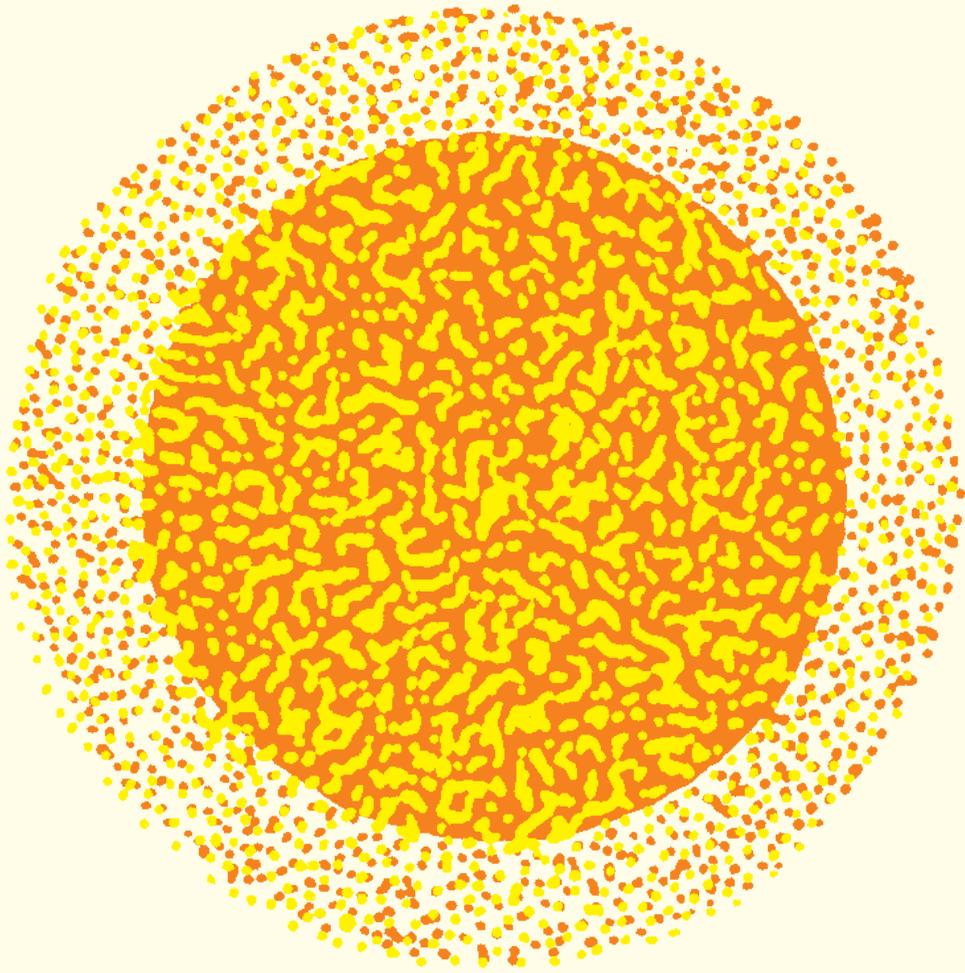


Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research [SAIIER], Auroville is launching a new bi-annual journal RITAM from August 2003 on material and spiritual researches in Auroville. The objectives are given below. It is also to be available on the web at <http://www.auroville.org/index/ritam.htm>. If you wish to receive a hard copy or to have us send it to a friend of yours, please let us know on unity@auroville.org.in. There is no subscription price as yet.

1. This is a journal under SAIIER connecting the various units under its umbrella with the focus on education and other related areas of research.
2. The purpose is to create a space where we express and share our work in Auroville and also invite others to share their perceptions with a view to look at where we stand with reference to the ideal.
3. It will publish articles, interviews etc. which are relevant to the Charter of Auroville, both from people in Auroville as well as those from elsewhere.
4. This journal is for both Aurovilians as well as others who are looking to Auroville for pioneering work in many fields.
5. The goal is to understand better the spirit of Auroville and in that context what we are doing and what further we can do.

ऋतम् • Ritam



A Journal of Material and Spiritual Researches in Auroville

Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research

Volume 1 Issue 1

August 2003

ऋतम्

RITAM

Volume I Issue 1

AUGUST 2003

•

EDITORIAL COUNCIL

SANJEEV AGGARWAL

MARY KAPUR

•

EDITOR

KOSHA SHAH

•

LAYOUT & DESIGN

PRISMA

Aurelec

Auroville - 605 101

•

PUBLISHED & PRINTED BY

SANJEEV AGGARWAL

for

Sri Aurobindo International Institute

of Educational Research

Bharat Nivas

Auroville - 605 101

Tamilnadu India

Phone: 0413-2622 210, 2622 982

Email (Editor) : unity@auroville.org.in

•

WEBSITE

<http://www.auroville.org/index/ritam.htm>

•

PRINTED AT

ALL INDIA PRESS

Kennedy Nagar

Pondicherry 605 001

India

All rights reserved.

We thank the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust,

Pondicherry for granting permission

to print material from the works of

Sri Aurobindo, the Mother

and other publications

of the Ashram.

CONTENTS

2 Publisher's Note

3 Prayers and Meditations *The Mother*

4 On Ideals *Sri Aurobindo*

8 Interview: Joy *Kosha Shah*

14 Research: large "R" or small? *Heidi Watts*

19 The SAIER
Development Proposal *Kathy Walkling*

21 Auroville Education and Society *Jean-Yves*

23 On Public Spaces and the
Development of Auroville's
Crown Road *Helmut Schmid*

27 Vedic Perception of the Word . *Iatsenko Vladimir*

30 To the Students, Young and Old *The Mother*

32 Self (Poem) *Sri Aurobindo*

Publisher's Note

Auroville has been given a stupendous task - to live life by new aims, to create a society hitherto not conceived of in human history, to take every aspect of life and give it a higher turn, to start at the pinnacle of human endeavour achieved so far and spring boldly towards future realizations. For over thirty-five years, Aurovilians have taken up this challenge and created the first tentative structures of a new life.

The Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIER) was created over twenty years ago to give a frame to the activities of Auroville. During its lifetime, many attempts have been made to start a research journal that would reflect the attempts, successes and failures of the life of Auroville in its effort to chart the course of its development in the direction pointed by its Charter. Each attempt has been marked by a slow petering out of the intellectual energy that should sustain such an attempt. It was as if the need to do the immediate tasks at hand demanded more attention, the need to build the structures more important than taking the time to reflect what sort of a structure is needed.

Once the structure has been built, one begins to notice its shortcomings the flaws in its plan, what is missing, what need not be there and also what is good about it. Such a process is a long drawn out one where there is a continuous interaction between one's needs (which are themselves changing as we grow in our aspiration) and our structures which are continuously being shaped and reshaped by us to fit our perception of our needs. Auroville at age thirty-five and SAIIER at age twenty are at this stage. "*Ritam*" hopes to be the vehicle of this self-reflection for all those deeply involved in the concept and creation of Auroville. We dedicate this effort to Mother's vision of Auroville.

Prayers and Meditations

The Mother

It is a veritable work of creation we have to do: to create activities, new modes of being so that this Force, unknown to the earth till today, may manifest in its plenitude. To this travail I am consecrated, O Lord, for this is what Thou wantest of me. But since Thou hast appointed me for this work, Thou must give me the means, that is, the knowledge necessary for its realisation. We shall unite our efforts: the entire individual being will concentrate in a constant call for the knowledge of the mode of manifestation of this Force, and Thou, supreme centre of the being, Thou wilt emanate the Force fully so that it may penetrate, transfigure and overcome all obstacles. It is a pact Thou hast signed with the worlds of individual life. Thou hast made a promise, Thou hast sent into these worlds those who can and that which can fulfill this promise. This now demands Thy integral help so that what has been promised may be realised.

In us must take place the union of the two wills and two currents, so that from their contact may spring forth the illuminating spark.

And since this must be done, this will be done.

June 14, 1914

On Ideals

Sri Aurobindo

Ideals are truths that have not yet effected themselves for man, the realities of a higher plane of existence which have yet to fulfil themselves on this lower plane of life and matter, our present field of operation. To the pragmatist which takes its stand upon the ever-changing present, ideals are not truths, not realities, they are at most potentialities of future truth and only become real when they are visible in the external fact as work of force accomplished. But to the mind which is able to draw back from the flux of force in the material universe, to the consciousness which is not imprisoned in its own workings or carried along in their flood but is able to envelop, hold and comprehend them, to the soul that is not merely the subject and instrument of the world-force but can reflect something of that Master-Consciousness which controls and uses it, the ideal present to its inner vision is a greater reality than the changing fact obvious to its outer senses. The Idea is not a reflection of the external fact which it so much exceeds; rather the fact is only a partial reflection of the Idea which has created it.

Certainly, ideals are not the ultimate Reality, for that is too high and vast for any ideal to envisage; they are aspects of it thrown out in the world-consciousness as a basis for the workings of the world-power. But they are primary, the actual workings secondary. They are nearer to the Reality and therefore always more real, forcible and complete than the facts which are their partial reflection. Reflections themselves of the Real, they again are reflected in the more concrete workings of our existence. The human intellect in proportion as it limits itself by the phenomena of self-realising Force fails to catch the creative Idea until after we have seen the external fact it has created; but this order of our sense-enslaved consciousness is not the real order of the universe. God pre-exists before the world can come into being, but to our experience in which the senses act first and only then the finer workings of consciousness, the world seems to come first and God to emerge out of it, so much so that it costs us an effort to rise out of the mechanical,

pluralistic and pantheistic conceptions of Him to a truer and higher idea of the Divine Reality. That which to us is the ultimate, is in truth the primary reality. So too the Idea which seems to us to rise out of the fact, really precedes it and out of it the fact has arisen. Our vulgar contrast of the ideal and the real is therefore a sensuous error, for that which we call real is only a phenomenon of force working out something that stands behind the phenomenon and that is pre-existent and greater than it. The Real, the Idea, the phenomenon, this is the true order of the creative Divinity.

The pragmatic intellect is only sure of a thing when it finds it realised in Power; therefore it has a certain contempt for the ideal, for the vision, because it drives always at execution and material realisation. But Power is not the only term of the Godhead; Knowledge is the elder sister of Power: Force and Consciousness are twin aspects of being both in the eternal foundation of things and in their evolutionary realisation. The idea is the realisation of a truth in Consciousness as the fact is its realisation in Power, both indispensable, both justified in themselves and in each other, neither warranted in ignoring or despising its complement. For the idealist and visionary to despise the pragmatist or for the pragmatist to depreciate the idealist and visionary is a deplorable result of our intellectual limitations and the mutual misunderstandings by which the arrogance of our imperfect temperament and mentality shuts itself out from perfection. It is as if we were to think that God the Seer and Knower must despise God the Master of works and energies or the Lord of action and sacrifice ignore the divine Witness and Originator. But these two are one and the division in us a limitation that mankind has yet to conquer. The human being advances in proportion as he becomes more and more capable of knowing before he realises in action. This is indeed the order of evolution. It begins with a material working in which the Prakriti, the executive Power, is veiled by its works, by the facts it produces, and itself veils the consciousness which originates and supports all its

workings. In Life the force emerges and becomes vibrant in the very surface of its works; last, in Mind the underlying consciousness reveals itself. So too man is at first subject in his mentality to the facts which his senses envisage, cannot go behind and beyond them, knows only the impressions they make on his receptive mind. The animal is executive, not creative; a passive tool of Matter and Life he does not seek in his thought and will to react upon and use them: the human being too in his less developed state is executive rather than creative; he limits his view to the present and to his environment, works so as to live from day to day, accepts what he is without reaching forward in thought to what he may be, has no ideals. In proportion as he goes beyond the fact and seeks to anticipate Nature, to catch the ideas and principles behind her workings and finally to seize the idea that is not yet realised in fact and himself preside over its execution, he becomes origination and creative and no longer merely executive. He begins thus his passage from subjection to mastery.

