India.

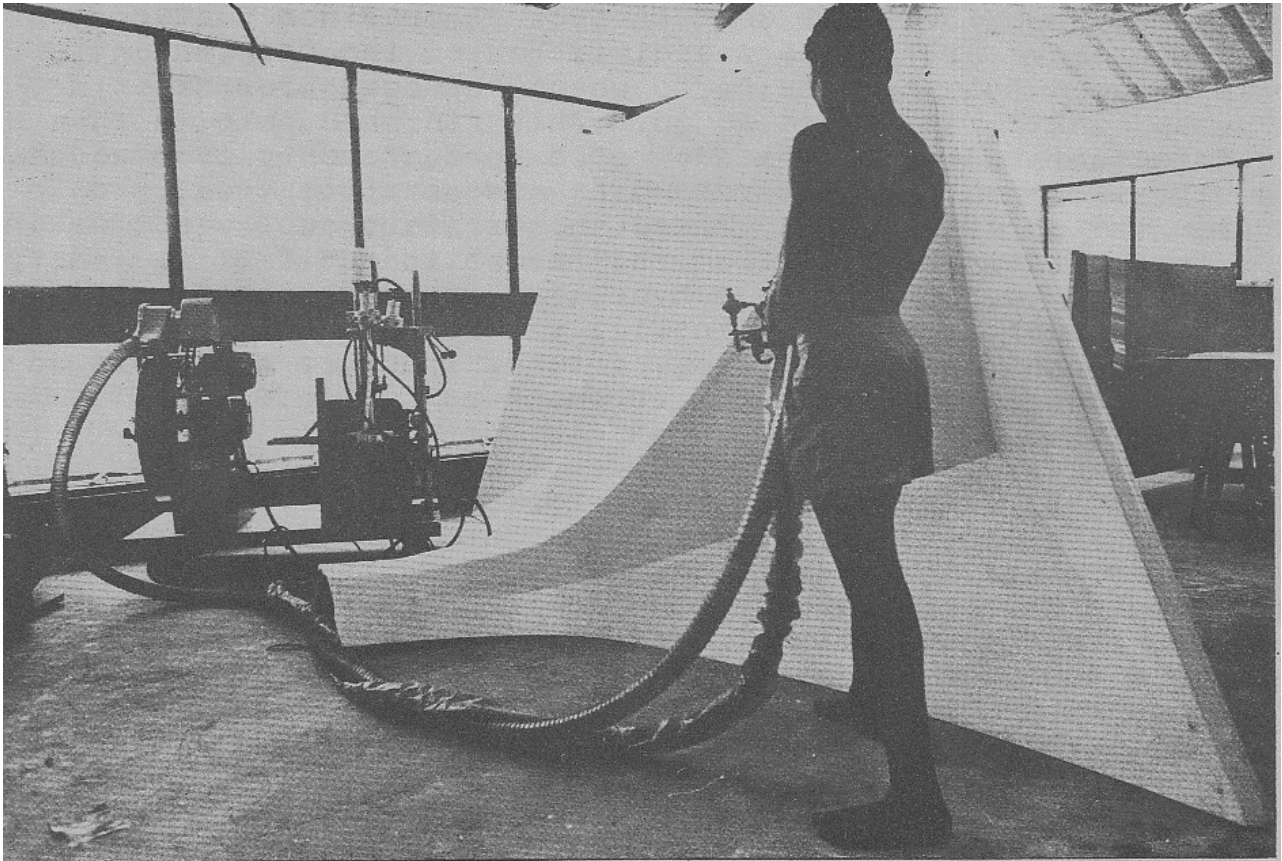
Abri... (vide Auroville and the Indigenous People, the Tamils)

Agriculture.

Over the years a series of kitchen gardens and field crops have patched the various communities and inter-cultivated among the industries, but only two areas have developed thus far as concentrated organic farming units: Auro-Orchard and the adjacent dairy, and Annapurna, a recently emergent agricultural system in the Vanoor area.

Auro-Orchard...

When Auroville initiated the project some 6 years ago as an experiment in organic farming, the land contained two acres of young lime and lemon trees, ten acres of cashew, ten acres of mango and about two acres of mixed cultivation – vegetables interplanted among fruit trees – of which only the first and last two acres were under irrigation by a single borewell. The remaining 20 of the original 24 acres were utilised as dry crop farming, with 4 milk cows present.



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1. worker in polyester fiberglassing a roof element for the Library,
2. Sprinkler system at Aero-Orchard

Gradually the acreage which was once arid land, sandy-clayish loam, compact lateritic, exhausted of humus began to be developed in increments of 5-acre irrigated blocks, alternating good windbreaking forest trees with small groves of fruit trees to break up the barren patches. Through this slow and deliberate approach of intensively working small areas at a time, the soil was reinfused with organic material, and complemented by the presence of trees, a new microclimate began to evolve, attracting large numbers of birds as natural deterrents to insect infestation.

Since May of 1973 the proportion had grown to 60 acres of which 53 were fully cultivated. Two more borewells had been implemented with three sprinkler units capable of presently irrigating 21 acres – 3 acres vegetable, 3 of lemon, lime and miscellaneous fruit, and 15 of peanut, millet, fodder and green manure. The remaining 32 acres are under dry cultivation – 11 acres of mango, 15 of cashew, 3 of peanut and legumes, 3 of forest and miscellaneous fruit. The cattle herd had grown to more than a dozen providing a natural resource of manure.

Avoiding monoculture, employing a varied system of crop rotation, the aim has been to create a harmonious, self-sustaining, mixed farm – cattle, vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains, oil seeds and crops interspersed with forest trees.

The Dairy...

Across the Madras-Pondicherry road from the Orchard lies the dairy and neighbouring Service Farm unit. Beginning from a cowshed near Aspiration housing six milk cows, the herd transferred to a large keet shed at its present site at the end of '71, increasing in numbers to 40. New dairy facilities were built in October of '72 and the cow herd now exceeds 80 – Jerseys, Holsteins, Red Danes, Brown Swiss and other crosses. Because of its grassless location, a fodder program is being instituted at Annapurna through the assistance of a grant from the German FAO.

Annapurna...

Annapurna is a 140-acre farming tract of black cotton soil – the best quality in this region, in the preparatory stages of unfolding as a biologically integrated unit. It is located some 2 miles west of the dairy. It is envisioned that Annapurna will be able to supply most, if not all, of Auroville's food needs for the present population.

A recent grant from the FAO-Germany will permit the growing of 17 acres of high-protein grasses as dairy fodder. The grant will also cover the expenses of borewells and sprinkler irrigation system for the fodder acreage, a shredder, and a bullock team and cart to transport the fodder. With the growing food shortage and Auroville's accelerated need for self-sustenance, more energies will be concentrated on Annapurna.

