



Auroville International
UNITED KINGDOM

India

The wonder of this country is
Return:

Always it seems,
The same sun,
Winking off leaves and mud,
The same boys,
Splay-toed,
Chanting after dusty cows.

And always, somehow,
That twitch at the curtain –
Find me! Find me! –
Before the setting sun
Bloods
The dying earth.

Alan Herbert



Early One Morning

The sun got up; so did I,
slow and cosy, half in sleep.
Stumbling out, I sat upon the step:
receiving nothing from the night
I expected nothing from the day.
There was a tree in flower,
A scratching dog,
the sun was shining on the sea.
But then, at half-past by the clock,
the world turned over....flip!...
and changed all that.
And when it all had settled down,
resplendently I saw:
a tree in flower,
a scratching dog,
and the sun O shining on the sea.

by Navoditte (Norman Thomas)

In This Issue

Our Newsletter is changing, now that we have the AVIUK website www.aviuk.org operational to give more up-to-the minute news and information. The Newsletter will continue to give news and updates from Auroville and AVIUK, but from time to time we will feature some aspect of the vision of the founder, whom we know as the Mother, and her originating purpose in creating Auroville. She saw the emerging township as a place in which the research into our human condition and the future evolution of our species, so brilliantly expounded in the works of Sri Aurobindo, would be carried forward for the benefit of all mankind. In this issue we begin to explore the nature and possibilities of human consciousness as an integral part of Auroville's mission to India and the world.

"For millennia, we have been developing outer means, outer instruments, outer techniques of living – and finally those means and techniques are crushing us. The sign of the new humanity is a reversal in the standpoint, and the understanding that inner knowledge and inner technique can change the world and master it without crushing it."

Auroville is the place where this new way of living is being worked out, it is a centre of accelerated evolution where man must begin to change his world through the power of the inner spirit."
(The Mother 3 August 1968)

It is no coincidence that Auroville was founded in rural India, a nation where belief in a dimension of life beyond the physical and material is universal. This belief is not 'religious' in the Western sense, for it is not tied to a particular dogmatic belief or creed. The rigid distinction between human and divine is not made as it is in the West. In such fertile ground a seed was planted: the idea that the human condition is not fixed for all time, the idea that infinite possibilities are within our reach, and *"This deathbound littleness is not all we are."* (Sri Aurobindo)

From award winning inventions to mud brick technology and research into the medicinal use of local plants, Auroville is well known for its ability to find practical solutions to the problems of living in a difficult environment – solutions that are relevant and can be shared with the rural population around. Less well known, but even more important is the concentration on the development of consciousness, beginning with the goal of human unity. *"East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet,"* was the old idea, but it is not true any more. The West needs the discoveries of the old yogas accumulated over millennia but hidden (until Sri Aurobindo brought it to light) beneath a mountain of superstition; and equally India needs the intellectual rigour of the Western approach to knowledge: *"Our first necessity, if India is to survive and do her appointed work in the world is that the youth of India should learn to think – to think on all subjects, to think independently, fruitfully, going to the heart of things, not stopped by their surface, free of prejudgments, shearing sophism and prejudice asunder as with a sharp sword, smiting down obscurantism of all kinds as with a mace of Bhima."*

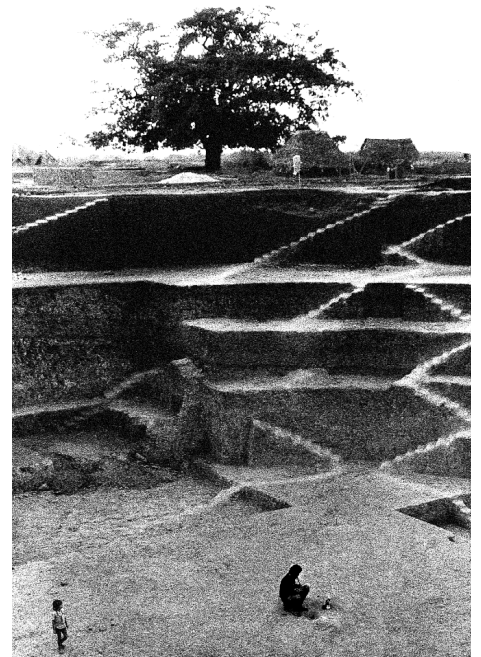
(Sri Aurobindo CCWSA Vol 12 p.40)

Living the Truth

One can have spiritual experiences and get into states of consciousness that are very beautiful and fine; but I feel that the Auroville consciousness includes a drive towards expression and this is why Auroville is not only an attitude but also a physical place, it's a place that wants to be the site of an incredible manifestation, not only in the buildings and gardens and cultural activities, but in the contact between people in the course of its ordinary daily life. It's this idea, this possibility of every contact of daily life being a direct, living expression of the highest spiritual truth that is the magnet for me. There have only been moments of it, glimpses, but they seem like glimpses of the future, glimpses, of what the future will be like. That state – it feels like something absolutely

miraculous, that beauty, that splendour – and yet, it's in the everyday process of living – making your bed, taking your food. It's that idea, to make the ordinary business of living a sustained expression of... the Truth – that, for me, is the promise of what the future will eventually bring. And one has these glimpses now to show one that it's being prepared and that that's the real thing, that everything else, all the difficulties, are simply the means of getting to that. But it's that, that's the real thing.