In thus progressing humanity falls apart after its fashion into classes; it divides itself between the practical man and the idealist and makes numerous compromises between the two extremes. In reality the division is artificial; for every man who does anything in the world, works by virtue of an idea and in the force given to him by ideals, either his own or others' ideals, which he may or may not recognise but in whose absence nevertheless he would be impotent to move a single step. The smaller the ideals, the fewer they are and the less recognised and insisted on, the less also is the work done and the progress realised; on the other hand, when ideals enlarge themselves, when they become forceful, widely recognised, when different ideals enter into the field, clash and communicate their thought and force to each other, then the race rises to its great periods of activity and creation. And it is when the Ideal arisen, vehement, energetic, refuses to be debarred from possession and throws itself with all the gigantic force of the higher planes of existence on this reluctant and rebellious stuff of life and matter to conquer it that we have the great eras which change the world by carrying out the potentialities of several centuries in the action of a few decades.

Therefore wherever and whenever the mere practical man abounds and excludes or discourages by his domination the idealist, there is the least work and

the least valuable work done in that age or country for humanity; at most some preliminary spade-work, some labour of conservation and hardly perceptible motion, some repression of creative energies preparing for a great future outburst. On the other hand, when the idealist is liberated, when the visionary abounds, the executive worker also is uplifted, finds at once an orientation and tenfold energy and accomplishes things which he would otherwise have rejected as a dream and chimera, which to his ordinary capacity would be impossible and which often leave the world wondering how work so great could have been done by men who were in themselves so little. The union of the great idealist with the great executive personality who receives and obeys the idea is always the sign of a coming realization which will be more or less deep and extensive in proportion as they are united or as the executive man seizes more or less profoundly and completely the idea he serves and is able to make permanent in force what the other has impressed upon the consciousness of his age.

Often enough, even when these two different types of men work in the same cause and one more or less fulfils the other, they are widely separated in their accessory ideas, distrust, dislike and repudiate each other. For ordinarily the idealist is full of anticipations which reach beyond the actual possibilities or exceed the work that is destined to be immediately fulfilled; the executive man on the other hand is unable to grasp either all the meaning of the work he does or all its diviner possibilities which to him are illusion and vanity while to the other they are all that is supremely valuable in his great endeavour. To the practical worker limiting himself by patent forces and actual possibilities the idealist who made his work possible seems an idle dreamer or a troublesome fanatic; to the idealist the practical man who realises the first steps towards his idea seems a coarse spoiler of the divine work and almost its enemy: for by attaching too much importance to what is immediately possible he removes the greater possibilities which he does not see, seems to prevent and often does prevent a larger and nobler realisation. It is the gulf between a Cavour and a Mazzini, between the prophet of an ideal and the statesman of a realizable idea. The latter seems always to be justified by the event, but the former has a deeper justification in the shortcomings of the event. The successes of the executive man hiding away the ideal under the accomplished fact are often the tragedies of the human spirit and are responsible for

the great reactions and disappointments it undergoes when it finds how poor and soulless is the accomplished fact compared with the glory of the vision and the ardour of the effort.

It cannot be doubted which of these two opposites and complementaries is the most essential to success. Not only is the upheaval and fertilising of the general consciousness by the thinker and the idealist essential to the practical realisation of great changes, but in the realisation itself the idealist who will not compromise is an indispensable element. Show me a movement without a force of uncompromising idealism working somewhere in its sum of energies and you have shown me a movement which is doomed to failure and abortion or to petty and inconsiderable results. The age or the country which is entirely composed of reasonable, statesmanlike workers ever ready for concession and compromise is a country which will never be great until it has added to itself what is lacking to it and bathed itself in pure and divine fountains and an age which will accomplish nothing of supreme importance for the progress of humanity. There is a difference however between the fanatic of an idea and the true idealist: the former is simply the materialistic, executive man possessed by the idea of another, not himself the possessor of it; he is haunted in his will and driven by the force of the idea, not really illumined by its light. He does harm as well as good and his chief use is to prevent the man of compromise from pausing at a paltry or abortive result; but his excesses also bring about great reactions. Incapable of taking his stand on the ideal itself, he puts all his emphasis on particular means and forms and overstrains the springs of action till they become dulled and incapable of responding to farther excitation. But the true idealist is not the servant of the letter or the form; it is the idea which he loves and the spirit behind the idea which he serves.

Man approaches nearer his perfection when he combines in himself the idealist and the pragmatist, the originative soul and the executive power. Great executive personalities have usually been men of a considerable idealism. Some indeed have served a purpose rather than an ideal; even in the idea that guided or moved them they have leaned to its executive rather than its inspiring and originative aspect; they have sought their driving force in the interest, passion and emotion attached to it rather than in the idea itself. Others have served consciously a

great single thought or moral aim which they have laboured to execute in their lives. But the greatest men of action who were endowed by Nature with the most extraordinary force of accomplishment, have owed it to the combination in them of active power with an immense drift of originative thought devoted to practical realisation. They have been great executive thinkers, great practical dreamers. Such were Napoleon and Alexander. Napoleon with his violent prejudice against ideologues and dreamers was himself a colossal dreamer, an incurable if unconscious ideologist; his teeming brain was the cause of his gigantic force and accomplishment. The immense if shapeless ideas of Alexander threw themselves into the form of conquests, cities, cultures; they broke down the barriers of Greek and Asiatic prejudice and narrow self-imprisonment and created an age of civilisation and soul-interchange.

But these great personalities do not contain in themselves the combination which humanity most needs; not the man of action driven by ideas, the pragmatist stirred by a half-conscious exaltation from the idealistic, almost the mystic side of his nature, but the seer who is able to execute his vision is the higher term of human power and knowledge. The one takes his stand in the Prakriti, the executive Force, and is therefore rather driven than leads himself even when he most successfully leads others; the other takes his stand in the Purusha, the Knower who controls executive force, and he possesses the power that he uses. He draws nearer to the type of the divine Seer-Will that has created and governs the universe. But such a combination is rare and difficult; for in order to grasp the Ideal the human soul has to draw back so far from the limitations, pettinesses, denials of the world of phenomenal fact that the temperament and mentality become inapt for executive action upon the concrete phenomena of life and matter. The mastery of the fact is usually possible to the idealist mind only when its idealism is of no great depth or power and can therefore accommodate itself more easily to the actual life-environment.

Until this difficulty is overcome and the Seer-Will becomes more common in man and more the master of life, the ideal works at a disadvantage, by a silent pressure upon the reluctant world, by occasional attacks and sudden upheavals; a little is accomplished in a long time or by a great and sudden effort, a little that is poor enough, coarse enough, material enough

compared with the thing seen and attempted, but which still makes a farther advance possible though often after a period of quiescence and reaction. And times there are, ages of stupendous effort and initiative when the gods seem no longer satisfied with this tardy and fragmentary working, when the ideal breaks constantly through the dull walls of the material practical life, incalculable forces clash in its field, innumerable ideas meet and wrestle in the arena of the world and through the constant storm and flash, agitation of force and agitation of light the possibility of the victoriously fulfilled ideal, the hope of the Messiah, the expectation of the Avatar takes possession of the hearts and thoughts of men. Such an age seems now to be coming upon the world. But

whether that hope and expectation and possibility are to come to anything depends upon whether men prepare their souls for the advent and rise in the effort of their faith, life and thought to the height and purity of a clearly-grasped ideal.

The Messiah or Avatar is nothing but this, the divine Seer-Will descending upon the human consciousness to reveal to it the divine meaning behind our half-blind action and to give along with the vision the exalted will that is faithful and performs and the ideal force that executes according to the vision.

The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings

We believe in the constant progression of humanity and we hold that that progression is the working out of a Thought in Life which sometimes manifests itself on the surface and sometimes sinks below and works behind the mask of external forces and interests. When there is this lapse below the surface, humanity has its periods of apparent retrogression or tardy evolution, its long hours of darkness or twilight during which the secret Thought behind works out one of its phases by the pressure mainly of economic, political and personal interests ignorant of any deeper aim within. When the Thought returns to the surface, humanity has its periods of light and of rapid efflorescence, its dawns and splendid springtides; and according to the depth, vitality, truth and self-effective energy of the form of Thought that emerges is the importance of the stride forward that it makes during these Hours of the Gods in our terrestrial manifestation.

There is no greater error than to suppose, as the "practical" man is wont to do, that thought is only a fine flower and ornament of life and that political, economic and personal interests are the important and effective motors of human action. We recognise that this is a world of life and action and developing organism; but the life that seeks to guide itself only by vital and material forces is a slow, dark and blundering growth. It is an attempt to approximate man to the method of vegetable and animal existence. The earth is a world of Life and Matter, but man is not a vegetable nor an animal; he is a spiritual and a thinking being who is set here to shape and use the animal mould for higher purposes, by higher motives, with a more divine instrumentation.

Therefore by his very nature he serves the working of a Thought within him even when he is ignorant of it in his surface self. The practical man who ignores or despises the deeper life of the Idea, is yet serving that which he ignores or despises. Charlemagne hewing a chaotic Europe into shape with his sword was preparing the reign of the feudal and Catholic interpretation of human life with all that that great though obscure period of humanity has meant for the thought and spiritual development of mankind. But it is when the Thought emerges and guides life that man grows towards his full humanity, strides forward on his path and begins to control the development of Nature in his destiny or at least to collaborate as a conscious mind and spirit with That which controls and directs it.

The progress of humanity has therefore been a constant revolution with its rhythm of alternative darkness and light, but both the day and the night have helped to foster that which is evolving. The periods have not been the same for all parts of the globe. In the historic ages of the present cycle of civilisation the movement has been almost entirely centred in the twin continents of Asia and Europe. And there it has been often seen that when Asia was moving through the light, Europe was passing through one of her epochs of obscurity and on the other hand the nights of Asia's repose or stagnation have corresponded with the days of Europe's mental vigour and vital activity.

Sri Aurobindo 'Our Ideal'
Essays in Philosophy and Yoga

Interview: Joy

Kosha Shah

Kosha: Joy, could you tell a little about yourself and your background and what brought you to Auroville?