HEALTH HYGIENE AND NUTRITION

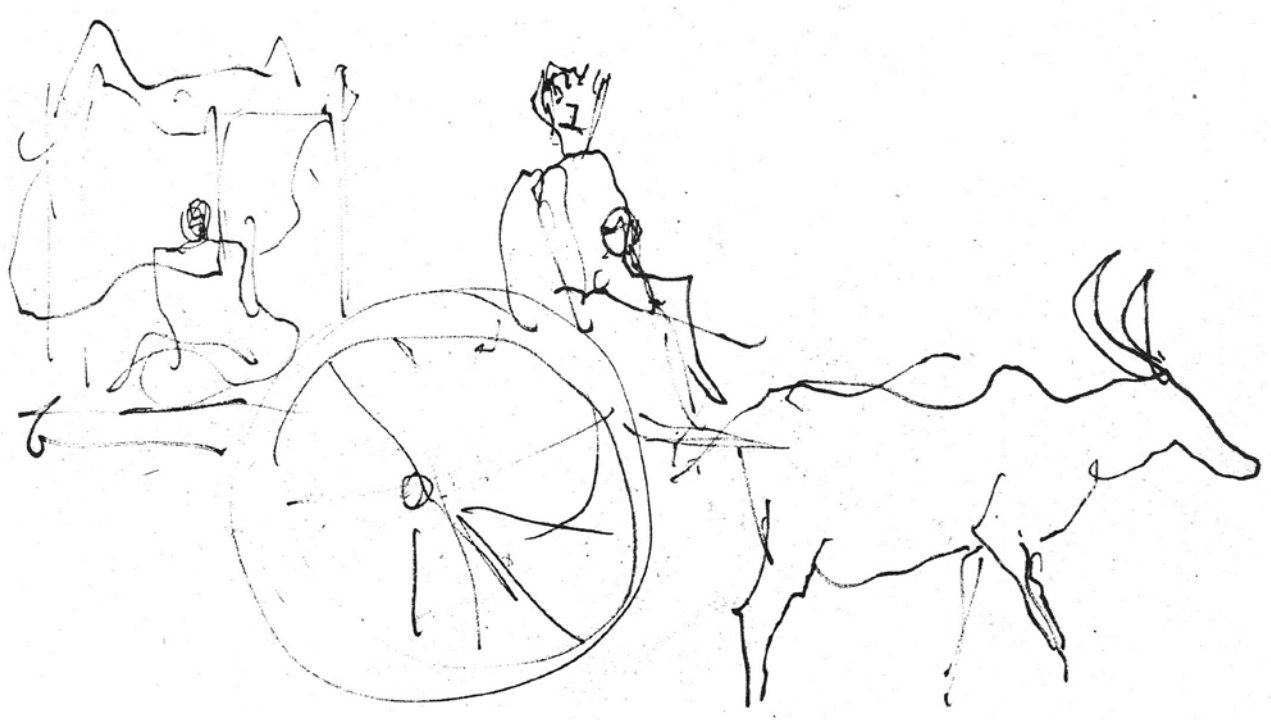
A small keet dispensary had been established in 1969 across from Kuilapalayam and beside what is now the Aspiration community kitchen. Health care, even from this primitive beginning, has always been a free service both to villagers and Aurovilians. The original medical staff consisted of two alternating doctors. In July of '71, Dr. Kamal, a woman recently arrived from Bombay, began coming daily from Pondicherry and later moved to Aspiration in August of the same year. The clinic was minimally equipped, capable of treating common illnesses and injuries, but the more severe cases had to be referred to a nearby medical college and hospital.

The December cyclone of '72 levelled the old keet structure and the clinic was shifted to a temporary housing between the village and Aspiration. Regular physical examinations and records had already begun to be kept of the school children in February. By August of '73, the formal Health Centre, long delayed by construction stoppages and lack of materials, opened beside the kindergarten in Aspiration. Overseen by Dr. Sen, the working responsibility was shared by Dr. Kamal who had also assumed the charge of pre- and post-natal care with the closing of the maternity clinic in Promesse. The new health quarters provided a much more organised environment for medical treatment. Ardis, a young American girl with nurse's training, has gradually grown into the role of integrating health education in the school (vide Education). In addition to this focal Health Centre, two smaller clinics have sprung up in Udavi and Kottakarai to serve the village needs.

The parasitic and amoebic diseases endemic to the region and the susceptibility of wounds to infection are largely due to the hygiene, nutritional and climatic conditions prevalent in rural India. Until the sanitary and dietary habits of the villages change, treatment can only be symptomatic. Though precautions may be taken, there is no way for Auroville communities to remain immune due to proximity and constant interchange with the villagers. It is not possible, nor is it desirable, for Auroville to progress impervious to the level of health of the indigenous inhabitants. For this reason, Auroville has introduced within its means drinking water facilities and nutritional programs in several of the immediate villages (vide Auroville and the indigenous People, the Tamils). Until funds are forthcoming, alternative sanitation facilities cannot be implemented. But perhaps only through the slower yet more assured educational process with their children who are less resistant to change, can an effective solution be found.

In terms of diet, the poorer Tamils subsist on a variation of white rice and spices. Aside from dietary habits and other considerations, the standard of nutrition is correspondent to the level of available agriculture. It is in this sense that as the agricultural index of Auroville rises with its contact effect upon the villagers, the quality of their diet will improve, as will their motivation and capacity to develop and render the land productive. The present diet in Auroville is largely vegetarian, though there is no compulsion and individuals, according to their means, are free to choose their food needs. The numerous community kitchens provide their own variations, Indian and Western, of the basic food commodities which consist of whole grains, local fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds, milk products and egg for those who wish. An experiment with algae as an alternative food is in progress in two of the communities (vide Ecology: Alternative Foods).





TRANSPORTATION AND ROADS

No complex system of roads and transportation has been so far engineered, but rather a simple and minimal network has been implemented by need. None of the roads within the Auroville interior are paved. Generally, they are packed-earth roadways, raised for drainage, with a series of interconnecting bicycle and footpaths to the outlying communities (vide Appendices, Map). As motorised vehicular transport is largely limited to the few construction vehicles and tractors, the present system has proved nominally adequate for the simple animal-drawn, bicycle and pedestrian traffic. It is only during the heavy monsoon rains that traffic becomes awkward and unreliable, and the constant wear of bullock tracks and exposure to the elements demands a continual upkeep and repair to keep the roads passable.

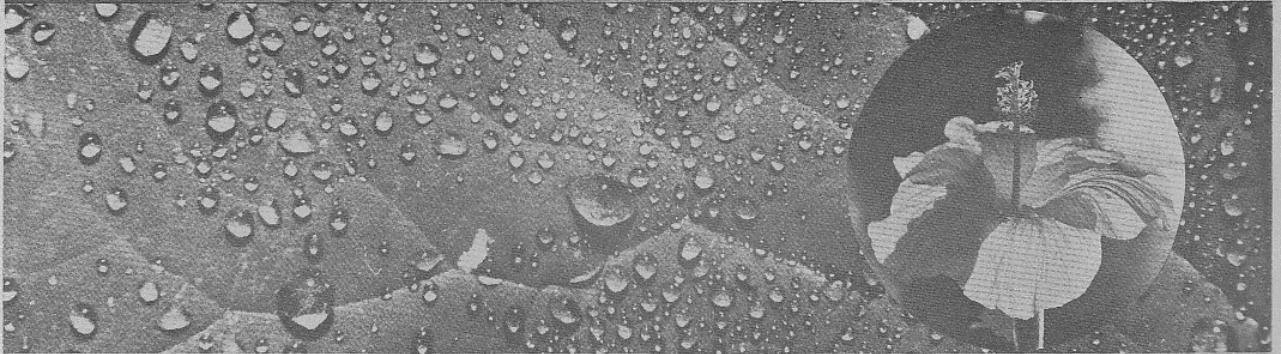
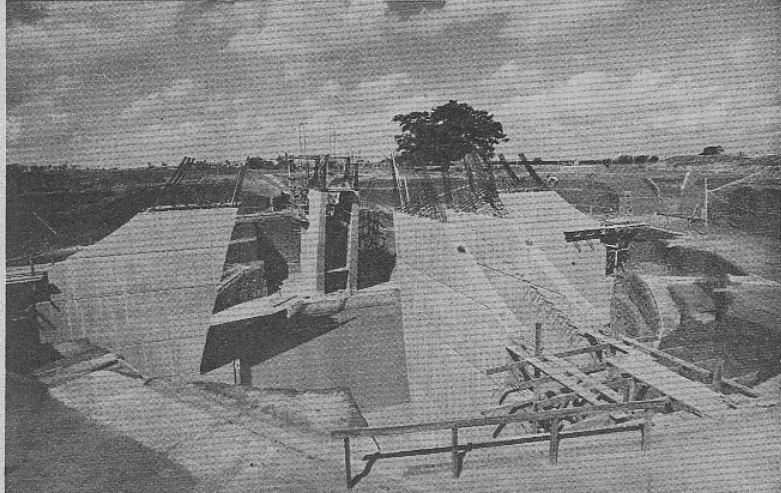
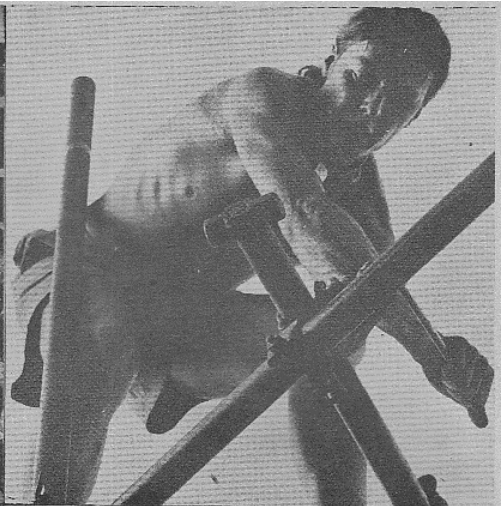
In keeping with Auroville's ecological considerations, the relative compactness of its distribution, and its financial means, combustion-engine transport is reduced to a minimum, and automotive traffic as presently existent is not envisioned in the context of the city. Bicycles and bullock carts have proven the most dependable and desirable for the moment until a new progression evolves.