Vikas, 1974 from an interview with
Michael Zelnick



*The call of the flute from the depths.
Matrimandir excavation, 1972.
Photo by Dominique Darr.*

Acres for Auroville (A4A)

On April 24th 1920, the Mother settled definitively in India to join Sri Aurobindo in the work of humanity's enlightenment and Earth transformation. One of their goals was the realization of Human Unity, and Auroville was created for that purpose. The Mother said:

"I am speaking of the countries' combined collaboration in CREATING something. It's not when Auroville has been completed: it's the nations' collaboration in creating something – but creating something founded on the Truth instead of a rivalry in Falsehood's creation.... it's truly a hope – it's founded on a hope – of doing something that can be the beginning of a harmony."

An important new step for the International Zone and the collaboration of nations for Auroville took place on the Mother's birthday, February 21st 2015. In a beautiful ceremony inaugurating the European Plaza, the soil of 44 European countries and from the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother was mixed with Auroville soil, and a tree planted. The earth from the UK was taken from Cambridge, where Sri Aurobindo had done his studies.

The International Zone is one of the 2 key targets of the Acres for Auroville campaign.

Let's boost this fresh energy by helping to acquire the vital plots needed

for building this zone dedicated to incarnating international unity and peace. By contributing to A4A, you support the aim and development of the International Zone.

In solidarity for the City of Dawn
Aryadeep, Mandakini, Sigrid, for the
Acres for Auroville Team

Please specify **"ACRES FOR AUROVILLE"** via Auroville Unity Fund (checks or bank transfers), **Auroville Donation Gateway** (credit or debit cards) www.auroville.com/donations/, **Auroville International** www.auroville-international.org. See **COLAAP for tax deductibility**: www.colaap.org



The European Centre and Cluster of Individual Pavilions

From Auroville's International Zone Coordination Team.

1 The Continental Centre for Europe

The Continental Centre for Europe is proposed as a temporary common building with common facilities and common infrastructure in the continental area of Europe.

It will provide to the Pavilion Groups of Europe a place where they could organize by rotation (joint) cultural events, study groups, seminars, exhibitions, and where they can maintain (joint) libraries, offices etc.

So far six pavilion groups have been approached to commit financially to the construction of a temporary Continental Centre for Europe. The pavilion groups are representatives of the following countries: Germany, France, England, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands / Belgium-Flanders.

Why these six pavilion groups? Some of them have shown willingness to participate in the construction of the Continental Centre for Europe. Of course, without any hesitation, other European countries are welcome to join and to make their commitment and/or financial commitment to the project.

The Pavilion Group of France for instance, will contribute 1 Lakh Rupees

for the physical construction of the Continental Center for Europe and will simultaneously start the Pavilion of France (5 Lakhs Rupees), in order to have a temporary space for their activities.

It's well known that the Pavilion Group of France organizes weekly activities and is therefore in need of a space to manage their office.

The IZ Coordination Team:

- Will prepare a brochure / project proposal including maps, drawings, an estimate for the temporary structure and an estimate for the common infrastructure (e.g. electricity, common waste water treatment, water connection, optic fiber, cleaning of the site, internal pathways, landscaping etc.)
- Will ask, in regard to responsibility and accountability, the participating pavilion groups to recommend a person(s) who will take responsibility and be accountable for the managing of the Continental Centre for Europe, for example the organization of (joint) cultural activities, (joint) studies and (joint) advanced research, managing the office, maintenance of the building etc.
- Will ask the participating pavilion groups to recommend a person to be a co-project holder in Auroville.

2 Individual pavilions or Pavilion Clusters?

The IZ Coordination Team reached consensus in their weekly meeting of April 13th 2015, to starting an individual national cultural pavilion in the IZ. The IZ Coordination Team will encourage the construction of another individual pavilion on the site, adjacent to an already existing Pavilion in order to create a cluster of pavilions.

Take the Pavilion of France as an example, when the construction of the Pavilion of France is finished, another pavilion group from South Europe (e.g. Italy, Spain) could start with the physical construction of their pavilion on the same site and close to the Pavilion of France. It will be the "birth" of a cluster of Pavilions.

Fundraising for the British Pavilion

The proposal from the IZ Coordination Team in Auroville is fully in line with Mother's vision of the International Zone and seems to embody the spirit of proceeding on the basis of an organic development within a serviced framework that respects both the Galaxy concept and respects the existing ground realities, allowing growth, organically, in accordance with needs and means.

We are setting up a fund within AVI UK with an account in Auroville for the construction of a starter British Tea Shop within the temporary Continental Centre for Europe and for the later construction of a British Pavilion as part of the cluster of European Pavilions. Donations should be marked: **British Pavilion Fund.**

Can You Help?

We have received a request for financial assistance to avert the danger of leaking asbestos roofs in the Abri community of Auroville and in an office building of Matrimandir.

Donations to Auroville through AVI UK

AVI UK receives and passes on donations to a variety of projects in Auroville. As a registered charity we qualify to receive 'Gift Aid' on donations provided the donor is a tax payer. This means we receive an extra 25p for every £1.00 donated and it does not cost the donor any extra.

Donations Policy

- Donations up to £5000: 50% of the Gift Aid to go to the project, the remainder retained by AVI UK.

- Donations over £5000: 50% of the Gift Aid from the first £5000, plus 100% of the Gift Aid on the value of the donation over £5000 to go to the project, the remaining Gift Aid to be retained by AVI UK.

For donations not eligible for Gift Aid:

- 7% of the donation to be retained by AVIUK for administration purposes.