Joy: I came here in September 1977, right in the middle of the conflict between the Sri Aurobindo Society and Auroville. I had finished my studies at the Ashram school and had done about two years of apprenticeship in the house maintenance service and at the Ashram Press. I had come to know Jean during that time and sometimes in 1977 he had decided to join Auroville. So I used to come and visit him on the weekends. Then on one weekend, while we were having dinner at somebody's house - it just happened. I was reflecting on that day's crazy events and somehow it was like a page which turned for me. I just knew that this was where the next stage of my life was going to be. I couldn't explain it in any way. Even after the weekend that sensation stayed on with me. It was so strong that suddenly after spending 14 years at the Ashram where my roots are, the place was no more the same; it was no more a home to me like it used to be. It felt like a different place. It was such a strong feeling that during that week I could go and see the necessary people in-charge and told everyone that I was going to Auroville. I think most people were quite shocked.

Anyway, that's how it happened and the following weekend I was here. We were about ten people from the Ashram who within 6 months had moved at that time to Auroville right in the middle of the conflict. Retrospectively I think I couldn't have come into Auroville without Jean because I needed that human support. The atmosphere was quite crazy and very intense. Then within 6 months, we started this new community called Djaima like in a desert, with only one palmyra tree growing there. We were pioneering a new community based on agriculture and alternative energy and we were very few. We worked hard for five or six years but after a certain time, the project being too big for its challenges to be met by so few people, the energy dwindled, we lost the impulse, the initial

inspiration, and the will to continue. I was one of them. For me, living that pioneering life was often difficult and intense. After six years, especially after Anandamayi was born, it was not easy, and not only physically or materially. At that time, because we had cut ourselves off from the Sri Aurobindo Society, the funds stopped coming; actually for months and even years we had not much to eat but still we had great joy and enthusiasm in just being together and starting a new place. There were all these political tensions though and people got really worked up.

K: But were you aware that you were likely to have a very difficult life when you joined Auroville?

J: Actually, when I had the feeling that this was going to be the next stage of my life, it was because I felt that all the artistic activities which I was fully into in the Ashram at the time - theater, dance, singing - that Auroville was where it was going to continue although how and in which form, I didn't know. The funny thing is that during the first seven or eight years, apart from a little bit of singing, almost nothing of all that happened. I was really engrossed into being first a pioneer and then bringing up a child. It was only from 1985 that I got back to dance. Theatre, and music followed. One doesn't know what one has to go through to reach where one is supposed to. You hear a call and then you just follow it.

K: What was the area that you were working on in Auroville? You said earlier you were doing agricultural and pioneering work?

J: Yes, we called the community Djaima, which means victory to the Mother. It was a barren land where we planted each seed of each tree or shrub growing there today. We began a vegetable garden, an orchard, fishponds, set up windmills. Jean and I lived on top of the community kitchen, which was a capsule-cum-hut. Then a month before Anandamayi was born, we had the entire hut to ourselves.

K: This was pioneering work and then after seven to eight years you said you got more into what you were looking for connected to the arts, the reason why you came to Auroville.

J: The only thing that continued during the pioneering time was singing. There was a person named Pascal who lived in Aspiration and composed his own songs and many of us sang those songs together. This was really something which made me survive all those years of earthy pioneering. I moved out of Djaima when Anandamayi was three and a half years old because I wanted to go somewhere else and do something other than this. So after a few months of shifting around we found a place in Dana. At that point a dance team formed with Aryamani, Paulo, Jeevatman and Ila who had moved in from Brazil. They had all earlier lived in a community in Brazil together, and they wanted to continue with dance here. So I joined them and it was like coming back to something that was very fulfilling. Then theater came. I was working in the kindergarten when Anandamayi was young, reading out stories to the children and because of that environment, I started writing plays for them. When Anu joined Auroville and took up dancing, she

offered to choreograph. So we became a group of people who danced to her choreography.

K: During all these difficult years that you had initially, did you ever feel that you had made the wrong decision? You still felt motivated and inspired to continue to be here?

J: Yes, I mean there were times when it was very difficult and I asked myself the question is this really my place. I can't remember the exact circumstances when it happened, why that question came, I just remember it was so intense. Once or twice I think the question was so strong, I would go to sleep just offering that question to the Mother and the next day I would wake up as if no question had ever been in my mind - it was like answered from somewhere and the question was wiped out. But this question always remains - even now, in a way all the time. I know now that this is an essential part of our life here. This is not an easy place to live in. We are always confronted with ourselves and our own incapacities and we feel that we are so far from the ideal and what we should be. Yet, the miracle is there all the time, all around us, palpable on a different plane. You just have to be in a certain state to feel it all round you.



K: Could you just mention a little bit about the work that you have been doing with music, dance, and children's theater? What is the feeling with which you approached the work and when you have done something, what is the feeling that you get at the end of it?

J: In the last few years, apart from teaching a little bit of Sanskrit singing in schools and producing a CD of hymns and songs, I haven't really been very musically active. But I did help set up and organize regular Hindustani music classes for Aurovilians here. When Anandamayi was still young I had written and helped direct four plays for children and as for dancing, until a few years ago, I participated in many Auroville choreographies, over a span of about 15 years. As for your second question - I think that for most people who are in arts, it is just that we feel happy while in it. I feel a kind of fullness and when that fullness is there, I feel that something has happened, that I have reached something.

K: But there's also sometimes a need for recognition from other people. Is this also important?

J: Yes, I will not say that I am beyond it. I think there is a part of me which feels excited even though a part of me says it is not important and I'm not here for that. But sometimes something in me still gets caught. It's a kind of ego game. But what really brings me a deeper satisfaction is when even for a moment I have felt, during singing, or dancing or recitation, that I have been an instrument, that something has flowed through me or that I've been carried by something. When I reach that point, suddenly it doesn't matter anymore whether people have felt it or not, because it is a direct link between something else and me which is more fulfilling than anything else.

K: That something manifested through you?

J: Maybe. It was as if suddenly something else flowed through me, maybe flowing is the better word. It could be very simple, it could be just one minute, five seconds, but when you touch that, then you feel wow, that was not the usual me but much more.

K: Do you think it is something one can communicate to others, other artists or students? Is it something that one can tell people that this is the sort of thing

that we are aiming for or is it something that everyone is left to themselves to seek for - what could be the expression of the soul? Because this is after all something that everyone can experience if they aim for it, and I am sure that being in Auroville in itself means that there is something higher that we are trying to aspire for over here. It's different from merely being outside and being a singer or a dancer because over here, you are consciously or unconsciously trying to reach that point within yourself. Is this something that can be communicated? How do you really express it to students, if you want to tell them this? Do you just teach them the externals or do you also tell them how to reach that point as a process step by step because it is not mental, but a feeling within.

J: Well I don't have any students, I just have a group with whom I sing. If anybody feels the need and asks me for indications, I could give, but it's actually very personal.

K: But how would they even know?

J: What I used to tell them - my dance students - is, "Just try to just forget yourself. When you are doing something, just try to forget yourself, be in what you're doing. Like if you're singing a song, or if in dance you're improvising to music, stop thinking about other things or yourself, try to identify yourself with what you are doing, the music, the thing itself." This forgetting oneself is so important, I feel that's when the other thing becomes possible... being taken over by something else, being a channel... letting something else flow through you. The secret is in the forgetting of oneself. Perhaps it doesn't have to be great art. It's something very simple. I remember once some people came to perform. They were connected to Mother and Sri Aurobindo. It was, technically speaking, not very professional. But I remember there was a point, when they were doing something absolutely of no importance, when they and I became one because there was something else flowing through. And that could happen because I had reached a point of forgetting myself as an audience and they as dance performers. After a few seconds, when I looked around in the audience I felt they were also in the same flow. I understood that evening that actually it is not only the quality of a performance technically speaking, but the inner state of forgetting oneself which is important and to me more fulfilling.

K: And yet, when the instrument is perfect, the manifestation also becomes more perfect.

J: Yes, yes, this is true.

K: So, outer training also has that importance and the inner quality is also important.

J. Absolutely, both are important.

K: Okay, now can we talk a little bit about the education system in Auroville? How would you see its strengths and limitations? You have put your daughter, Anandamayi, as a student over here right from the beginning and now she's an Aurovilian too. How did you decide to put her here and not elsewhere?

J: Frankly, there were maybe one or two times, during Anandamayi's childhood when things seemed really difficult and so disorganized in the area of education, that I had thought, "Oh, it would be so good if Anandamayi could go to the Ashram school", because that's all I know and I'm always immensely grateful for having studied there. After the split with the Society many areas of life here became dysfunctional. The schools also closed and for many years some of the children at that time didn't have any schooling and they still regret it to this day. After Anandamayi was born and when she was about two and a half years old, mothers who had children of her age, got together at somebody's house who offered space for starting a creche. Then the children grew older and they needed to go to a kindergarten and then again some mothers and maybe one or two people who were not parents offered to work for the kindergarten. This is how the school process started again. Then for the older children there were Croquette and Yanne in Douceur near Aspiration. They had started a school because they had their own children of that age who needed education. And then when that group grew a bit older, SAIIER was formed so Government grants could be channeled towards Auroville. Then Transition school began, again by Croquette, because his son and other children who were of his age needed a proper school. Then Miramukhi started, so Anandamayi moved from Transition to Miramukhi because I felt at that point that Transition school was not quite satisfying. Not only educationally but atmosphere-wise also, it was pretty wild.

K: But down the years, do you feel there's been a major change in terms of the education system here? Do you feel that it is now adequate and that the youth get what they need from this place, both in terms of external support from the teachers as well as what inwardly they would need to grow?

J: I will not venture on the inward needs because I really don't know. I'm not involved in the schools since quite a few years. I know that I took Anandamayi out of Transition school because I felt the inner part of it was not there at all. People were just trying to see how to get the children to sit down and do something, not run around all over. Miramukhi was started by people who wanted another quality in education, but then of course it went in a completely different direction. So I took Anandamayi out again and put her back in Transition even though it was still not perfect, because I preferred that kind of atmosphere to the very rigid religious attitude which Miramukhi had. Miramukhi's teachers wanted to follow the education as envisaged by the Mother. They really were trying their best and doing excellent work in certain areas, but I think I couldn't relate to it because I had a reference of the Ashram school. In Miramukhi there seemed to be too much morality and sermonizing and I felt the children's vital beings were being completely squashed. This I found most unhealthy. In my times at the Ashram I found the education of the vital in general lacking in dynamism and creative energy but they were certainly not squashed. Things might have changed since then. Then again Anandamayi went back to Transition school and then she went to Last School. She still follows a few classes in Last School besides other activities.

K: Can you give some idea about the problem the youth over here face? I am especially talking about those who have grown up here, not just those who have come from outside and settled down, those who have gone through the educational system. Is there something that makes them special? You spoke about suppression of the vital and freedom and interpretation of freedom and discipline. How would you elaborate on that?