The few Jeeps, diesel vans, and tractors in use are serviced in several locations, the main one being Aurogarage, a central vehicle repair and maintenance shop. A large diesel school bus serves on a daily basis as the general transport medium between the Auroville communities and Pondicherry. Not only does it convey children and passengers, but it coordinates its schedule to receive and deliver milk and other miscellaneous items to the several distribution points. A new diesel van recently arrived from Germany likewise serves as a common intra- and inter-Auroville vehicle with weekly runs to Madras.

It is apparent that as in the case of the growth of the Auroville system as a whole, the sub-system of roads and transport is a tentative and evolving arrangement, corresponding to organic needs and capacities rather than arbitrary visions. Things are kept simple until one knows.

The journey of a thousand miles begins from beneath one's feet...

Tao Te King



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1. excavating the crater for the Matrimandir,
2. working on the tubular support frames,
3. view of four pillars set in the crater, early '73, Banyan in the rear,
4. passing the concrete,
5. hibiscus

THE CENTERING OF THE CITY

There is a point at which all of the roads in Auroville, the paths seen and unseen meet, converge, and having no place further to travel spatially, turn within. This point is the Matrimandir, the Centering of the City.

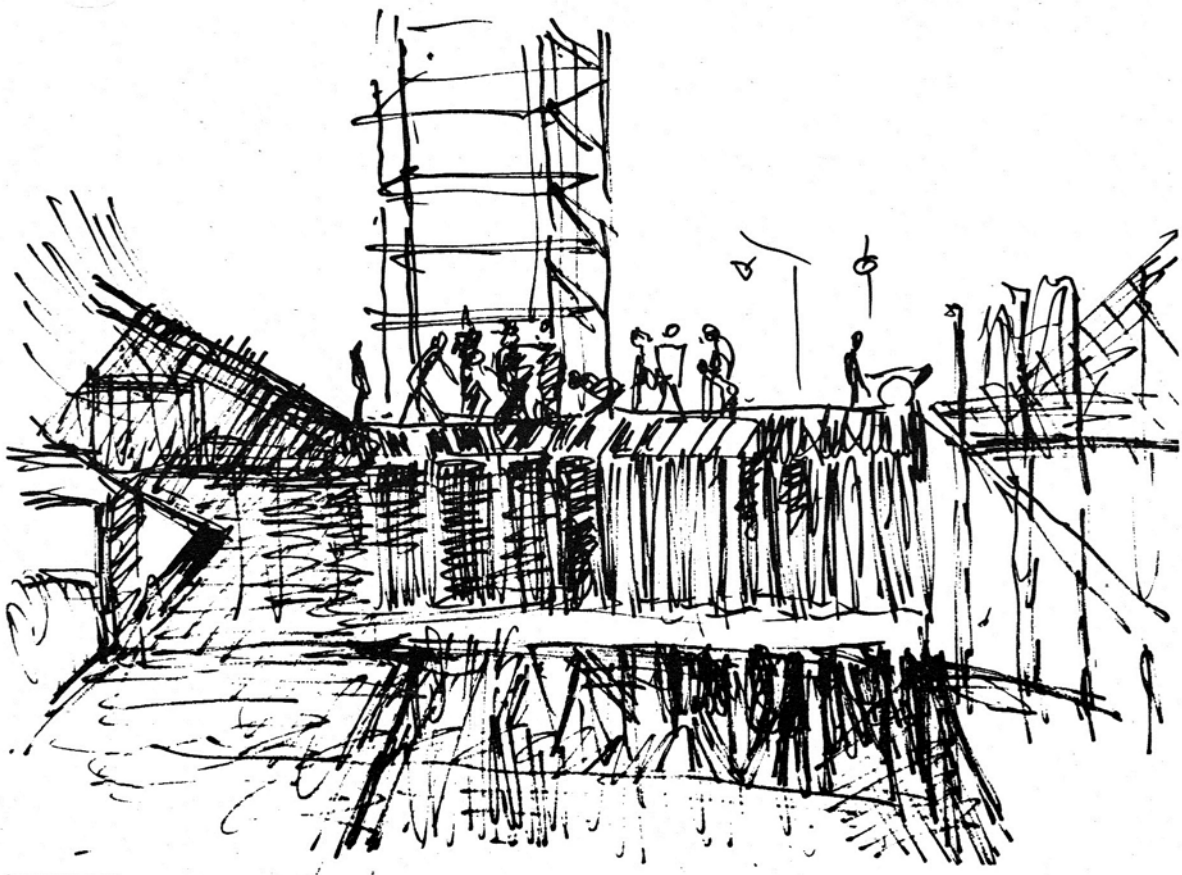
But what is this point, the Matrimandir? It appears starkly as some inexplicable and partially-formed structure set in an abyss, an enigma in concrete peopled with tiny figures, seemingly its constructions... though one has the feeling that they are the constructed. But why, why the Matrimandir? Perhaps one could say that it represents the embodiment of the aspirations of all the peoples who have come to build and be built by Auroville. Or perhaps one could say it is the point which unites the diversity. Perhaps one could say it is the mirror which reminds them why they are there. Perhaps it is all of these and none of these, and perhaps after all, one does not know. Perhaps one simply says it is the soul, the centre.

Everything has a centre and that centre connects everything. At the centre of each is the centre of all. The cell has its nucleus, the earth its molten core, the solar system its sun, the atom its core harbouring the energy locked in matter, concretised in matter. And Auroville, the City, it too has a centre, not just a geographical centre, but a Centre, plain, one, without adjectives and modifiers, a mystery. The world needs a good mystery. Of course, the practical men will say that it is not practical: how can you build a building if you don't know what it is? But then, it is the practical men with their practical thoughts who have built the world which has proven quite impractical, quite dangerously impractical... because they have built without a centre. Perhaps it is best to find this centre first and then build. And perhaps if we could discover what was inside the Matrimandir, we would discover what was inside ourselves... because the centre of each is the centre of all.

But words are obtuse and the Matrimandir still remains impenetrable and itself. Perhaps it is easier to observe some of its initial effects. It has transformed a melange of global amateurs, most of whom have never held a reinforced rod, into a coherent and skilled group of artisans assembling a delicate engineering work. It has taken a clash of colours, cultures and castes – villager and sophisticate, child and elder, woman and man – and harmonised them in a common labour, sweating together under a single sun. It has shown the Aurovilians that they can do what they cannot do, and earned the unquestioned respect of all the apprentice citizens of the apprentice city. But one need no longer defend it, find reasonable excuses for its presence. It is and that is more than sufficient.

Among its more material mysteries, the Matrimandir has no fixed and final architectural plan. Only the structural design has formalised and that too is subject to detail adjustments in process. It is a living and evolving form revealing itself one step at a time, the next step becoming clear, focussing, only when the previous has been fulfilled. One does not have so much the feeling that he is creating something but rather delivering something, a child that is already there. It is a birth, a discovering, not a manufacturing as the tree within the seed and the man within the gene – already there, unfolding in its own rhythm, its own inner momentum, its own determinism.

The building itself is a teacher, demanding, educating a certain knowledge, a certain sensitivity from its constructions, building that knowledge up progressively level by level, corresponding to its increasing complexity and difficulty to execute. It is not a programmed script to be mechanically followed. One has to listen closely, feel the movement, be alive to its needs, its subtle gestures and hints indicating what is to be done, what is the next step. There is consciousness in the concrete. It is the Centering of the City.



The Matrimandir.