Consciousness: The Importance of New Research

Scientists are becoming increasingly aware of the need for more research into the nature of consciousness. No longer is it considered as a property of mind alone: it is seen to have an effect upon every aspect of human life from physical and mental health to our sense of well-being and even our willingness to embrace and explore the new and the unknown, qualities which are essential to our survival as a species in an ever-changing planetary environment and expanding cosmic field.

Auroville has been committed to this area of research from its foundation, though it has been slow to recognize the need for a more rigorous approach to the documentation of the discoveries made and the establishment of connections with specialists working in other parts of the world. In India the science of consciousness has traditionally been the province of the scholars of Sanskrit who can read the ancient texts, and in recent times of organisations such as the Bihar School of Yoga, which has specialized in the relationship between consciousness

and the physiology of the human body. The result has been a resurrection of knowledge about the treatment of medical conditions which would otherwise have been lost to the modern world.

Auroville is heir to the Indian tradition and especially to the more modern and profound insight into our human condition to be found in the work of Sri Aurobindo. These together form the theoretical background to the ongoing research undertaken by individuals who are attracted to this field.

What does this research into consciousness contribute to our personal well-being and how does it help us develop a social structure that is based on human unity? First, it enables us to understand our human nature and its limitations, and as a consequence we see ourselves not as helpless beings "stretched upon the rack of this harsh world" but as members of an evolving species destined to overpass our current capacities and achieve a more abundant life.

The root of the human dilemma is Avidya, as it is called in India. The word means lack of understanding – the error of perception that mistakes the false for the True.

We see ourselves as an ego, a 'me' that is cut off and separate from the rest of mankind. This error is so deep and blinding that we become a poor thing, clinging to life, fearing death, seeking personal pleasure, afraid of psychological pain, fenced in by barriers of our own making. This sense of separation is responsible for the wars, the injustice, the corruption, the rich and poor divide – all the sorrows and sadness in the world today.

Sonia 2015

"I experimented day and night for years and years, more carefully than a scientist verifies his theory or its method on the physical plane."

Sri Aurobindo

What the Earth Needs Now

Ask any Aurovillian “What is the purpose of Auroville?” and the most likely reply will be “to achieve human unity.” Undoubtedly human unity was a significant part of the mission statement of Auroville from the first, but the successful realization of this goal depends upon a radical change in the way in which we see ourselves both as individuals within a specific society and also as members of a much wider collectivity – the human race in all its immense diversity. Equally important, is the ability to move beyond our conception of ourselves as powerless to bring about any real change, limited as we are by the forces of nature that have for millions of years shaped our evolution on planet Earth.

Sri Aurobindo wrote: “This death-bound littleness is not all we are”. He dedicated his life to the discovery and exploration of a new consciousness that the force of evolution on earth will manifest in us when we are ready (and willing) to receive it.

His vision embraced the view that the natural process of human evolution has reached a stage when we ourselves are called upon to play a part in the formation of our own future existence on earth as conscious and consenting beings. The old law of “Nature red in tooth and claw” by which the life of one species depended for its continuation on the death of another has always been the determining fact of our

existence from which there was no escape, but Sri Aurobindo’s vision of mankind’s future offers us the possibility of freedom from the iron law. This is not an idle dream, but a very real direction of our future, once we accept, like so many leading scientists today, that there are other as yet unexplored physical and mental dimensions of our existence.

“At first sight this insistence on a radical change of nature might seem to put off all the hope of humanity to a distant evolutionary future; for the transcendence of our normal human nature, a transcendence of our mental, vital and physical being, has the appearance of an endeavour too high and difficult and at present, for man as he is, impossible. Even if it were so, it would still remain the sole possibility for the transmutation of life; for to hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition; it is to ask for something unnatural and unreal, an impossible miracle.

But what is demanded by this change is not something altogether distant, alien to our existence and radically impossible; for what has to be developed is there in our being and not something outside it: what evolutionary nature presses for, is an awakening to the knowledge of self, the discovery of Self, the manifestation of the self and spirit within us and the release of its self-knowledge, its self-power, its native

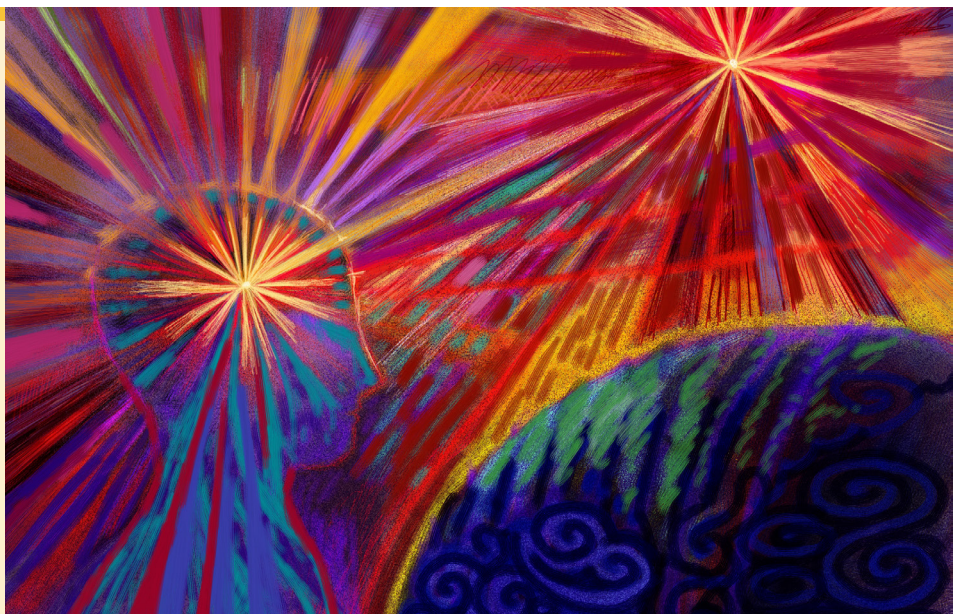
self-instrumentation. It is, besides, a step for which the whole of evolution has been a preparation and which is brought closer at each crisis of human destiny when the mental and vital evolution of the being touches a point where intellect and vital force reach some acme of tension and where there is a need either for them to collapse, to sink back into the torpor of defeat or a repose of unprogressive quiescence or to rend their way through the veil against which they have been straining. What is necessary is that there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many towards the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves and to find the way”. (Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine)