J: Auroville has an ideal which is based on some guidelines given by the Mother, some indications though very broad are free to be interpreted in many different ways. I think the problem is that the children

really have a tough time relating to what people say and what they actually do, not only as individuals but collectively - the discrepancies. I think they are often lost. Another thing is that because most children here have parents who have come from the west, their vital needs are very different from that of Indian children. Even if they've grown up here, their vital needs are stronger and maybe on that level sometimes they feel a bit frustrated. For example, they feel that there are not enough youngsters around them, they find the stimulation of a group lacking. I think that is one of the reasons adolescents go out because they need to be in a bigger group, to be in a school with more children of their age because it stimulates them more. I suppose an Indian student would feel the same thing, but maybe not so strongly, and besides this is India and our home. In spite of all these differences, quite a few western children who have grown up here actually end up marrying Indians or people who are from the East. India does leave a very strong imprint on them. Some of them are now thirty but they still haven't come to the forefront of the community's life or its expression. By this I don't mean that they are not working but they don't come to the forefront. Perhaps they still don't dare to say what they think in front of a group of adults or simply that we don't give them the chance. I mean many of us would like that young people who are born and have grown up in Auroville should come and join the existing activities and take over the work that our generation is doing and do better than us. All those of us who have come here as adults have come with our own baggage. And I think it would make a difference if young Aurovilians come forward with another view because they are probably free of this baggage and show us that things can be done in another way.

K: To come to the next question, where do you feel we are going as a community? And how do you think we could move more consciously towards our collective goal?

J: Right now, to my limited view, it seems that we as a community are still acting pretty much like any other place. I feel that we are not focusing enough inwards but more towards the outward aspects of life. We often forget the reason why we are here at all. Let's say, our efforts and our energies are going more into the manifestation of something which we are not taking the time to look at. The principles behind what has to be manifested is not very clear in our minds. I

think the main problem is that we are focusing on the outside; perhaps because it is easier. And as a collectivity, to be able to move towards our goal in the true spirit, I think we need certain basic qualities. Those which come to my mind right now are humility, sincerity and goodwill. I think humility and sincerity have to be really boosted up, that is if we want to go somewhere in the right spirit and for the right reasons. I mean, we are not here for just making another place with many activities, humanitarian causes and all those things. We are here for something more. So, unless this is in the forefront of our minds, we will just end up making another community like there are already in the world. For me, the key thing is humility because humility leads to self-questioning... are we doing what we have to do? Are we being what we are supposed to be? Because without these two or three qualities I don't think we can ever reach where we are meant to.

K: Just a little elaboration on what you are saying. Since you said that we don't concentrate enough on the inner aspect of being here and more on the outer, how can we really become conscious? Because after all, in one way it is an individual process...

J: Yes, absolutely.

K: ... and unless all of us realise the fact that this is the most important thing, nothing is true in a way. But do you think there is some responsibility of the collectivity to create a space or to create an ambience or atmosphere in which the individual is made to move in that direction so that even those who are a little more casual about this place, could become a little more focused just by the very fact of being here?

J: Maybe I lack imagination in this field, but my understanding is that if the flame of aspiration burns sufficiently strongly in many of us, slowly it will grow into a fire spreading, like a contagion. So from a few individuals - of course it has to be done individually - it will sort of spread, and at that point something will happen. But I think there is no way out of the fact that we have to work as individuals on ourselves. I think we can always try to work out methods and try to create an ambience, an environment or an atmosphere, but doesn't this also start with the individual? This means that somewhere within themselves the individuals have to accept to create this environment, which means that somewhere they have worked on themselves

sufficiently to reach the point where they feel that an environment has to be created so that more people could feel attracted to it. More and more individuals must light up their fire with the will to change things - first of all in themselves which will then have an effect on the surrounding. I don't think mentally we can imagine systems which people will join and automatically something will happen. I think it's through contagion from individuals working on themselves sufficiently to create an atmosphere, a vibration which will then radiate outwards to all the people around. I don't know if there is any other way out.

K: To come to the last question. Now that you are a part of the Auroville Council, what is the additional perspective you have on Auroville? What are our limitation and strengths as a collectivity?

J: Well, ever since I have been in the Auroville Council, I actually get to see another aspect of Auroville where the problems are, very often conflict situations that we have to deal with between groups and sometimes between individuals. But otherwise we help make policies for different working groups, such as Entry Group, Economy Group, Housing Group, Development Group, etc. It's interesting in a way because on the one hand you have to deal with all sorts of problems, on the other it's like you have to find ways to move forward. For me, I see it as a challenge. Also what I see through this is always the same thing - it's forgetting why we are here, which creates the problem. And the ego of course, the individual egos which come in between what should be and what is.

As for the strength of the collectivity I suppose that according to the capacity for sincerity our strength as a collective would manifest and is already manifesting. There are individuals who are sincere to a certain degree and I think that is what makes us into a collectivity with a certain vibrancy even though we tend to follow what is already known and done elsewhere because basically we are afraid of the unknown. There is something else. Something in Auroville which permeates even the earth and the air, something which drew many of us irresistibly to choose this place when we first stepped on it. This something I would call freedom. It's a freedom, which will raise up its head in spite of everything that would stifle it. This freedom which is there at the base of our

existence and at the base of Auroville's existence is of course also our main problem, because most of the time, consciously or unconsciously we misuse it. We misuse our potential as human beings because we are ignorant, because we forget why we are here. The same thing applies to Auroville - we keep forgetting why it is there. And that's where the problems come from.

K: Maybe it is the vital which responds to this freedom rather than the higher self within us.

J: Yes, I think the higher self recognizes it, each one in his own way at that first instance, and the vital uses it, even abuses it.

K: What do you think are our limitations and strengths as a community? Now that you are working in the AV Council, you get to see the collectivity with a different perspective. How much different is your understanding at this point, now that you are a part of this process, than what you felt earlier?

J: Well, earlier I was only in a certain atmosphere which was relating to one aspect of Auroville which hopefully served as inspiration, all that wants to move forward. But being in the Auroville Council you face the more basic human aspects. Human in the sense all that which has yet to change, all that has yet to go through the process of transformation. So, in that sense I feel it's very interesting. It serves as a mirror also, very much. To put it in a simplistic image, in activities like dance and music, it's like a mirror turned upwards, and here it's a mirror turned downwards.

K: That is perhaps a more inner part and here we have a more external part of Auroville.

J: Yes, but this outer work too is very essential because unless all this is transformed... When the human... when the mind and the vital and physical aspects of Auroville, when they will evolve, I have a feeling that everything else, all music and dance, everything will be able to go a step further and our collective life will have a truer base. So maybe that's why, somewhere unconsciously, I decided to join the AV Council. I had felt in me personally the need to work out things which I've not been wanting to see. And I thought that by seeing them, working on them and offering them, I could contribute towards the collective movement forward.

Research: Large “R” or Small?

Heidi Watts

The purpose of this essay is to clarify the distinction between research and experimentation. Working with experiments is an integral part of research but there are many experiments, which have no research component. An experiment is an attempt to try out something new, to test a theory, an idea, a product, an approach. Research is what happens when that test is subjected to certain clearly defined boundaries and restraints: limits as to time, place, experimenter, scope, range, and variables. If a group of parents decide to start a school without teachers, for instance, that is an experiment. If they decided to start a school without teachers and they agree to study the school and its effect upon the children for a given period of time; if they set out clear objectives and get some measure of where the children are in regard to those objectives before they start; if they measure the change in the children at, say, a year later; if they have multiple measures and some check on their own probable bias; if other people not involved with the experiment see the same results; if they share the findings from their experiment with others in some formal fashion - that would be research.

To give a sense of how an experiment or a series of experiments might be limited or framed I like to use field glasses - binoculars - as a metaphor. If I hold a pair of binoculars to my eyes I can focus on one object: bird, beast or butterfly, and temporarily shut out everything else. The binoculars magnify enough to allow me to see more than I can with the naked eye, but my focus is also helped by the fact that I have isolated the creature I am looking at and, for the moment, removed the distractions of its environment from my field of vision. The same thing is true with research. When we conduct research into the effect of a particular experiment we try to isolate the experiment and the variables: that which is different from the ordinary.

A scientist sets out two Petri dishes in the lab with exactly the same liquid in each one. The first dish he keeps as it is, to the other he adds one new ingredient. If there is a change in the second Petri dish he can attribute that to the effect of the added ingredient. If a psychologist wants to study the effect of light stimulus on rats he can put them

in a dark box and flash lights at them at recorded intervals. If a teacher wishes to research the effect of a new approach in her classroom she must try to isolate the change from all other possible influences. This, of course, is much easier with Petri dishes, or rats.

Human beings can not be subjected to the controls we allow ourselves with rats, and are, in any case, such a complex mix of variables we can never be certain about their motivations or the meaning they make of their actions and ours. The best the teacher can do to turn her experiment into research is to make it into a study "project", with all the deliberation and intention that word implies. When an experiment becomes a research project it is usually for the purpose of replication and/or better understanding. The teacher may want to "research" her change in approach to determine whether she wants to do it again and to determine whether the results should be shared with other teachers to encourage replication. She may want to do a number of experiments within the boundaries of the research project, and in this case what she is doing is an exemplification of the scientific process: experiment, evaluate, modify, experiment again, evaluate, modify....

But, you say, teachers are doing that all the time. They try something new, notice what happens, make a slight change, try it again, test it out on a different day or a different group, notice what happens... This a process Donald Schon calls reflection-in-action and thinking persons do it all the time: it is learning from experience while in the experience; it is what is happening when we say thoughtfully, "Next time, I will try..."

However, a research project is more than the reflective process, or the scientific method applied to daily life, though research is impossible without reflection. Research, as opposed to an experiment, is cribbed, confined, controlled and focused within the uncompromising and rounded frame of whatever form of field glasses we choose to use.

I had the good fortune while I was in Auroville this winter to work with a small group of people interested

in qualitative research. We began by working on a definition of research, and came to the conclusion that there are two kinds of research. One we described as Research with a big "R" - by which we meant a Research Project, a deliberate study, framed by field glasses; the other, research with a small "r" by which we meant what I described above, what happens all the time when we make conscious attempts to try something different in order to observe what will happen; something as small as changing the baby's schedule or as large as planting a different kind of forest. Reflective practitioners, people who are often reflecting on what they are doing; who are trying to be deliberately aware and conscious; people who are engaged in careful observation, and are practicing what we might call a research frame of mind, are not doing Research in the way it is understood in common parlance.

The guidelines for Research with a big "R" may best be understood if I lay them out as questions. When you want to Research an innovation you ask yourself:

- 1) What is the question I wish to answer, or the problem I hope to understand better? (The clearer and more precise the question the more likely the Research will be successful.)
- 2) Why is this question important to me? (Now you have a chance to lay out your assumptions and give your rationale for the research.)
- 3) How will I look for answers to my question? Who will work on this research? What are their qualifications? What do "distant friends" (i.e. other writers and Researchers) have to say about this issue?
- 4) What methods will I use to collect my data? (With qualitative research this means you need to identify your sample, and the methods you will use to collect the data: survey, interview, observation, record searches, etc. You will also need to indicate the time frame you are working in.)
- 5) How will I analyze my data? (Analysis is often the most difficult and the most time consuming part of a Research Project. This is when you sort all your data, looking for themes, trends, and patterns; looking for findings, and when you cook or crunch and summarize the data so that you can communicate the main conclusions to others.)

- 6) How will I present my findings? (Most Research Projects end up as a document like a report or a book, but a presentation, videotape, a collection of pictures; even a novel or some other media may be used if appropriate to the subject.)