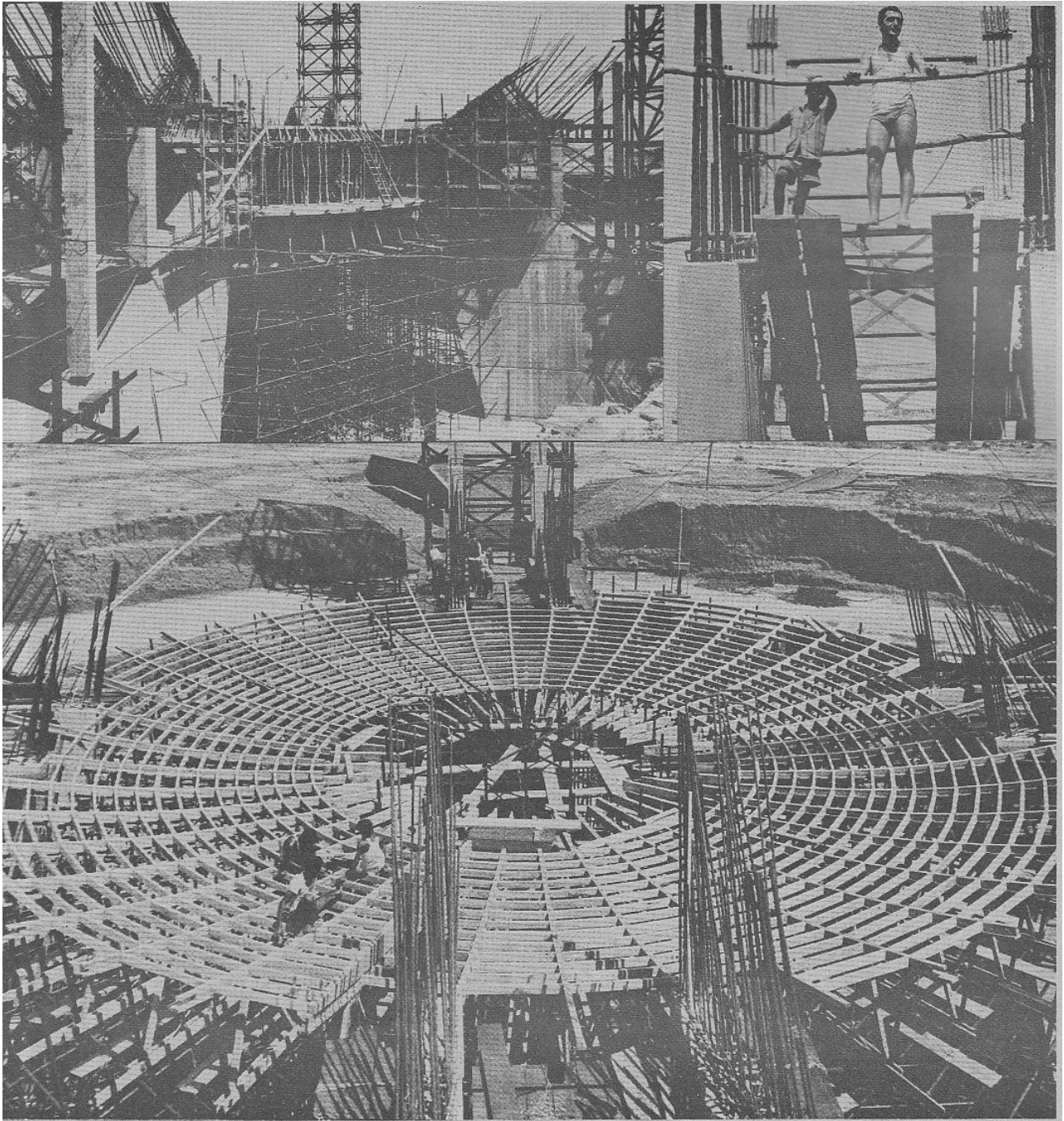
At dawn on the 21st of February, 1971, the foundation stone was laid for the Matrimandir. All of the Aurovilians were present. It was the third element completing the centre of Auroville: The Banyan Tree, the Urn, the Matrimandir.

The weeks and months following that date saw a handful of Aurovilians digging into the callous clay in an area roughly marked as the excavation site for an immense crater 10½ metres deep and 50 metres across at the rim. They dug with their small hand shovels, picks and crowbars, removing the earth in flat pans and wheelbarrows. Joining this first core of Matrimandir workers, a van would come each morning between 5:30 and 7:00 with a crew of a dozen or so who had other works during the day. On Sundays work parties from the communities and Pondicherry would form rag-tag lines of men, women and children, passing pans of burnt earth from the growing matrix to swelling mounds nearby, staining hands and bodies with its indelible red.

In the summer of '71, a meeting was held in the recently completed workers camp at Peace to clarify directions, approaches and methodologies. The excavation needed to be accelerated. The workings of the small group of Aurovilians was remarkable in its own way, removing 2,000 cubic metres of compact earth with primitive handtools; but it was more a symbolic action and an initiation. Earth-moving equipment was suggested but rejected because of its incapacity to negotiate the steep incline, its expense, and the general undesirability of heavy machinery when avoidable. It was decided to employ large numbers of villagers in traditional hand methods. Beginning in November a swarm of 400 labourers began chipping away bit by bit and by February 21st of 1972, the excavation was completed. Twenty thousand cubic metres of earth had been displaced.

One year had passed, a year of digging and dredging until the base had been found. Now began the reascent. A concrete platform would be laid at the bottom of the pit, implanted with four arching pillars rising back to ground level to uphold the spherical superstructure of the Matrimandir, four foundation pillars exceeding 10 metres in height to support a compressed globe 36 metres wide and 29 metres high. Entry into the sphere would be through steps set within the paired pillars, the sphere itself containing three chambers, – the first two apparently antechambers leading to the third, a dodecagon. An opening in the top, continuing through each of the successive descending levels, would render a vertical aperture bisecting the axis of the sphere. Built upon the pillars, four paired ribs will curve upward joining at the summit of the sphere forming its skeleton and contour. They will be interconnected by three tie-slabs serving as the chamber floors. This much was seen in its outlines from the beginning of the execution, but the exosphere, its material and texture, and the interior, its content and functioning, remain unknown.

To establish some grasp of its magnitude, of its physical proportions and the skill demanded from its apprentice constructors, a series of raw notes based on eleven progress reports roughly sketches the concreting stages and interims completed:



1 | 2
—
3

1. Matrimandir under construction, spring '74,
2. Gerard and friend on one of the pillars,
3. view of shuttering for slab 1 from above

April 10, 1972. Concrete “mat” 30 cm thick laid and completed. Projected work to include: setting foundation footings capable of bearing 1,500 ton/ft. load transmitted by total weight of Matrimandir and pillars; tie-slab 22 cm thick reinforced concrete connecting footings in structural unity. Preparing for this concreting, materials delivered, 400 cu ft. of wood shuttering cut, 15 tons reinforced steel bent and welded. Temporary carpentry shed established. 12 regular Aurovilians, team of village workers.

May 16, 1972. May 3-40 tons reinforced steel for tie-slab emplaced. Pouring operation commenced same day, completed 26 hrs. later. 76 cu.m. concrete. Target strength of 250 kg./sq.m. exceeded. Approx. 120 people participated. Scaffolds erected for foundation footing reinforcement. Next operation, concreting south and east footings (100 sq.m. – 1.20 deep). Quantity 240 cu.m. to commence 20 May--one layer/night, 8 consecutive nights, 4 PM-2AM.

July 3, 1972. 4 foundation footings completed 8 June. (480 cu.m.). 4 paired pillars begun, taken up to starter level of 30 cm by 19 June. West pillar, 2 m. poured; east, shuttering and form work. Projected: 4 levels to be poured, 3-2m. each, 1-2.64m. reaching ground level.

August 3, 1972: East pillar concreted 2 layers, 2 consecutive nights. Steelwork prepared on north and west, south in process. Metal workshop begun. Steel stockyard established in field.

September 13, 1972. East pillar up to 4th level, 8.64 m. Begins to rise up and out of excavation. Curvilinear shape clear, steps indicated by protruding reinforced rods. Aurovilians increased to 2 teams. Crane of 1-ton capacity constructed in workshop to hoist concrete from mixer level to pouring level.

June 2, 1973. All pillars completed to 4th level. Temporary propping towers of reinforced concrete emplaced on pillars for rigid supports of extending ribs until skeletal structure is self-supporting by means of 1st and 2nd level tie-slabs. Hoist towers, resembling launch towers, erected beside pillars to provide scaffolding for ribs and winch to lift materials. Tower 17 m. above ground, 9 m. below ground. Tubular scaffolding support for 1st level-slab under assemblage. 8 kms. of pipe. 6,000 joint clips used on 280 vertical props to support calculated 400-ton load, of lower region of sphere. New workshop (200 sq. m.) constructed for new tools and machinery.