Such is the challenge put before every Aurovillian by the great visionary after whom Auroville is named. Human unity can never be achieved without the change in human consciousness that must precede it and prepare the ground. Auroville plays its part by its commitment to research and its outreach to promote sustainable living and the welfare of surrounding communities, but to keep alive the vision of an evolutionary change, ‘the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves’- this above all is what the Earth needs today.

Sonia, 2015

“A human being...experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons near to us. Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of Nature in its beauty.”

Albert Einstein



Can Human Beings Really Change?



The real work of the Aurovillian, the inner work, is to become progressively conscious of all levels and parts of one's own being. By working through this inscape, one begins to shine a light onto the ego. Whilst the ego served an evolutionary purpose in allowing humans to become truly individual, its persistence and dominance at an individual and collective level in human affairs now acts like a cancer of human nature: the visible part of a greater darkness. Our work requires us to expose the concealed darkness and to gradually change how we see the world and ourselves, so that the reign of the ego no longer dominates our actions and motivation. This insight begins to affect how we relate to others, to the community, to the earth. Without this inner work, no real change is possible and the ideals and aims of Auroville remain a dream, at best moderated by goodwill and possibly touched by some mental idealism, but amounting to only an approximation of human unity. As Mother said, *"The Aurovillians must want the truth, whatever it may be...."*

Self-perception is too often diminished, corrupted by self-deception. There is a tendency throughout all human activity to assume that if one addresses the symptoms of a problem, one can achieve a cure. This fails to get to the real and underlying cause of a problem. When one looks more deeply at the world and the state of things, one sees that one's own personal problems as well as humanity's problems stem from a false view and false values. Sri Aurobindo calls it 'The Ignorance'. In the

current system of things, it is repeatedly evident that, in order to solve those problems, to change one's partner, or the people in charge, or the political system, only results in a different version of the same old thing, the same sorts of problems, because we have not changed. When Sri Aurobindo emerged from Alipore jail after a year in solitary confinement, his *priority* was no longer the emancipation of India from British rule, important though that was in his view, but the liberation of mankind from its slavery to the ego and its false view of the world. Without the inner change nothing changes. Auroville was created to find an answer.

We come to Auroville because we have, somewhere in our being, understood our personal dilemma and that of our species, we have felt the need for something truer to replace this world submerged in ego, this ignorance, this falsehood. It is our psychic being, subjected to the suffocation of the present state of things, which intuitively why we are on earth at this time and initiates the search for something truer. We have not come to build another new age community or another city, although building a city or even just building a loving family or an honest business is the means, the vehicle by which we can learn how to do our real work and progress in changing ourselves.

When I arrived in Auroville in 1971, disillusioned with the prevailing system of things, and having rejected the self-interested future and petty success for which I had been groomed, I came to Mother and in 20 seconds of silence in

her presence, it was as if she had shown me the movie of myself and all my flaws, my pretenses and my little games and planted in me the wordless challenge: "If you want to change the world, change yourself!"

We definitely have not come to be part of the creation of another religion. We have come to be part of a great experiment and adventure, to discover and pioneer new ways of relating to one another, of relating to money, to food, to our bodies, to matter, to the planet. For our journey we have been uniquely blessed and gifted with incredibly precise road maps – the *Letters on Yoga, Savitri*, and the *Agenda*. And then there are the messages that Mother gave, such as this brief but utterly complete statement that sums up the whole core of an Aurovillian's work: *"The complete unification of the whole being around the psychic centre is the essential condition to realise a perfect sincerity"* (21st Feb. 1972. Psychic centre = Soul). We are asked to seek out and eliminate all division in ourselves. This is a huge work, for transformation cannot be complete until the light is brought into the subconscious and the inconscient, into cellular matter itself. It is not a work that can be undertaken by our own efforts alone, but needs an altogether different consciousness-force to work in us. Our part is to try at every moment to invoke and be open to that which alone can effect the change, to call it from the heart. It is not our concern how long it takes, but it does matter that there are those on earth who will work for that change despite all

contradictions. It also matters that we are prepared to be warriors to ensure that our species does not destroy itself and the Earth in the process.

At first we need peace and space, to pull back from the business of the outer world, to begin to look at what truly has been motivating our actions, to see for what it is *'the traffic of petty dreams'* in which we are enmeshed, to deal with the apparently simple but huge task demanded by Ramana Maharshi of his disciples: to answer the question *'Who am I?'*.