There are two kinds of Research: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research is, as the name suggests, an activity which involves quantities, and quantities means counting. Quantitative research (hard research) is generally "scientific", carefully bounded and defined, with all the variables controlled and accounted for. Quantitative research is the operating mode for most scientists and is responsible for most of the advances made in technology and medicine in the last few centuries. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is a "soft" science, gradually winning acceptance as the most useful form of social science research, particularly when quantitative and qualitative methods can be combined in a single project. Since it is not possible to control for all variables in human beings (praise be!) it is necessary to find ways to study human situations and human relationships which do not have to rely on control groups and confinement. Human beings are not rats or pigeons. The purpose of qualitative research is not to prove something but to learn something.

Simply by learning more about a situation, by studying it from different angles, by observing it with an impartial eye, and from several different vantage points we may get new insights on causes, effects and on how to proceed with our human subjects and compatriots.

The most common methods of gathering data for qualitative research are with the interview, survey, study of related documents, and various forms of observation, both formal and informal, participatory or objective. Since there is so much more likelihood of misinterpretation and unwitting bias in qualitative research a rigorous process of triangulation is required for credibility. Triangulation means trying to both gather and analyze information by different methods and from different points of view: qualitative researchers talk about multi-trait and multi-method approaches. In lay terms this means collecting the same information from different people, in different ways, and perhaps by different people; it means subjecting the data collected to different ways of sorting and understanding it and checking it out with different audiences. Triangulating is a term taken from

navigation: the sailor identifies a fixed point on the horizon and then measures that against several other points to get an accurate reading of where she is. Qualitative Research relies heavily on "thick" description, and usually presents the findings embedded in descriptions so that the readers can "see" what the researchers see.

In my own research, based on the question, "How do teachers get better at teaching on the job?" I interviewed about twenty teachers individually, and then another fifty or more in groups; I conducted a 12 question survey with 200 other teachers from different parts of the country; I recycled my findings to the respondents and others to be sure they said what I said they said and to be sure my conclusions made sense to them, and I read extensively on what other

people had to say about professional development. When I had done all that I thought I was able to say something which would make sense, stand up to criticism, and be of use to other teacher educators.

There are many educational experiments in Auroville today but not many Research Projects, and that is just as well. If every innovation had to be subjected to the rigors of Research there would be little time left for teaching - or learning - or doing. However, if Auroville wants to learn more about itself and to send examples out into a thirsty world there will need to be more Research projects which are credible in the world's terms, which can speak with authority and pass the test of replication, with or without adaptations. Think carefully before you select your Research question, define it clearly, and then give it your full attention!

The training of the logical reason must necessarily follow the training of the faculties which collect the material on which the logical reason must work. Not only so but the mind must have some development of the faculty of dealing with words before it can deal successfully with ideas. The question is, once this preliminary work is done, what is the best way of teaching the boy to think correctly from premises. For the logical reason cannot proceed without premises. It either infers from facts to a conclusion, or from previously formed conclusions to a fresh one, or from one fact to another. It either induces, deduces or simply infers. I see the sunrise day after day, I conclude or induce that it rises as a law daily after a varying interval of darkness. I have already ascertained that wherever there is smoke, there is fire. I have induced that general rule from an observation of facts. I deduce that in a particular case of smoke there is a fire behind. I infer that a man must have lit it from the improbability of any other cause under the particular circumstances. I cannot deduce it because fire is not always created by human kindling; it may be volcanic or caused by a stroke of lightning or the sparks from some kind of friction in the neighbourhood.

There are three elements necessary to correct reasoning: first, the correctness of the facts or conclusions I start from, secondly, the completeness as well as the accuracy of the data I start from, thirdly, the elimination of other possible or impossible conclusions from the same facts. The fallibility of the logical reason is due partly to avoidable negligence and looseness in securing these conditions, partly to the difficulty of getting all the facts correct, still more to the difficulty of getting all the facts complete, most of all, to the extreme difficulty of eliminating all possible conclusions except the one which happens to be right. No fact is supposed to be more perfectly established than the universality of the Law of Gravitation as an imperative rule, yet a single new fact inconsistent with it would upset this supposed universality. And such facts exist. Nevertheless by care and keenness the fallibility may be reduced to its minimum.

The usual practice is to train the logical reason by teaching the science of Logic. This is an instance of the prevalent error by which book-knowledge of a thing is made the object of the study instead of the thing itself. The experience of reasoning and its errors should be given to the mind and it should be taught to observe how these work for itself; it should proceed from the example to the rule and from the accumulating harmony of rules to the formal science of the subject, not from the formal science to the rule, and from the rule to the example.

The first step is to make the young mind interest itself in drawing inferences from the facts, tracing cause and effect. It should then be led on to notice its successes and its failures and the reasons of the success and of the failure: the incorrectness of the fact started from, the haste in drawing conclusions from insufficient facts, the carelessness in accepting a conclusion which is improbable, little supported by the data or open to doubt, the indolence or prejudice which does not wish to consider other possible explanations or conclusions. In this way the mind can be trained to reason as correctly as the fallibility of human logic will allow, minimising the chances of error. The study of formal logic should be postponed to a later time when it can easily be mastered in a very brief period, since it will be only the systematising of an art perfectly well known to the student.

Sri Aurobindo, 'The Training of the Logical Faculty'
On Education

The SAIER Development Proposal

The maturation of a potent seed takes deep root in Auroville

Kathy Walkling

Right from the start, the idea of Auroville as a "universe-city" inspired a vivid image of a vibrant place, planned as an open and dynamic centre of research, learning and teaching. Contained within this vision was the idea of a learning society implying that all residents would be students as well as researchers and teachers and the basic economy would be an exchange of knowledge, an economy of research, teaching and learning. Throughout the last 35 years of Auroville's development, the flame of aspiration contained within these images has remained persistently alive in the collective consciousness in one form or another. Today we see that this flame which has been burning quietly and steadily is rising! Since the year 2000, Auroville has been preparing a proposal for major expansion of its educational and research capabilities, the details of which have been formulated as the SAIER development proposal. This proposal was submitted to the Government of India for consideration in 2001 and recently, Auroville has received confirmation that it will receive a substantial financial support for the 10th 5-year plan which commenced 31st March 2002.

In this paper, we would like to take you on the journey that describes the very special unfolding of events that have led to this moment whereby Auroville is poised to take this major step towards fulfilling on a large scale an important aspect of its dharma. It is our hope that by contemplating in its entirety the unfolding of these events, that one may see a kind of red thread that runs throughout Auroville's history and feel the sense of destiny that we are collectively being moved towards.

The Red Thread of Destiny

Auroville's vocation as a site dedicated to research, exploration and experimentation is made very explicit in its charter which speaks of it as a "place of unending education", a "bridge between the past and the future" and "the site of material and spiritual research." One

can also read in publications produced during the first years about life in Auroville being "dedicated to education and organised in such a way that it is open to all who want to learn and study its activities" . Education and research is an integral part of a curriculum given by the Mother and Aurovilians it could be said, are bound through the charter to keep questing to work out a new way of life in accordance with this curriculum.

In Auroville's founding years, the focus was necessarily on establishing a material base and the relatively few early settlers had their hands full with this work. The first major appearance of some solid evidence of this thrust came with the establishment of the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational research (SAIER) in 1984 which was a deliberate effort to give greater prominence to these key points from the charter at a critical period in the township's growth. SAIER was recognised by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) of the Government of India as an All India Institution of Higher Learning devoted to educational research and was created to continue and broaden the work that was already underway to co-ordinate and develop the educational and research capacity of Auroville. From its inception, the founding members set up schools, research teams, libraries and theatre groups with a great deal of creativity and enthusiasm. The themes of evolution and value-oriented education were given a priority through this initiative and research into the production of innovative learning and teaching materials began in earnest at this time. The combination of qualified and unqualified staff gave expression to the spirit of unending education, as the staff were able to learn from one another as well as from the children themselves. In general though, it could be said that while education, particularly for children, was significantly enhanced in the years since SAIER's birth, higher education was yet to come into focus in a widespread way.

The next major appearance of this red thread of destiny could be seen in the birth of the concept of the Centre for International Research in Human Unity (CIRHU) in 1986. CIRHU was envisioned as a major project for Auroville that aimed at addressing the evolutionary crisis that was becoming increasingly apparent at a global level. The specificity of CIRHU is that it was to become a world class centre of international relevance whose material and spiritual research would be dedicated towards a transformation of human consciousness - seen as the root cause of the multifaceted global problems. Certain operational concepts were given to focus the activities of CIRHU including knowledge as synthesis, sovereignty of the child and education as free progress. A location for CIRHU had been earmarked on a prime site within the city centre adjacent to Matrimandir and the construction - which is yet to be started - was envisioned as a large complex of many buildings that would house the multifarious activities of this centre.

Later we see another form of the same idea recurring in the birth of the Sri Aurobindo World Centre for Human Unity (SAWCHU). In 1997 - the year of the 125th birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo - The Government of India had constituted a special committee with representatives from all the centres around India where Sri Aurobindo's thoughts were given prominence (including the Ashram, Auroville and various other national centres) to decide how they would like to commemorate Sri Aurobindo's birth anniversary. The 35 members of this committee unanimously agreed that they would like to create an international centre to promote the vision of Sri Aurobindo and that this centre should be in Auroville. Those involved with this undertaking felt that a stage had been reached in Auroville where research pertaining to higher education could be given a much larger impetus. The centre would take as its main themes of research: evolution, synthesis of knowledge, synthesis of culture, human unity and next species. Methods of research were to be experiential and experimental aiming at concrete realizations. It was a good opportunity for Auroville, but again the limitations at the ground level became evident rather quickly and while some funds went toward activities and publications, most of the funds in the end went into creating a building which is now the most commonly used meeting space for public meetings held in Auroville at the time of writing.

Then in March 1999, Dr. Kireet Joshi was appointed the chairman of Auroville's Governing Board and with his active re-involvement in Auroville after many years of close but more peripheral relationship, the same idea of Auroville becoming a site for advanced educational research took a major boost. He perceived both the ripeness of potential within Auroville - more so than the Aurovilians themselves! - and the favourable conditions within the government of India at this time, and stimulated a move to make a substantial application for funds to the government of India. He wrote and distributed a concept paper to all residents of Auroville for feedback under the title of CIRHU where he introduced a concept for organising the themes of research that had been previously given to the SAWCHU in a new way and expanded the concept to include faculties that would focus research under specific themes such as Education for Human Unity and Indian Culture and Human Unity.

The team of people who had been meeting to co-ordinate the activities of SAWCHU and had a natural interest in this initiative as a whole, decided to probe more deeply within Auroville which had largely been somewhat unresponsive to the CIRHU paper as proposed by Dr. Kireet Joshi. This group began a research within Auroville itself to explore and try and determine more precisely the degree of interest and maybe more importantly, Auroville's capacity to more actively orient itself around education and research. In undertaking this study, the team spoke with many Aurovilians about the ideal of a learning society and the ideas contained within Kireetbhai's paper and was for the first time in Auroville able to qualify and quantify the range of possible learning opportunities that existed. Interestingly, what emerged from this research were a few important things - firstly that the overwhelming number of respondents were indeed willing and enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge in one form or another with interested learners - youth right through to adults. The main limitation to them doing so was a lack of resources such as space and equipment. Secondly, it was noted that there was a particular novelty about research in Auroville - that it tended to span more than one field of interest and there was a general interest to study not just an outer problem but the inner dimension of it as well. These findings plus the knowledge that there already existed over 20 centres of team based research at the time in Auroville, gave the team the needed confidence to

pursue the opportunity that was being presented through the CIRHU development proposal.