December, 1973. 70 tons reinforced steel bent and fitted for 1st slab and lower rib sections. New machinery, stone crusher and earth rammer. 11th Nov., continuous concreting of 1st slab – 72 hours. Nov. 15, 16, 17, concreting summit portions of pillars forming curve with 1st slab level.

February 28, 1974. Preparation of 1st nib layers, shuttering, reinforcement. Concreting of 4- 1st rib layers completed.

March 29, 1974. Concreting of slab level 2 completed 29 March, dawn.

The Gardens of the Matrimandir

It is envisioned that twelve gardens will surround the Matrimandir and the thirteenth under the Banyan Tree. To begin the preparation for such a botanical work, a nursery was begun on February 21st, 1970, behind the site where the workers camp would rise the following year. The work would be overseen by Narad, who had received 10 years training in temperate horticulture and 2 years in sub-tropic, before his five years experience in Auroville.

The nursery's beginning recalled many other difficult beginnings. With no water and a barren patch of land which later expanded to 6 acres, the first 4 Aurovilians found themselves gardening with two barrels of water a day hauled by bullock. Months passed in this precarious fashion until a pipeline could be rigged to a well some distance away. Its 1,200 gallons per hour barely permitted selective watering, no irrigation. With the resulting lack of ground cover, each plant had to be banded, mulching as much as possible. During the summers of the power cuts during daylight hours, watering continued till midnight. With no fencing, no initial protection, the first planting was wiped out by the cows.

The initial acquisition of seeds and plants came from friends abroad and pilgrimages to nurseries. Gradually this grew into monthly nursery tours to Madras and Bangalore, collecting seeds, cuttings, some endangered species, trying to establish positive and accurate identifications and keeping monthly observation charts on all the plants which now number 20,000. An attempt has been made to upgrade and refine the trees and shrubs and propagate new varieties, introduce new flora to the region. Of the 55 varieties of hibiscus, 21 are Hawaiian. In 1973, more than 5,000 plants had been given out to the several Auroville communities.

Many Aurovilians working in other "green" programs have gained their initial experience in the nursery. A small reference library has grown to 300 books. It has similarly become an educational field for the Tamil youths employed, a "school for young gardeners" seeking to determine the work for which they have a feeling – watering, cuttings and graftings, compost making, pottery. To encourage the diffusion of flora and strengthen contact, any villager willing to care for a plant or tree is free to take it.

The areas of the nursery include: seed propagation and cuttings; transplanting, overseen by Lieske, a 70-year old from Holland who teaches flute to the village children; a semi-Japanese shade garden of orchids, ferns and begonias, two main shrub gardens (experimenting in acclimatising new shrubs); gazebos and arches for creepers; hibiscus gardens; lotus and water lily pools, a tree farm integrating rare tree of India and the tropics, a rose garden; a section of bulbous plants, local fruit trees, and flower pot making. In addition, a number of contacts, including the Los Angeles Arboretum, and the University of Hawaii and various seed-exchange programs, have developed.

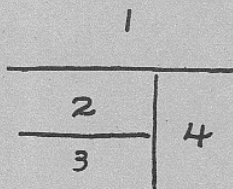
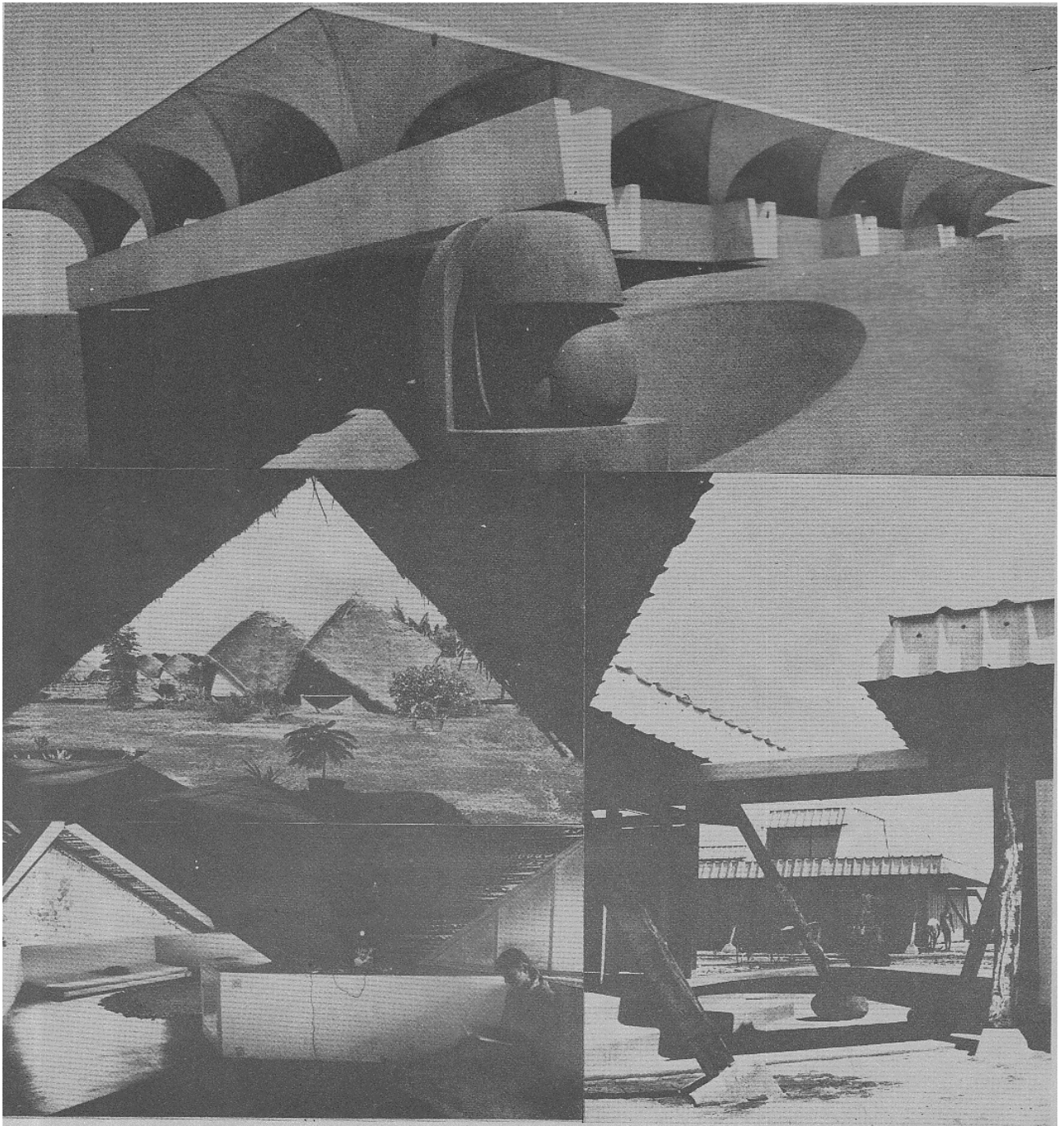
ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING AND NON-PLANNING

Two architectural and planning processes have emerged co-existently: one, the formal, organisational, seeking to integrate the most evolved urban planning techniques; the other, informal, organic, diffused, seeking growth and design in process, from within. Both are necessary in Auroville, both balance one another in a whole, testing one another's weaknesses, creating a dynamic tension in which neither can become self-satisfied. Planning and non-planning.

In the beginning, the formal seemed to dominate in what might be referred to as the "model" stage of architecture. Multitudes of models were created in the drawing room, many plans and schemes evolved on paper. This was before there were many people actually living on the land, before the collectivity had begun to come together, to establish its contact with the process and flow from within Auroville. As a result, with no accumulated basis of living experience, architecture and its planning context were largely abstractions. But what could one expect until directions, knowledge of the land and one's selves, had begun to clarify? Only then could a conscious and correspondent architecture emerge.