It is not enough, however, to take the widened and heightened consciousness we are now entering into and then retire from engagement with life and matter. Personal liberation and leaving the world to go its own way is surely just another form of egoism. We need to begin implementing the gains of our changing view of ourselves and things, by finding ways in which, when we come up against problems with others, instead of insisting on how right we are and how wrong everyone else is, instead of insisting on the supremacy of our own ideas and beliefs, we try to find how we may build a synthesis of these inevitably partial, because mentally realised truths.

But we need first the humility to accept that our mental understanding and approach is like that of blind men trying to describe an elephant by the part of the animal they have touched and perceived. Our teachers have promised to all who aspire and wholeheartedly commit themselves to the Yoga, the eventual blessing of a vision that sees. Then the answers to our problems will not depend on the long labour of trying to find a synthesis from below, but will be presented to a larger vision above the lid of mind, a vision from above the mental level which sees things as a whole and knows effortlessly what to do because in fact all is being done by the Light itself, to which we have only to surrender.

At a point on this journey we begin to realise that we are not the doers; nothing is unimportant or irrelevant; 'that will do' won't do; nothing less than the aspiration for perfection can really suffice; and that events and situations we have considered negative are not necessarily what they seem, for our catastrophes can actually turn out to be

acts of divine grace.

We then need to offer ourselves to be instruments, because Mother needs instruments, not just good people leading a quiet life and meditating a lot. But it also matters that Her instruments are able to act from another level than the human ego. And Auroville's purpose is to be Mother's instrument in effecting the change, somewhere on Earth, that actually can demonstrate how real change stems only from the inner change.

A Supramental Truth-Consciousness at work in the terrestrial atmosphere is compelling the march of evolution despite the colossal resistance of falsehood and the deeply embedded inertia of the Ignorance. *"The separative consciousness and the egoistic mind and life...All in the consciousness of this creation is either limited or else perverted by separation from the integral Light; even the Truth it perceives is only a half-knowledge."* (Sri Aurobindo). The Supramental works by creating events and circumstances on the global stage which expose all of the web of concealed power strategies by which anti-evolutionary forces seek to maintain their hold over humanity, forcing into the light all of humankind's darkest shadows, compelling transparency. Some of the events have the characteristic of large scale movements, revolutions, such as the 'Arab Spring' and the recent movement for democracy in Hong Kong. But these dynamic and dramatic movements can only succeed to the extent that the individuals involved have themselves been through a sufficient degree of inner transformation, of mastery over their own ego. Without this, one sees large human movements in which the true thing trying to manifest is either brutally suppressed or where the movement appears successful, one evil is supplanted by another, one tyrant by another, to give just another version of the status quo.

This is where the slow, steady, inner work by individuals on themselves and by laboratories of evolution, like Auroville, have their role in the evolution towards a truer world. If you really want to change the world, change yourself!

It is often by the apparent contradiction of the aspired-for state of consciousness that the transformation process sets in

front of one the full extent of the thing to be changed. The movement of a higher consciousness descending cannot establish itself because the being has not the purity to hold the light. So the light withdraws. As Sri Aurobindo said: "The descent comes in order to transform the consciousness but the transformation takes time. It is not done all in a moment". It is a game of hide and seek the outcome of which will one day be a living and established realisation that opposites are only apparent, and there is only The One. Perhaps then the world will truly change.

(Unless specifically indicated, all quotations from Sri Aurobindo are from 'Letters on Yoga')

"For each problem there is a solution that can give satisfaction to everybody; but for finding this ideal solution each one must want it instead of meeting the others with the will to enforce one's own preference."

Enlarge your consciousness and aspire for the satisfaction of all."

(The Mother, 28.8.1971)

"As long as you are for some and against others, you are necessarily outside the Truth."

You should constantly keep good will and love in your heart and let them pour out on all with tranquility and equality."

(The Mother)

From Savitri

All now is changed,
yet all is still the same

Sri Aurobindo

The Mutating Ego

The ego is that which divides an individual from the whole and obscures the true vision of an individual's or group's relationship with the whole. The normal human ego seems to be an uncomplicated thing. It has two obvious variants, the vital/physical ego and the mental/intellectual ego. But the ego is a chameleon and can mutate as we ascend the ladder of human evolution, becoming much cleverer in its disguises the higher it, and we, seem to ascend.

The vital/physical ego sees the world as revolving around 'I, me, mine'. It places itself at the centre of any relationship, the family, the world, the universe in the same way that pre-Copernican man thought that everything in the universe revolved around the earth, because that was how it appeared. This ego desires and demands and can be almost animalistic. It only understands problems and issues in the terms of 'How does this affect me? What do I get out of it?' This crude ego is easy to spot and not that dangerous except when there is a crisis requiring basic survival instincts to ensure that it gets its way. At a collective level, it operates as the anthropocentric attitude, the belief that all of manifested existence is there only for our enjoyment and use and that we are the masters rather than the stewards of the planet. Sadly, almost all of us still have traces of this ego residing in us, even if it is kept consciously or subconsciously well hidden.