However, some fine-tuning was needed. The idea of faculties contained within the paper sounded a bit pompous to some people and some activities such as those related to environmental regeneration and the human body, did not apparently have a natural place within the proposed faculty structure. Some adjustments were made to allow the proposal to more accurately reflect the situation on the ground in Auroville. One important modification was the decision to actually route the whole proposal through the existing SAIER channel and to make CIRHU - originally in Kireetbhai's proposal seen as the overarching centre under which the faculties would operate - a major centre within the overall structure of SAIER. Over a one-year period, a team - who had by this stage agreed to intentionally undertake this work in a spirit of co-operation and collaboration - worked on collecting and examining proposals from altogether about 150 people representing about 30 centres of existing or proposed educational research in Auroville. This was a massive work resulting in the first draft of the SAIER development proposal - a proposal requesting a generous grant from the Government of India to definitively establish Auroville as a site of national and international importance in the fields of innovative, value-oriented educational research.

After the proposal had been submitted through the appropriate channels of the HRD ministry, the authorities of the Ministry decided to send a very high level visiting committee to Auroville to study the proposal and assess the feasibility of Auroville being able to implement what it was proposing to do. The 3-day visit took place in September 2001 and the visiting committee was very impressed by the many displays and presentations made by a vast number of the researchers involved in the proposal and recommended that maximum possible support be given to this undertaking. In view of the magnitude of the SAIER Development Proposal, which would obviously take more than 5 years to be fully implemented, the Visiting Committee recommended that a more modest grant be sanctioned as a 1st phase. The specifics of this recommendation were spelt out in a Financial Resolution signed by all the 5 members of the Committee for implementing the SAIER Development proposal during the 10th 5 year plan 2002-2007.

The SAIER development proposal

The SAIER development proposal outlines a concept to further develop and focalise in a significant way the specialised work that is being undertaken through the existing educational and research centres within the whole of Auroville. It describes the objectives and proposed activities of each of the 7 faculties and CIRHU. The following briefly describes the main thrust of each of the faculties and CIRHU:

- 1) *The Faculty of Education for Human Unity:* The purpose of this Faculty is to advance educational pedagogy by researching and developing methods, curriculum and programs in value-oriented education applicable and appropriate for children of any age. The primary modality of instruction will be an integral education as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The Faculty will integrate this vision with current world developments, problems and proposed solutions. All research outcomes and results will be transmitted through teacher training programs and educational materials produced within Auroville.
- 2) *Faculty of Studies in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother:* The aim of this faculty is to facilitate a bridge between the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the translation and application of this vision to contribute towards the realisation of a concrete human unity, through a new kind of human society
- 3) *Faculty of East, West, and Human Unity:* The faculty will promote and facilitate research, study programs and cultural exchanges so that the unique contributions and qualities of each individual culture can enhance our current understanding of the world and ultimately foster the realisation of a common unity within diversity.
- 4) *Faculty of Indian Culture and Human Unity:* The purpose of this Faculty is to bring out the gains of Indian culture that are relevant to the unity of mankind and, in the setting of Auroville, to represent the essence of Indian Culture that seeks unity and endeavours to re-mould, or transform, all the activities of life in the light of the Spirit.
- 5) *Faculty of Arts, Crafts and Technologies:* The purpose of this faculty is to explore how the proper development and use of arts, crafts and technology can enhance development of creative expression, enhance value education and foster the emergence of a unity consciousness.
- 6) *Faculty of Humanity, Nature and Development:* The purpose of this Faculty is to research and

develop replicable and sustainable models of development relevant for India and other urban areas facing a shortage or destruction of natural resources. Studies and research focus on the inter-relationship between humanity, nature and development and seek solutions to environmental problems that promote harmonisation through appropriate management of these elements.

- 7) *Faculty of Perfection of the Human Body*: The purpose of the Faculty is to elaborate through practice and research, methods to deal with the body, to keep it fit and in optimal health, aiming towards its progressive perfection. The influence of various states of consciousness on the body will be experimented with and the effects of food, hygiene, environment and physical culture on the body will be systematically studied.

In addition to these faculties, the Center of International Research in Human Unity (CIRHU), as mentioned earlier in this paper, is envisioned as a world class centre of international relevance and through the SAIER development proposal, it would be able to be re-invigorated in a more mature form than has been possible until now. The themes of evolution, synthesis of knowledge, synthesis of culture, human unity and next species would remain. CIRHU will be interdisciplinary in the sense that it will be a synthesising centre integrating related streams of knowledge that will flow into it from research institutions in India and abroad as well as from the other faculties of SAIER.

Funds which are expected to begin to flow into Auroville from early 2003 will be utilized for construction of new or expansion of existing educational and research centres, equipment and research programs. In preparing to receive these funds, SAIER is currently developing a new organisational structure and preparing the project holders in the new procedures for accounting and reporting that will be necessary to manage such a large project.

Summary

By this stage, it should be clear that the latest injection of funds into Auroville for the purpose of supporting education and research has its antecedents from the very beginning of Auroville - the charter itself. This vision has remained alive and as a result of recent developments, is poised to take a major leap. Arriving at this point, one can plainly see that many fortunate

co-operations have happened both within Auroville itself, and beyond by those who can clearly perceive Auroville's destiny as being for something bigger than its own glory - that Auroville does have an important part to play in the emerging evolutionary picture on the globe. For the first time though since Auroville's inception, with the recent inflow of funds set to pour in, Auroville can take a quantum leap in its destined direction. The little flame that has burned patiently and persistently is now, with the kindling of funds from the Government of India, set to become a blazing fire.

And, apart from the visible changes this will mean for Auroville in terms of new buildings, more programs and more people flowing through, within Auroville itself, less visible changes have been taking place. It has been the first time in Auroville's history that there has been a process whereby a very large number of residents from diverse working areas have come together in agreement to move in a similar direction together - to consciously say yes to Auroville actively moving in the direction of a learning society. These Aurovilians have collaborated and co-operated in making various, sometimes difficult, decisions regarding priorities and on the whole it has been a very smooth and harmonious process - quite remarkable considering the vastness and complexity of what is being planned!

"The permanent university will be the key to Auroville's raison d'etre. It must to be a leap forward: so that it can hasten the advent of the future - a world of harmony, beauty and union."

- Mother to Roger on 1st February, 1969

[Roger's personal notes, translated from the French]

Could it be that this is an idea whose time has come?

Notes:

1. Equals one - the universecity. Pg.16
2. The members of the visiting committee were:
 - a. Prof. G.C. Pande: Chairman of the Committee, expert on Buddhism; Chairman of Tibetan Institute at Sarnath; Chairman Institute of Advanced studies Shimla.
 - b. Dr. Venkatasubramaniam: member of the Planning Commission.
 - c. Mr. Venkateswaran: Additional Secretary in charge of expenditure in the Ministry of Finance.
 - d. Dr. Subash Kashyap: Constitutional expert and member of Auroville's Governing Board.
 - e. Mr. Champak Chatterjee: Joint Secretary Ministry of Education, Head of the Higher Education Cell.

Auroville Education and Society

Jean-Yves

Schools are often presented as places where you get educated, but educated to what? Mainly to the spirit, values, systems of authority and methods of the society they belong to; in that sense, they are 'instruments of socialisation' (among others): they prepare the youth to fit in the social order where they are going to live, to adopt the rules and codes that run it. This social function designs their program and method and school itself is a reflection of society. When we speak of Auroville's schools, we tend to think that they should transmit something of Aurovilian values, but they can do it only as far as these values are those actually at work in our collective life, embodied by it. In many domains, Auroville is just in between two worlds, the old one (where we have been born and which still moulds many of our attitudes) being still believed in, and the new one, not fully trusted because not really possessed in consciousness. But let's dream of what an education derived from the Auroville Charter would be and we will see that it is one of the most attractive one can imagine for the world of today.

The most outward aspect of the Charter, which is more used to present Auroville, its conclusion so to say, is the last article:

Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity.

True human unity does not come about by melting all the differences in the same pot, but on the contrary by finding how the diversity of human cultures can blossom when nurtured by a living sense of unity. This is possible only if we develop a synthetic culture, the habit of finding how what seems so different, sometimes so divergent, can indeed be combined in a rich complexity. As Mother said, a complex unity is the very spirit of Auroville. This skill in dealing with complexity with its underlying law of unity would be the main feature of Auroville's education. The students would be trained in widening

and deepening their thought in order to cultivate a synthetic method without which neither Auroville nor human unity are possible.

But how can we develop such a program in our schools if the Aurovilian society still clings to the exclusive way of imposing the truth of one over the others? Synthesis here is made somehow unreal and appears only as vain ornament of the intellect without any organizing power. This issue is directly connected with the way we organise our collective life and our dealing with power. In a utilitarian society, where everything can be compromised, some sort of constantly bargained harmony is possible. But in a highly idealistic society – and what is man if he renounces his idealism? – the occasions of conflicts multiply, for nobody is ready to give up what seems essential, which is that part of the total truth one holds and stands for as one's own path of dedication and progress. So aspiring at human unity may very well result in a greater difficulty to harmonise a living variety of conflicting ideals and forces. The only way out of the difficulty is to go beyond, towards a synthetic capacity which includes and harmonises, thus finding for each thing its right place. The actual capacity to harmonise life with a synthetic thought would replace the competitive system of democracy where organized minorities capture apparent majorities to impose its view to the whole. Auroville society has to value harmonization through synthesis if synthesis and harmony are to be valued by our youth.

But human unity is not only through space, it is also through time, and that is what the third article is about:

Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future.

Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realizations.

Before going to the next step of our evolution, we have to gather in ourselves the past experience of humanity, understand what it has represented and attempted and see how it prolongs itself dynamically into the future. We must feel this vast human adventure carrying us towards new accomplishments. There is no history but the history of consciousness and its different aspects through time and space and we need all of them for the Auroville adventure but also if we have to live in a world reconciled with itself. Each student would be invited to rediscover these cultures in himself, for they have all developed something he needs for an integral development. But the story of the universe has not started with human history and its evolution itself which will be the continuous subject of knowledge: how organized matter came out of the original fragmentation, how the energy it contained became more apparent in the movements of life, then how energy released more and more consciousness through its operations until a conscious mind emerged and experimented its possibilities through human history. Then would we truly become the children of evolution, fully gathered and ready for the next step. Reconciling ourselves with our past is the same thing as uniting the within and the without for it is in the most remote past of Vedic times that we find the beginning of what we want to achieve now: a rehabilitation of the earth in the light and power of the spirit.