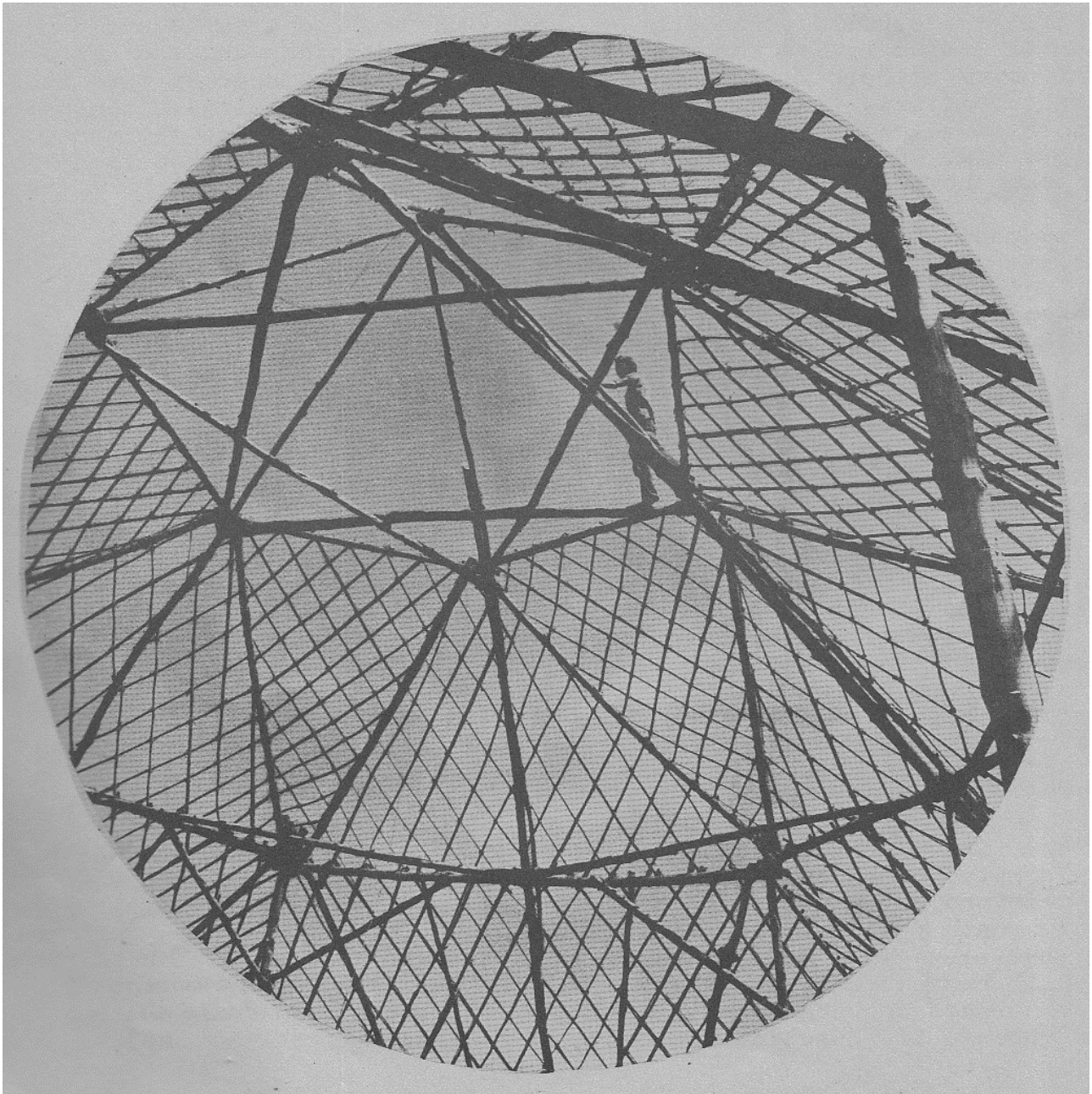
Gradually as the consciousness began to develop within Auroville, began to experience its real needs and the needs of the land and the available means, more simple, indigenous, flexible forms arose. A kind of spontaneous generation. The architecture of the planner had found a more humble counterpoint rhythm – thatch, bamboo, pressed earth and stone overtaking brick and concrete – direct experience rather than abstract thought being the determinant and formateur. A non-planning process permitting a truer planning process to emerge, surely it is not the mind that will build Auroville – Auroville will build itself. At the beginning everyone held the illusion that he could build Auroville, superimpose his wonder-idea of how it should be. It was not until everyone realised that nobody knew that things became clearer.

The focus for the formalised architecture is presently located in the drawing office at Aspiration. Their concern for the moment is the planning and realisation of Auromodèle, a prototype community growing on the slope below Aspiration. For a period, an Auroville Planning Group existed, composed of representatives from the various disciplines in Auroville, meeting irregularly in Pondicherry. But the group seems to have dissipated and dissolved, unable to master this thing called Auroville. A non-planning group, having no focus and every-focus, meeting nowhere and everywhere, seems to be the only system wide enough and fluid enough to catch the subtle intimations and clues without too much distortion.



1. Rear view of Last School,
2. view from within a hut at Aspiration,
3. interior view of a family hut, Aspiration,
4. detailed exterior of craft units at Fraternity

The only plan which one may speak of as definitive, serving as the minimal outline and framework to contain Auroville's teeming diversity, is the four zones – the simple quaternary on which the city is to be built: residential, cultural, international, and industrial. All the rest is only a tentative process of a city trying to discover itself.



TOWARDS A NON-ECONOMIC SOCIETY

Money would be no more the sovereign lord... A Dream

Modern civilisations and societies, their value systems and orientations, have succumbed to an economic determinism. The greatness of a nation is judged by its material wealth and possessions and the accruent power it holds. Institutions and social systems are programmed toward quantitative rather than qualitative goals, which in fact are no goals at all simply perpetuations and expansions upon the same linear theme. Education is reduced to a mere assembly process feeding the economic mechanism.

Because money has become an end rather than a transitional means, man has sacrificed himself, obliterated his self-nature, trampled his inner potentials to “earn a living”. It is more to earn a non-living, for one never has the chance to discover who one is on what one is capable of. The child who dreams of flying is constantly reminded of what he must become until he forgets his dreams and himself and goes to sleep. The fears have become hereditary.

Perhaps the disharmonies in society are a reflection of this aberration, this unnatural and distorting compulsion which tears men apart from themselves and forces them to be what they are not. Perhaps if man could once again follow his true nature, find his true place, social harmony would evolve spontaneously, consistent with a supremely practical functioning. But in the transition of a society reversing from external to internal determinants – until the thread is recovered – risks, difficulties, insecurities intensify. The harmony is not immediate. One is in between.

Auroville is in between. It has sought to disengage from the economic motive, but the spell is deep, the habit is deep, and Auroville is still in a world under its sway.

When the first Aurovilians came and for long thereafter, there was a certain naiveté concerning money and its place. Those living in Auroville who could not meet their minimal expenses (approximately \$.30 per month for food, lodging, utilities and personal items) were borne by “Prosperity” – a system in which the general fund assumed financial responsibility. The general fund was the original repository of grants and donations, individual and organisational, channelled through Sri Aurobindo Society (vide Ground and Background) to support the project of Auroville until it could become self-sustaining. It has since gradually been

supplemented by the slowly growing collective capital generated within Auroville. In addition to boarding and lodging, Prosperity supplied personal requirements – toilet articles, clothing, miscellany – at the end of each month in response to itemised requests.

With this appearance of all things being provided – the land, or at least part of it already there; initial work projects and constructions proceeding as if by magic, personal expenses met, the pressure to produce was suspended and one began to accustom himself to this illusion, forgetting about the question of money as if it would just go away.

Of course it was only a temporary respite before gears were shifted, but a necessary one – Auroville did not want to know itself immediately into the economic scrambler get caught in the same syndrome. It was in its infancy and needed an external support, a guardian, a protected moment, so that it could be a child and see as a child with his pure vision and goals rather than being forced abruptly into economic adulthood. The people needed that breather to find themselves, to evaluate and form, even if germinally, the truer direction collective and individual. There had to be that moment to see more clearly, to set the course consciously, even if only for a moment.

During this interregnum, Aurovilians were able to establish their communities, their environments, their educational and social values independent of economic compromise. But once this first basis was secured, at first imperceptibly, then more swiftly and finally with a crash the materialist reality descended like a fury. Following the Bangladesh war in late '71 which drained India's economy, financial assistance governmentally, privately and abroad subsided, compounded by a series of international money crises and collapses. The cycle had begun to reverse itself, Auroville's needs and population growing, its external support diminishing. The neophyte city was jolted from its idyll and faced with evolving a self-sufficiency, non-economically. How to be self-sufficient, effectively productive, without becoming commercialised, without getting lost in the machinery without selling oneself?

But Auroville was not completely unprepared. It had learned through its rigorous and pioneering experience to simplify wants, to discriminate between the extraneous and the needful. That had set the perspective for a true self-sufficiency – the liberation from the consumptive impulse. It was now a matter of organising an agriculture, or some alternative, capable of feeding the population, and of developing relevant industries to provide the essential goods and services as well as generating income through interchange with outside markets.