The mental/intellectual ego sees itself as more evolved, belonging to a higher order of humanity, from which it looks down on other humans and even other intellectuals, wrapped in the certainty of the superiority of its own beliefs, able to use the reason to argue any point and convince itself that it has won that argument, even if it hasn't necessarily convinced the intellectual opponent. It develops ideologies and beliefs, and can dogmatise them to the point of becoming fundamentalist in the application of its ideas. It is possible to see intellectual egos as boxes that fit over and around people, separating us from one another with walls built of ideologies and dogmas. Hence we get the phrase 'to think outside of the box'

where one liberates oneself sufficiently to be able to open to insights, wider truths, inspiration and intuition. On the contrary, the mental ego in its most extreme form manifests itself in basically well-educated, intelligent, cultured people as an armoured belief system that marries with the lower vital/physical forms of ego and is capable of extreme, even infra-human cruelty and barbarism. In these forms it can even descend into genocidal fervour. This manifestation is accompanied by a blindness and emotional anaesthesia that, for instance, makes it in its mildest forms acceptable to act from a higher caste towards a Dalit without the slightest awareness of the inhumanity and in its more extreme forms, possible for a concentration camp guard to go home after a day spent executing people, even children, to his/her own children and even to listen to some Beethoven or Bach in order to unwind. This type of extreme manifestation calls into question the whole notion that education is the cure for society's ills. It has emerged, for example, that those British youngsters joining Jihadi groups are often not merely well-educated, but actually A* pupils at school. Sadly, most of us have elements of the milder forms of this ego still clinging to our spirit as it attempts to break through the lid to something closer to union with That which is the reality beyond understanding.

Often, the most difficult type of ego to deal with is the spiritual. This where the Divine, That, whatever we may choose to call it, has allowed us either to rise above our mental and emotional pettiness to share glimpses or even floods of light, or where that Light has descended through and pierced the lid to give us moments of illumination and chooses to express itself through us as momentary instruments playing a truer and more sublime music. The music is not ours and even our transmission of it severely diminishes it, yet there is still little Mister Ego, the illusion of the doer, that waits to take the credit as if we were that light. The spiritual ego can be a master of disguises. Behind it lurks a dark and avaricious energy that seeks to ensnare, possess and exercise power. This results in the tragedy that

often overtakes religions and cults. One of the features of the Mother's action and grace, experienced very concretely since She left her body, is that her light operates within the human sphere to expose and make transparent all falsehood and pretense and to unmask all impostors and those who, having ascended to some level of higher vision, mistake what manifests through them as their own.

There may be a form of ego at the most physical, cellular level, in what Sri Aurobindo calls 'the physical mind'. It is rooted in millennial habits of being and, of all the forms of ego, represents the most deep-seated resistance to the transformation. In The Mother's Agenda and in the later writings of Satprem, there are descriptions of this form of ego and whilst it may well be the last and most difficult battleground for humanity's aspiration to establish a truer life on earth, who can speak of it unless he has had direct experience?

In Sri Aurobindo's yoga, there is an inner journey through all the different layers and levels of the being. In the process, to the degree that one is ready for them, one can have all of the spiritual experiences of all of the traditional yogas. Have the experiences, then let go and move on. Or rather, aspire to use the experiences as the means of bringing light and knowledge in to the different levels of our being in order to effect a transformation there and root out the ego. Liberation from the ego requires that one lets go, that 'the box' or 'the lid' that isolates us from truth either dissolves or has to be broken. The essential key to this liberation is the opening of the psychic centre, the call from the heart and soul.

This is a yoga of transformation, of action at the individual and the collective level, requiring us to go beyond dealing with the symptoms of human problems to deal with the underlying cause. That is the point of Auroville and of our action in the world.

Vikas, 2015

Dancing Between Structure and Openness

How attached I am to habit, to the stability of the known, from my mid morning cup of coffee, to my evening walk, to beliefs and attitudes that I know are my default settings. At the same time, paradoxically, I recognize that something in me aches for change. I don't want to be trapped all the time in the same old mould. In fact, one of the things I love about Auroville is the extraordinary possibility it gives us to reinvent ourselves.

The problem is that often we do not take it because we are too attached, stuck, to the stability and comfort of the known.

Dogma is one symptom of this stuckness. If we look closely, we see that many of the unresolved issues that have exercised the community for many years are actually dogmatic attitudes confronting each other. For example, the belief the township should develop 'organically' is as much a dogma as the belief that it should conform to the 'Galaxy' plan. We have dogmatic beliefs about what we should eat, how we should treat illness, how we should develop the township and, most obviously, about how we should interpret certain words of the Mother.

Of course, dogma provides a framework and at our present stage of development we need some kind of framework within which to work.

The problem is when the framework becomes a straitjacket, a dogma that prevents us from discerning a new or evolving truth. The history of paradigm change in the sciences, from Copernicus to Darwin to Einstein, shows how difficult it is to displace established ways of thought, for the old ways fight hard to retain their supremacy.

So how can we negotiate the daily dance between structure and openness?

The first step, perhaps, is to recognise how many of our beliefs and attitudes are dogma ("a point of view or tenet put forth as authoritative without adequate grounds": Merriam-Webster dictionary) and based upon a very partial understanding of reality. If we can do this, we may begin to recognise that, in many cases, we simply don't know what the truth is about something.

This is scary since, to a large extent, we have constructed our sense of who we are around certain beliefs, so we fear that loss of belief would mean loss of identity. But the 'no-knowing' opens up the possibility of a new way of knowing, or unknowing, which allows us new perspectives and a new, enlarged sense of identity.

The good news is this seems to be happening. Young Aurovilians today seems far less dogma-ridden than their elders. And many of those

older Aurovilians who experienced the struggles of the late 1970s and early 1980s have since rejected or modified the over-simplified, polarised viewpoints of those times. Auroville today is a less 'extreme' place than it was in those years. Even our present bureaucracy which, like bureaucracies everywhere, seems relatively impervious to change, is balanced by a counter-movement in the community that is more inclusive, flexible and expressive of trust in an emerging reality. Witness, for example, the popularity of the Monica Sharma workshops, which give guidance about how to embrace and negotiate change, and the various Auroville groups that are experimenting with different ways of meeting and knowing each other.