But beyond or underlying the program, there is the movement of self-education itself, as expressed in the third article of the Charter:

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

It points to a new paradigm in our collective life as well as to a more central secret of our individual one. A progress-oriented rather than a satisfaction-oriented society would reorganize our economy and polity in a collective where work is not anymore the tribute we have to pay in order to get the means of access to as much satisfaction as we can, but the field of our self-discovery and becoming; where political life is not organized by a mechanism aiming at decision-making automatically applied but becomes essentially a learning process by which we discover how we can harmonise our emerging complexity. But how can we teach this in our schools if we have not made of our

life a collective learning process?

But this article implies also a certain way of living for the individual. The very aim of the human species is to progress endlessly, which means to renounce constantly what we have become in order to become something new. It is here that freedom is required if we want each one to discover one's own truth beyond conventions and social roles. From here came the definition of the Free Progress method: the only way to learn how to be free is to be given this freedom and to learn how to use it, to learn that it is not the license of the ego but the respect of the illimitable sovereignty and dignity of each soul and the condition of its development. In fact, in an Auroville education, this would be the leitmotiv and implicit message of our all our activities and this would be possible only if carried by the same process in the society: each service and unit is to be thought of as a place of constant progress and unending education, the real wealth that we would increase, consciousness.

The central key to progress and unity is given by the first article of the Charter:

*Auroville belongs to nobody in particular.
Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole.*

*But to live in Auroville one must be the willing
servitor of the Divine Consciousness.*

This place where we live, learn and progress is not ours. It is offered to a greater consciousness, to its birth and growth in our humanity: we are only the stewards of the things we are given for a conscious use. It is the very method to progress for it is by offering one's energy to a greater consciousness that we create the path of becoming, as the ancient *rishis* had discovered, thus opening the human path. It is also the key to human unity since it is that which is equally present in all and working out its evolution in everyone. It is the leverage that can effectuate all the aims expressed by the Charter, its most dynamic power of effectuation, without which all the rest will remain an idealistic dream. It is this way of growing, of becoming more and more the aspiring soul within by offering what we are to what we want to become, which has to invade the whole space of Auroville, so that the dream of 'No School' can be achieved, when the school, defined as our home of progress, is everywhere and all the time for each one of us.

On Public Spaces and the Development of Auroville's Crown

Helmut Schmid

Town planning, unlike building design, is a process that extends over a long time. While in ancient times it took centuries for a town to develop, we now do it in a few decades, but even so total control over the process is rarely possible. As the initiators and original planners get replaced, visions and opinions change. The following generation tends to look at things differently. Usage and experience might not confirm the planners' intentions (as many examples show, Chandigarh being one of them). Human nature will reject the idealistic planners' cry of, "We want to avoid anything bad", unless the basic principles of their planning are so true and self-evident that they cannot easily be undermined or set aside.

What enduring principles, what "anchoring course of logic" (Louis I. Kahn), can be established in Auroville, that are strong enough to gain the endorsement and loyal compliance of future generations?

Auroville clearly has such strong principles in its Master Plan. For example there is Matrimandir in the centre, surrounded by a ring of public-use buildings, which is called the Crown. But until now the full significance and function of the Crown has not been elaborated in detail, and this has led to confusion and dispute.

Streets in Cities

The street, determining a system of movement and a sequence of public spaces, may be considered the most vital institution in a city. Town planning starts with the street (and not with individual buildings, which are subordinate to it). In this sense, the street is the forerunner of all the institutions and buildings to come.

Being able to move about easily and confidently, to linger between buildings, to take pleasure in the

spaces and buildings and life of the city, being able to mingle and move amongst other people - informally or in a more organized fashion - are possibilities that are fundamental to good cities and good building projects, today as in the past, in Auroville as elsewhere. The human quality of city streets and public spaces can play a major part in fostering these experiences.

Historical Perspective

In the course of history the street as a public space has undergone a number of changes. Although the Greeks and the Romans had city planners for their colonial cities, the planned city was hardly seen as a goal in the medieval period between 500 AD and 1500 AD. During that period the slow development of the city, which often took place over hundreds of years, allowed a healing process of continual adjustment and adaptation formed by use. The eventual outcome has often been urban spaces that provide extremely good conditions for outdoor city life by virtue of their spatial qualities and scale. Today these places have become powerful tourist attractions and desirable places to live.

A radical change took place during the Renaissance, with a transition from organically evolving cities to planned ones. Professional planners developed theories and ideas about how cities ought to look and to a great degree the city began to be considered as a piece of art to be conceived and executed as a whole. The areas between buildings and the human activities going on there were no longer the major points of interest, but were replaced by factors such as the symmetry of the plan, spatial effects, powerful vistas, impressive public buildings and the architects who shaped them. Urban spaces became larger, wider, straighter and, apart from some celebrated exceptions, rarely successful in human scale, since formal considerations and visual expression were given priority.



The awareness of the visual aspects of city planning developed during this period and the aesthetics formulated in this context formed the basis for the work of generations of architects in succeeding centuries, who concentrated more on buildings and groups of buildings as sculptural forms than on the human use of public spaces.

These aesthetic principles were supplemented in the early 20th century by the physical, physiological and functional ideas of a movement called Functionalism, which formulated criteria for healthy and physiologically suitable architecture based on the development of medical and hygienic knowledge. Buildings were oriented towards the sun rather than towards the street, green recreational areas were integrated into the city plan, work areas were separated from residential areas and public urban spaces were more or less eliminated.

Nowhere did the functionalists mention the psychological and social aspects of the design of buildings and public spaces. That these could influence social activities and contact patterns amongst people was not their concern. Functionalism

was a distinctly physically and materially oriented planning ideology. Its most noticeable effect has been that streets and squares disappeared from town-plans and were replaced by "roads": spaces designed for the rapid movement of individual motorized traffic, often between endless grass lawns for "recreation". The automobile made its appearance as the pet of planners for decades to come.

Motorisation

The "drive-in city" maintained its appeal right into the seventies of the twentieth century, resulting in a very serious threat to the human quality of city life. The still-continuing invasion of the automobile and its byproducts, through the preference given by planners to the security, speed and ease of motorised transport has turned many lovely cityscapes into inhuman automobile-slums, congested with vehicles and polluted by poisonous fumes. Here the predominant feeling for the individual on foot is tension and danger, not at all a climate for social interaction - one cannot let down one's guard. Public spaces are degraded to traffic junctions, and congestion, accident rates and pollution are still escalating to more and more intolerable levels. Any

non-motorised traffic participants such as pedestrians and cyclists are usually given second priority. The result is the loss of vivid street life and the disappearance of functioning public spaces in our cities - not to mention the negative effect on the health of human beings and the planet as a whole.

Life between Buildings

The life that takes place in and between buildings seems almost always to rank as more essential and more relevant than the spaces and buildings themselves. We know that human beings need contact. Apart from contacts at work, at school, at home in the family or other "arranged" groups, there is a need for the unpredictable, the spontaneous and unplanned. For example children often prefer to play on the street rather than in the well-equipped playgrounds prepared for them. We want these spontaneous contacts to happen in a relaxed way and not on the relatively formal level of school or workplace. Children see and learn how others work, behave and dress, and through this information and experience establish a confident relationship with the world around them. We are inspired by seeing others in action. Seeing other children or adults at play, children get the urge to join in and have ideas for new games. This often happens on the way to and from school. Street life, the safety of street space and its use by pedestrians play a major part in fostering this learning process. The luxury or need of taking children to school by car has unfortunately replaced that field of experience; it probably makes children eager to become car drivers as soon as possible.

Informal contact often takes place amongst pedestrians, but hardly happens between car drivers. A city designed to be experienced by pedestrians, offering beauty and variety in concordance with "eye and foot" (Louis I. Kahn), becomes penetrable and transparent, interesting and small in dimension, but rich in experience. It creates identity amongst its citizens, more loyalty to their city, and a fundamental feeling of human agreement and belonging.

“The whole idea of downgrading and minimizing the social part of the street in city life is the most mischievous and destructive idea in orthodox city planning; that it is so often done in the name of vaporous fantasies about city child care is as bitter as irony can get”, writes Jane Jacobs.

A Proposal

The cities of old were based on pedestrian movement, their size adjusted to a maximum extent of 3 to 6 km. Auroville's diameter is 2.5 km (the city circle within the Outer Ring Road). This means that it can be crossed by foot within 35 minutes (70m walking speed per minute).

Why not declare the whole city area within the Outer Ring Road an area of pedestrian priority, with limited access for individual motorized transport? Car and motorbike drivers could reach their destinations via the Outer Ring Road where they can move freely and from which they can access the different zones of Auroville. But they would have to return to the Ring Road to reach other targets, since they should be allowed to enter the Crown only for emergencies. One should not be able to drive around or across inside the City Circle. As we can see on Connaught Circus in New Delhi "Inner Rings" attract traffic with magnetic force, because the shortest trip to cross the city will pass through them. This is definitely not desirable for Auroville's Crown.

Instead we should be aiming for a centrifugal effect as far as motorized traffic is concerned, stepping down its disturbance from the periphery to the centre - an area which contains the "Soul of Auroville", the Matrimandir, and was named "Peace" by the Mother.

New Vision of the Crown

This would open up the wonderful option for the Crown to develop into a sequence of urban spaces where pedestrians and cyclists are given priority. Slow speed and preferably non-polluting Public Transport vehicles, slowly but frequently circling the Crown, and stopping at points within comfortable walking distance, will not pose any danger. Other necessary traffic would only be permitted at dead slow speeds, and probably only at certain times of day. Although used by all, the area would be unmistakably designed for the ease of pedestrians. Child play, trees for shade with benches, street side cafes and the absence of separate traffic lanes or pavements will foster a vivid street life. Safety from motorized traffic as well as from ill-intentioned strangers will be ensured through the priority given to human presence; there are more "eyes on the street" and less "get-away-vehicles". Buildings will no longer have to turn away from an unbearably dangerous and polluting street environment but will

come close and open up on both sides of the street. Closeness, human scale and the old friendship between street and buildings will be recreated.

In this case there would be no need to create a separate Pedestrian Boulevard. In fact such a separation between a Crown Road and a pedestrian walkway would inevitably signal that racing is allowed on a road that is obviously and especially being reserved for faster movement. The result would be inherently dangerous for the majority of the population, especially for the children, who would have to cross the Crown twice a day to reach school from their residences on the other side.

This concept is neither a utopian fantasy nor the pure heresy it might appear to car and motorbike lovers. It only follows the principles of "Traffic Calming", that are currently being implemented in many pedestrian areas and even entire city centres throughout the world.

Conclusion

The ideologies on which most cities and housing areas

have been planned right up to the 1980s gave priority to automobile-based mobility. But private motorized traffic has turned out to be the key obstacle in developing a sustainable and livable city. As long as cars and motorbikes dominate, cities lose the benefit of streets as public space which are a vital part of its social landscape. "Car-free" is rapidly becoming part of the vocabulary of forward-looking city-planners.

In the planning of Auroville it ought to be our major aim to reduce vehicle counts on the Crown, which should be designed primarily for pedestrians, cyclists and Public Transport. This will help to maintain a high quality of life in our city-centre and peace around Matrimandir.