By the end of the summer of '73, the bottom fell out. The general fund had all but run dry. The first and only general Auroville meeting was held at the beginning of September in the unfinished Amphitheatre surrounding the Urn to seek some resolve to the financial crisis. It was decided that the individual communities and work units would try to sustain themselves either by recourse to personal funds or by contracting work for outside concerns. Though it was not possible for Auroville to go from almost total dependence to complete independence, this began the push.

Auroville began to roll up its sleeves. Somehow it held together through this period, unable to expand in new directions or initiate new programs, but at least able to maintain. They had been forced into a survival situation and they survived, improvising from within, intensifying work, gradually climbing out from under the dependence, gradually supplementing the minimal and unreliable flow of external support in the general fund.

During one compressed week in September as a means of conserving and consolidating the loose and isolated system in which Auroville was acquiring its food needs, the Central Food Distribution came into being. Previously the individual community and worker kitchens were purchasing their own requirements fractionally, augmented by Auroville-grown crops. Now all the food needs would be assessed as a whole and purchased in bulk, wholesale – to be distributed equally among those who could contribute as well as those who could not and the push accelerated to grow one's own diet. A number of kitchen gardens rapidly multiplied and the potential of Annapurna farm became instantly significant.

In the meantime Barbara and Jocelyn had evaluated what and how much was being consumed in Auroville and how much money could be pooled into a Central Fund administered by Aurovilians for their food purchasing. The old Amphitheatre workshop became the new food distribution centre, shelved and stocked with tins, containers, bottles and cabinets from Aurovilians. Only a screen had to be bought. A van was made available, later replaced by the more practical bullock carts, to gather the goods from the bazaar in Pondicherry and the few producing farms in Auroville. The Central Food Distribution was underway and the move to grow one's own begun.

On February 28th of 1974, Pour Tous (For All), years in preparation, materialised. For long Aurovilians had wished to eliminate the internal exchange of money, but a workable alternative had not yet emerged, because most of the producing units – agricultural or industrial – required a returning capital to continue, and most had not begun to reach the point of sustaining themselves through outside market. Pour Tous represented a first focus to undo the habit of internal money flow, although informal interchange of goods had grown organically between individuals and communities and Auroville labour has always been free.

Aside from its functions as a free store and food distribution centre for the Aspiration-side of the plateau, Pour Tous has initiated a system of coupons which the villagers in the various Auroville work units may take in lieu of salary if they wish, or in some ratio to salary, and redeem them for goods. Aurovilians receive no wages, so this intermediary is unnecessary, but it is a first, perhaps play-like, attempt to disengage from the money-means.

It is possible for goods and labour to circulate freely in one interrelated system, without the alienating step of referring them to cash equivalents. But for this, the society must function consciously as one interrelated system, de-economised, the family extended to humanity.



GOVERNMENT AND COLLECTIVE ORGANISATION

...One should organise life not according to outer artificial rules, but according to an organised, inner consciousness...

To be a True Aurovilian

Codified laws exist in a society in proportion to its needs for laws, as a means to regulate and give semblance of order to what would otherwise disintegrate into chaos. But if it were possible for a collective self-discipline to emerge, based upon the free self-discipline of its members, this reliance upon external and rigid restraints would be no more necessary, would be constrictive and artificial. An organisation would be present, implicit by the very nature of the social composition, unlabelled without need of intermediaries and surface props.

In the beginnings there were no rules, or imposed order, just a blank, like the landscape. The city would either unify organically or shatter. The consciousness within would be the sole determinant, no compromising with the truth. Auroville had begun without a regime, without a way. No way and every way.

A growing microcosm of the earth's peoples was gathering in a red emptiness to build a city by ear, one had to learn to listen, to be silent – to quiet the impulse to predetermine and systematise. There was no formal governing body, no courts, no elected officials, no political machinery – no bureaucratic buzz jamming the reception, no rush to make it happen frightening it away.

The first phase of government then was a listening. Aurovilians had become suspicious of group meetings and committees which for the most part, produced little more than talk – a habit jarring in a city trying to listen. But in-august of 1973 a new kind of meeting spontaneously emerged – a departure and reversal from the verbal format. Twelve representatives from the communities present at that time collected early one Sunday-morning at Utilité to learn to listen together, to find a centre in silence. There was no program, no ulterior motive, other than to come and be together, to be quiet and hear as one. This came to be known as the Sunday morning meetings, and represented the first tangible form in a new and internalised collective process.

Decision-making in the city was a tentative discovery, determined in process, in the action, rectified in the moment. Each situation had to be met on its own merits, no generalisation, no ritualising. As these decisions began to widen from their immediate spheres of influence – individual, environmental, communal – affecting larger contexts, the collective consciousness likewise had to widen, co-ordinating actions and interactions, identifying with the system as a whole. And perhaps this prove to be the truer role of government a movement – a movement organising and integrating rather than authoritative and definitive – permitting the full and many-sided growth of a progressive whole which by its very wholeness exceeds the vision and determinism of any of its parts.

A leader is best when people barely know that he exists...

When his task is accomplished and his work done,

The people all say, 'it happened to us naturally,'

Tao Te King



CONCLUSIONS AND INCONCLUSIONS

Auroville has already raced beyond the frieze of these words. populations have altered, things in preparation completed, new things begun – worlds come and gone – the crochet workshop dissolved at Far Beach and moved into the village, a keet and bamboo guest house opened near Abri... But perhaps something has been glimpsed, something independent of the words and time, not an abstraction, something from inside.

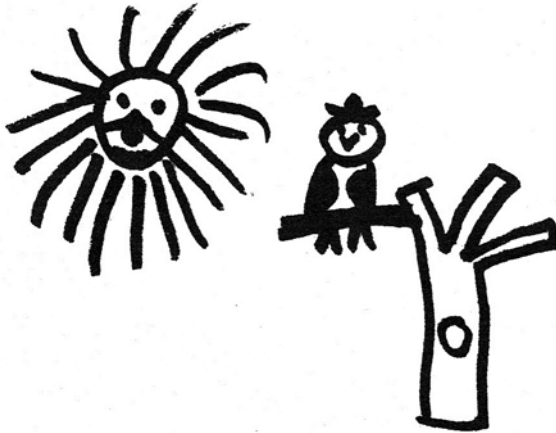
“Finally, all that one says, all that one has said and that one will say, is nothing but an extremely clumsy and limited way of expressing something which can be lived but never described.”