In the end, the only interesting thing is to get into contact with what Mother refers to as 'THAT', the ineluctable essence. "THAT is what you must truly hold on to – but then you must be THAT, not this whole agglomeration. What you now call 'you' is not THAT, it's a whole collection of things..."

But how many of us are truly ready for this?

Time for another cup of coffee.

*Alan Herbert
(Edited from Auroville Today, February 2015)*

Request for financial assistance for Auroville Today

Auroville Today was started in 1988, and in more than 310 issues it has been keeping people around the world informed of developments in Auroville, the light of Auroville's aims and ideals. The magazine is sent to subscribers in India and around the world.

The magazine has never received any subsidy from Auroville. We have managed to continue the publication on a shoe string budget, from subscriptions and irregular donations. This budget implies payment of very limited maintenances to its editors.

In 2013-2014 Auroville Today suffered a loss of Rs 87,000. The position in

2014-2015 was slightly worse, as the expenses have increased.

We are wondering if Auroville Today should continue, and if yes, how?

We receive many comments, that Auroville Today is a valuable tool for providing information about Auroville and that it would be a great pity if it would cease to exist. But to continue, we will need to increase the maintenances to a 'normal' level, and add more journalists to the payroll.

To continue we have few options. We cannot increase the subscription rate, as it is already considered (too)

high. The magazine does not carry advertisements and we would not like to go that way. Ceasing the print publication and only publishing an e-publication would harm the public information aspect of Auroville Today and many people prefer reading a hard copy.

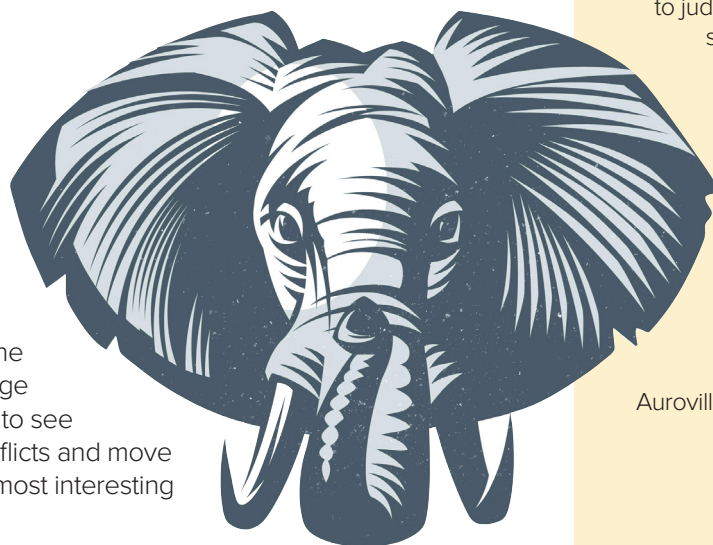
We would appreciate having your views. If you consider that Auroville Today should continue, how can we cover the shortfall, estimated at Rs 3 lakhs (£3000) for 2015-2016? We look forward to hearing from you.

For Auroville Today, Alan, Carel

Elephants in the Room

Retreat 2015

In March this year, Auroville held a 3 day Retreat as a means of coming together as a community to rediscover our purpose, to examine all of the issues that have caused blockage to Auroville's development and to see TOGETHER how to resolve conflicts and move on (we shall see!). Perhaps the most interesting dialogue to emerge was the following:



On the Nature of a Harmonised Solution

Each one has good reasons to support his own opinion, and I am no expert to judge between them. But from the spiritual point of view I know that with true goodwill, all opinions can be harmonised in a more comprehensive and truer solution. This is what I expect from the workers of Auroville. Not that some give way to others, but that on the contrary, all should combine their efforts to achieve a more comprehensive and perfect result. The ideal of Auroville demands this progress - don't you want to make it?

The Mother 14.11.1971

Examples of Unresolved Auroville Issues

Belief / view / stand	Counter belief / view / stand	Example of Integration that may take us beyond polarities
We are here not to build a city but a society 48	We are here to build a city, not a society. 2	We are here to build a city and a society, a society manifested in the form of a city. 65
Auroville must grow organically 21	Auroville needs to be a planned city 4	Auroville will be build with plans that allow for flexibility and organic growth within a planned framework 66
We must built Auroville as per the galaxy plan 4	The galaxy is outdated and we need a new plan 22	We build Auroville with the galaxy as an urban design concept while ensuring sustainable development that takes into account the natural resources and environment, contemporary insights in building technologies with low levels of embodied energy and urban plans that create a regenerative town. 53
All lands of Auroville are sacred and should not be exchanged or sold 19	We need to urgently consolidate the lands of Auroville, starting with the city lands and since we lack funding, some land exchange cannot be avoided 7	Use land exchange or sales as a means to consolidate city lands and mstatutory land use protection for the greenbelt lands 39
The population of Auroville needs to grow faster towards the planned population of 50,000 2	There is no need of population growth. Quality is more important than quantity (23	Quality and quantity are not mutually exclusive. Quality without a certain quantity does not fulfill the need of a replicable model. Quantity without quality is not sustainable 52
In Auroville everything must be decided by the Residents Assembly 21	We need a centralized strong administration. 0	The Residents Assembly organizes the work and activities of Auroville by setting up working groups which are empowered to implement their mandates, roles and responsibilities without Residents Assembly interference at implementation level. 48

Not a single tree must be cut in Auroville.	6	All trees that have been planted in areas that are earmarked for urban development need to be cut.	2	Many trees were planted to arrest top soil erosion with the knowledge that at some point in the future these trees will have to be transplanted or cut. Respect the built-up / open and green ratio of the city (48% / 52%) and of the green belt (5% / 95%).	55
In Auroville's education no certificates must be issued.	10	Certificates in education are needed for higher studies outside Auroville	18	Do not study for certificates but ask for one if needed as a reference for studies outside Auroville.	60
In Auroville there should be full freedom in terms of work and commitments.	13	In Auroville there should be even more discipline than in the outside world and everyone needs to work full time for the collective.	10	Follow the guidelines of the Mother whereby each individual works for a minimum of 5 hours per day, seven days a week, for the collective.	54
The Auroville economy should be 100% in kind.	8	We are not ready yet for an in-kind economy and need to continue with a money-based economy for some more years.	14	We can have an economy that works with in-kind currencies such as kWh for energy, liters for water, acres under cultivation for food etc.	34
There should be no grid power in Auroville and to start with not in the greenbelt.	3	We can have grid power everywhere in Auroville.	5	The question is not grid connectivity but energy sourcing. If we obtain our energy from sustainable sources, the grid functions as a demand-supply balancing system	55
There should be a centralized water system for the whole of Auroville.	5	There should be decentralized water systems in Auroville.	6	There can be interconnected local systems whereby the interconnection network balances local demand - supply mismatches.	44
Auroville must be completed within a time frame (city and society). If we do not hurry up the outside world will crush Auroville or reduce it to a suburb of Pondicherry.	3	Auroville must develop at its own pace. Timelines and targets do not work here.	17	Work with plans that include quality, quantity and time parameters and revalidate these plans periodically.	43
We should first reach the level of consciousness that the Mother wanted in Auroville and only then can we build the town and attract more people.	13	We have to first build the town and the town will attract more people who will collectively develop the consciousness that seeks to manifest in Auroville.	1	The building of the town and the growth of consciousness will go together. The physical growth of the town will attract people and activities. People and activities will attract physical development. The town with its people is the "laboratory of evolution."	52
"Mother said..." so we should follow this.	0	'Mother clarified that the truth is evolutionary'	18	Clarify when Mother is speaking of fundamental principles and when she is indicating an area where knowledge will develop according to the developing consciousness of the Aurovilians	47
Everybody has a right to participate in decision-making.	14	Only those with proven competence should take decisions.	4	Allow opportunity for community input, but empower competent individuals to interpret it, provided they keep the community informed of their decisions	49
Governance should be in the hands of the most enlightened. (10)		Wisdom is distributed across the community so everybody should be involved. (12)		Allow opportunity for community input, but empower competent individuals to interpret it, provided they keep the community informed of their decisions.	38
Empowerment of minorities / disadvantaged'	4	Meritocracy.	3	As far as possible ensure that all voices are heard and that training in governance is provided to all sectors but do not dilute the quality of people in our key groups	42
Centralized decision-making.	2	Decentralized decision-making.	6	Centralized decisions made on basis of local input.	45
Rules / guidelines.	4	Each case is different.	6	Provide broad guidelines which allow for individual interpretation. Empower our groups to make exceptions when needed.	56
Auroville should keep experimenting with new structures / approaches.	20	We should rely upon old ways until we have the consciousness to use new ones	0	Encourage widespread experimentation on alternative methods of governance in small groups. When something seems scalable, try it for a probation period in a larger work group with a fallback option to resume 'normal service' if it doesn't work out.	41

Blue numbers indicate number of votes each statement has received at the time of publishing (May 2015)

To vote visit: ras.auroville.org.in/retreat2015/elephants/

Sri Aurobindo's Humour

Despair on the Staircase

Mute stands she, lonely on the topmost stair,
An image of magnificent despair;
The grandeur of a sorrowful surmise
Wakes in the largeness of her glorious eyes.
In her beauty's dumb significant pose
I find The tragedy of her mysterious mind.
Yet she is stately, grandiose, full of grace.
A musing mask is her immobile face.
Her tail is up like an unconquered flag,
Its dignity knows not the right to wag.
An animal creature wonderfully human.
A charm and miracle of fur-footed Brahman,
Whether she is spirit, woman or cat,
Is now the problem I am wondering at.

Sri Aurobindo 1939

*Sri Aurobindo's description of the Mother's cat when
she found the door to his room unexpectedly shut.
It seems she liked to sleep on his chair.*

Compromise and Reconciliation

"A compromise is a bargain, a transaction between two conflicting powers; it is not a true reconciliation. True reconciliation proceeds always by a mutual comprehension leading to some sort of intimate oneness."

Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine Ch.IV

Savitri Circle

We are proposing to set up a regular Savitri reading and study group at the Auomira Centre in London. For further details, see www.aviuk.org. If you are interested, please contact a.vickers.arch@ntlworld.com

Next AVIUK Open Meeting

Saturday 26th September 2015 at 11am

at The Auomira Centre, 126 Whitton Avenue East, Greenford, Middlesex UB6 0PY.

The nearest underground station is Sudbury Town on the Piccadilly Line.

Please bring a contribution towards a shared lunch.

Please go to www.aviuk.org for further details, including the theme of the meeting.

Live in and be the Truth you aspire to.

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