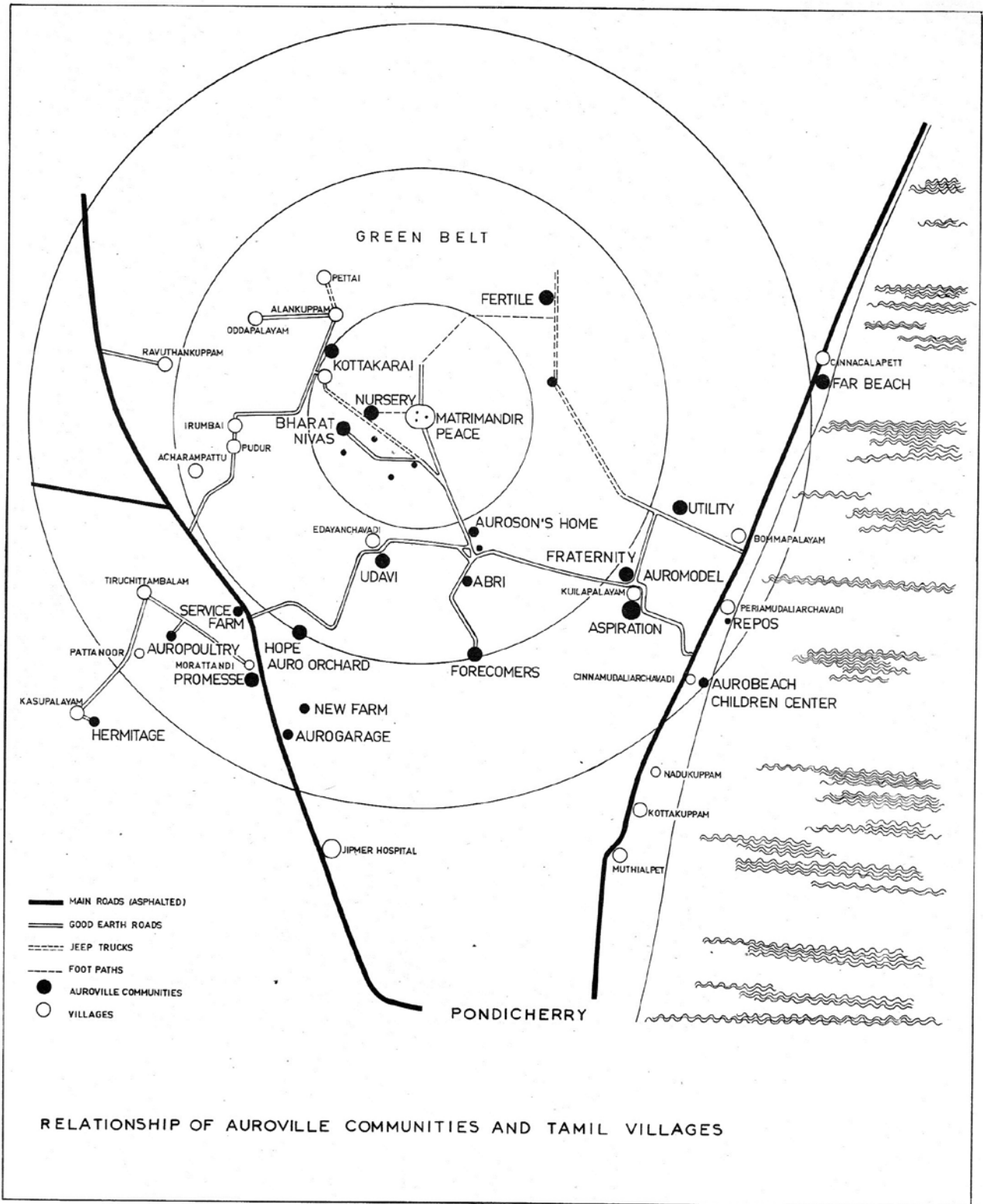
*29th March, 1974 – 12 May 1974
Auroville*

There were once two men lost in a deep forest, one, a blind man, the other, lame. The blind man could only stumble about in a maze of trees deepening his dilemma while the lame man could see threading woods but the means port him- two groped their help- until one cripple said to the blind man: “If you can put me on your shoulders, then I can be your eyes and you my legs, and together we can leave this darkness.”



APPENDICES





CENSUS DATA

TABLE 1: NATIONALITY-POPULATION RATIO (as of April 1974)

Community	A V B o r n	I n d i a n	F r e n c h	U S A	U K	G e r m a n	D u t c h	I t a l i a n	S w i s s	A u s t r a l i a n	C a n a d i a n	S w e d i s h	B e l g i a n	A f r i c a n	M e x i c a n	T u n i s i a n	N e w Z e a l a n d	M a l a y s i a n	T O T A L
*Aspiration	9	56	26	13	7	8	2	1	2	3		2	2			1			132
*Centre	1	4	6	20	5	4	5			1	2								47
*Promesse	7	10	6	2		3			1	1									30
*Auroson's Home	5	2		3		7		3				1		3					24
Kottakarai	4	6		3	1	3	4	1					1						23
Fertile/2 Banyans	2		5	4		2		1		3									17
Far Beach	3		3	3		2												1	12
Fraternity		2		2		3			2	1									11
Forecomers	1			7															8
Discipline				1		5					1								7
Hope						4											1		5
Udavi		1	1		1														3
Utilité				1											1				2
Pitchandiculam										1									1
#Total	32	81	47	59	14	41	11	6	5	10	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	322

* Communities including environs

Figures only represent present population in Auroville as of April 1974. Statistics unavailable for associate Aurovilians living in Pondicherry and villagers who have joined. Auroville but presently reside in their villages.

TABLE 2: AGE-SEX RATIO (as of April 1974)

Community	0-4	5-10	11-19	20-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+	Male	Female
*Aspiration	11	15	24	18	30	25	8	1	0	69	63
*Centre	3	1	2	17	12	7	2	1	2	29	18
*Promesse	7	3	2	1	5	7	3	2	0	17	13
*Auroson's Home	5	3	4	0	3	8	1	0	0	14	10
Kottakarai	4	0	2	8	6	3	0	0	0	13	10
Fertile/ 2 Banyans	2	1	4	8	2	0	0	0	0	9	8
Far Beach	3	1	0	1	3	3	1	0	0	6	6
Fraternity	0	0	2	2	3	4	0	0	0	7	4
Forecomers	1	0	0	2	1	4	0	0	0	5	3
Discipline	0	1	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	4	3
Hope	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	3
Udavi	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	0
Utilité	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0
Pitchandiculam	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
#Total	36	26	40	62	72	64	16	4	22	181	141

* Communities including environs

Figures only represent present population in Auroville as of April 1974. Statistics unavailable for associate Aurovilians living in Pondicherry and villagers who have joined. Auroville but presently reside in their villages.

UNESCO RESOLUTIONS AT THE GENERAL CONFERENCE IN PARIS FOR 1966, '68 and 1970 REGARDING AUROVILLE:

Resolution 14C/DR 6 (Oct.-Nov. 1966):

The General Conference,

Being apprised that in connexion with the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Unesco, the Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, India, a non-governmental- organisation affiliated to the Indian National Commission for Unesco, proposes to set up a cultural township known as “Auroville” where people of different countries will live together in harmony in one community and engage in cultural, educational, scientific and other pursuits,

Noting that the township will have pavilions intended to represent the cultures of the world, not only intellectually but also by presenting different schools of architecture, painting, sculpture, music, etc., as part of a way of living,

Appreciating that one of the aims of “Auroville” will be to bring together in close juxtaposition the values and ideals of different civilisations and cultures,

Expresses the belief that the project will contribute to international understanding and promotion of peace and commends it to those interested in Unesco’s ideals.

Resolution 4.131 (Oct.-Nov. 1968)

The General Conference,

Recalling that in connection with commemoration of the 20th anniversary of Unesco, the Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, India, had taken steps to establish an international cultural township known as Auroville where people of different countries will live together in one community and engage in cultural, educational and other pursuits, and that this project has been commended to all those interested in Unesco’s ideals in resolution 4.36 passed at the 14th session of the General Conference,

Considering that Member States, believing in the pursuit of truth and the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, have agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples,

Considering also that, despite the technical advance which facilitates the development and dissemination of knowledge and ideas, ignorance of the way of life and customs of peoples still presents an obstacle to friendship among the nations, to peaceful co-operation and to the progress of mankind,

Taking account of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideas of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples and the Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Cooperation,

Noting that the foundation-stone of Auroville has been laid on 28 February 1968 and that the youth of many nations participated in this solemn ceremony symbolising the coming together of nations in a spirit of human unity,

Confident that Auroville with its many interrelated. sub-projects will add a new dimension to Unesco's activities for the promotion of international co-operation and understanding and appreciation of cultural and human values,

Invites Member States and international non-governmental organisations to participate in the development of Auroville as an international cultural township designed to bring together the values of different cultures and civilisations in a harmonious environment with integrated living standards which correspond to man's physical and spiritual needs.

Resolution 3.32.1 (Oct.-Nov. 1970):

The General Conference

Recalling resolutions 4.36 and 4.131 concerning Auroville which were adopted by the 11th and 15th sessions of the General Conference,

Noting that the Charter of Auroville aims inter alia at establishing "a place of unending education, of youth that never ages", and "living embodiment of an actual human unity",

Recognising the progress made in Auroville since the foundation stone was laid on 28th February 1968,

Conscious of the new responsibilities cast on Unesco in the wake of growing unrest among youth from almost every part of the world; and which has taken the form of an open dispute with the universities and society,

Aware of the urgent need to welcome the "newly vocal young as allies in the search for a better world," and in keeping with the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for the promotion among youth of ideas of peace, mutual respect and understanding between peoples, and in conformity with the Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Cooperation,

Noting further that towards this end Auroville is already preparing and creating an instrument of education capable of meeting the formidable demands of our age, linking East and West in a new relationship,

Considering that Unesco's Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values gave a pioneering start, and recognising that Auroville can be an effective and integrated and follow-up to this Project,

Requests the Director-General to take such steps as may be feasible within the budgetary provisions, to promote the development of Auroville as an important international cultural programme.