References:

- Billinger, H. (2001) *Auroville Mobility Concept*
Crawford, J. H. (2000) *Carfree Cities*
Gehl, J. (1987) *Life between Buildings*
Jacobs, J. (1961) *The Death and Life of great American Cities*
Kahn, L. I. (1991) *Writings, Lectures, Interviews*
Vasconcellos, E. A. (2001) *Urban Transport, Environment and Equity*

In fact, beauty is something very elusive. It is a kind of harmony which you experience much more than think and the true suprarational relation with beauty is not at all a "reasonable" relation (Sri Aurobindo will tell you this at the end), it completely overpasses reason, it is a contact in a higher realm. But what precisely he tells us in this paragraph is that when it is an instinct it is found mixed with movements of ignorance and a lack of culture and refinement. So this instinct is sometimes very gross and very imperfect in its expression. One can experience an aesthetic pleasure (let us call it that) in seeing something which is truly beautiful and at the same time something else which is not beautiful, but which gives one some sort of pleasure, because it is mixed, because one's aesthetic instinct is not pure, it is mixed with all kinds of sensations which are very crude and untrained. So it is here, as he says, that reason has a role, that it comes in to explain why a thing is beautiful, to educate the taste; but it is not final, and reason is not the final judge; it can very well make mistakes, only it is a little higher, as judgment, than that of a completely infrarational being who has no reason and no understanding of things. It is a stage. It is a stage, that's what he says, it is a stage. But if you want to realise true beauty, you must go beyond that, very far beyond this stage. In what follows in our reading he will explain it. But this is the summary of what he has said in this paragraph. At first your sense of beauty is instinctive, impulsive, infrarational, lacking light, wanting reason, simply without any true understanding, and so, because the origin of the aesthetic sense is infrarational, it is understood, one always says this: "There's no disputing tastes and colours." You know, there are all kinds of popular proverbs which say that the appreciation of the beautiful is not a matter of reasoning, everyone likes a particular thing he doesn't know why, he takes pleasure in looking at a thing, and this pleasure cannot be discussed. Well, this is the infrarational stage of the aesthetic sense.

Vedic Perception of the Word In Search of a New Language

Iatsenko Vladimir

The most fundamental question in the field of Linguistics from immemorial times was the correspondence of meaning with sound (*artha* and *vāc*). There were several great attempts to discover their true relation, to observe and study it gradually and scrupulously on all levels. The oldest attempt, known to us, belongs to the Vedic period (more than 2500 BC). It should be noted that the Vedic Sanskrit language was functioning differently from what is known to us today. In the Vedic times, the main approach to the Word was mantric. Vac, speech, was seen as a carrier and even a creator of meaning. This view was maintained by ancient rishis on the basis of clear and transparent system of etymons and rich and flexible grammar of Vedic language, the meaning of which was cognized by comprehensive hearing.

When we say, for instance: 'pen', we do not know why this particular sound designates this particular meaning. We simply remember it as a symbol indicating it. There is no special law or deeper sense of sound and meaning going together. Their association is rather conventional, in the words of modern Linguistics. But in Sanskrit language if we say "*lekhani*", a pen, we immediately recognise its meaning from the root, to *likh / rikh*, to scratch, to scribe, and moreover it suggests us a more general significance of the whole family of roots and their derivations. So, there is a fundamental difference between the language which is etymologically transparent relying on its system of roots, creating a contextual significance from it, being always focused and oriented towards the roots, and the language which operates by conventional meaning, memorising the words, their meanings and contextual use, rather than creating them.

In Vedic language a simple root-sound "...had a general character or quality (*guna*), which was capable of a great number of applications and therefore of a great number of possible significances. And this *guna* and its results it shared with many kindred sounds. At first, therefore, word-clans, word-families started life

on the communal system with a common stock of possible and realised significances and a common right to all of them; their individuality lay rather in shades of expression of the same ideas than in any exclusive right to the expression of a single idea. ...The principle of partition was at first fluid, then increased in rigidity, until word-families and finally single words were able to start life on their own account.... For in the first state of language the word is as living or even a more living force than idea; sound determines sense. In its last state the positions have been reversed: the idea becomes all-important, the sound secondary." (*Sri Aurobindo, Secret of the Veda, p.49*).

So, the words in Sanskrit were far from simply symbolising the objects and their relations, as they seem to mainly appear in modern languages, but the derivatives of their own system of the seed-ideas, revealing quality, power and state of consciousness in their own system of Meaning. At the very source they were not meant to imitate or project the outer reality, as they are supposed to function in modern languages, but to reveal the inner reality of the Word, and thus to create a new outer reality.

Up to now there was no valid concept of a comprehensive etymological significance. It was seen mainly as historical evidence of the past and nothing more. The system of etymons was lost in time, and there was no direct correlation between sound and meaning in a systematic way. For instance if we compare the meaning of different synonyms in English: big, huge, immense, great, large, etc., we will find that on the one hand they represent the same concept and on the other hand they have a certain difference in sound-form. So the two phrases "big ocean" and "huge ocean" are not the same. Being similar in concept they differ in sound-quality and therefore in feeling, representing various expressions of consciousness. We can feel these variations but are not able to define them, because we have no knowledge of and access to the system of etymons anymore.

To make our point clear we can take another example. If we compare different words in Sanskrit, which have similar sound-form, we will find certain similarity in meaning also. So if we open the Sanskrit Dictionary we will find that the words, as we read them one by one, change their meanings gradually as they change their sound-form, always adding some new significance and having still something in common.

<i>i,</i>	to go, move;
<i>ikh,</i>	to go, move;
<i>inkh,</i>	to go, move;
<i>ing,</i>	to go, to go to or towards, to move, agitate, shake;
<i>icch / ish,</i>	to desire, to endeavor to obtain;
<i>it,</i>	to go, to go to or towards, to make haste;
<i>inaksh,</i>	to endeavour to reach, strive to obtain;
<i>indh,</i>	kindling, lighting, flaming;
<i>inv,</i>	to advance upon, press upon, drive;
<i>ir,</i>	to go;
<i>ish</i>	to course to move, throw, to stream out, to promote; etc.

It is very rare that the meaning would change in a completely unpredictable way because Sanskrit had not yet deviated from its original system of etymons. To certain extent it is also true for Latin and Greek, though much less, because their systems are incomplete. For modern languages it is absolutely different. Here the meaning is changing from word to word without any systematic phonetic reason. But even here we can find similarity to examples in Sanskrit. If we take, for instance, the whole range of words in English starting with "st" -, like: state, stay, stand, station, static, status, stable, stage, and even such words like: stubborn, stupor, stupid, stumble, stop, stock, staff, stuff, stiff, stem, stick, stuck, etc., we can see without any difficulty that they have some common semantic field behind them, of which they are the applications into a specific context.

Here we have to mention that there is whole range of words, which imitate the sounds of objective reality, so called 'knock-knock language'. We will not deal with them for the time being, but only with etymologically cognisable words. For this purpose we will start with Sanskrit which as a language which preserved its own original etymological system. We have basically three different types of meaning:

- etymological (original semantic), the core meaning,
- grammatical, syntactic semantic,
- contextual, (the applied one into a specific context), the word-text as we use it.

The syntactic semantic or grammatical meaning is mainly created by the mind, forming language as such. Therefore in ancient Indian linguistic tradition Indra is the first grammarian. Indra as the Lord of Illumined mind, according to Sri Aurobindo, invented Grammar to master the Eternal Word. His teacher of Sanskrit was Brihaspati, the Lord of the Divine Word. The flow of Brihaspati's speech was endless and eternal, so there was no way for Indra to master it. Therefore he had to stop the flow of the eternal speech and to fashion Grammar, so that with its help the etymological original semantic of Brihaspati, which is beyond time and space, could be grasped and applied to the manifested world in time and space. The Vedic Myth of Creation also tells us about the Word-Grammar-Meaning, which are identified and explained in the Upanishads:

- Dyaus*, Heaven - Original Word, System of Etymons, Meaning,
- Antariksha*, Space in between Heaven and Earth - Grammar, Syntax, Structure, Language,
- Prithivi*, Earth - Applied, manifested Speech.

At the beginning, Heaven and Earth were one, as Original-Intention-Word and Manifested Word, or we may say that Meaning and Sound, *artha* and *vāc*. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." (*Gospel from John 1.1*) But after splitting into two by grammatical structures, the meaning of the text could not be grasped without mediator - Grammar. It was no more understood through the sound only, but through the structure of the text, the Language.

In our research, we follow Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the origins of human language. In his essay "Origins of Aryan Speech" in the book "Secret of the Vedas", Archival notes, we collect invaluable material for our studies. Sri Aurobindo gives us keys to the original classification of etymons and a variety of grammatical forms. He gives us

original abstract meanings of simple vowels and consonants and moreover - a comprehensive understanding of the processes involved into the creation of human language. This knowledge was revealed to him differently than simply through the linguistic studies. He entered the hidden source of the Word with a help of his yogic realisation.

As Sri Aurobindo writes in his article "Philological Method of the Veda", "The Vedic Sanskrit ... abounds in a variety of forms and inflexions; it is fluid and vague, yet richly subtle in its use of cases and tenses. And on its psychological side it has not yet crystallized, is not entirely hardened into the rigid forms of intellectual precision. The word for the Vedic Rishi is still a living thing, a thing of power, creative, formative. It is not yet a conventional symbol for an idea, but itself the parent and former of ideas. It carries within it the memory of its roots, is still conscient of its own history." (p.51)

He gives us the keys to the etymological system of Sanskrit language. The four first simple vowels *a*, *i*, *u*, *ri* of the Sanskrit language "indicate the idea of being, existence... *a* in its short form indicates being in its simplicity without any farther idea of modification or quality, mere or initial being, creative of space; *i* an intense state of existence, being narrowed, forceful and insistent, tending to a goal, seeking to occupy space; *u* a wide, extended but not diffused state of existence, being medial and firmly occupant of space; *ri* a vibrant state of existence, pulsing in space, being active about a point, within a limit." (*Sri Aurobindo, Archives and Research, December 1978, v.2, No 2, pp. 155-156*). A conscious attempt to articulate a particular meaning revealed the system of sound-ideas. The later specification of the idea was provided by the mind, which shaped out the word and its farther derivations. It is the mind which assigns to the words a particular significance, but it is not the mind which assigns to them their general meaning.

Now we have to trace this general semantic in the roots and words of Sanskrit, and to compare the general meaning of all those similar in grammatical structure words and roots with general meaning of vowels. Here we will not differentiate the short and long vowels, considering the long vowels to be of the same basic quality. Later in our studies we will make the difference between them.

<i>bha</i> ,	to appear, to look like, to shine;
<i>bhi</i> ,	to fear, to be tense;
<i>bhu</i> ,	to become, to occupy a new space;
<i>bhri</i> ,	to bear;
<i>ma</i> ,	to measure, to create;
<i>ma/mi</i> ,	to measure, to diminish;
<i>mu</i> ,	to measure, to bind, to mingle;
<i>mri</i> ,	to die;

From these few examples we can clearly see that the semantic of selected roots is changing according to the general semantic of the vowel sounds. Thus, for instance: *bha* is to appear; *bhi* is to be tense; *bhu* is to become; *bhri* is to bear. Let us now compare them with the semantic characteristics of the vowels which Sri Aurobindo has given. So if the first root *bha* means an appearance, then the appearance in power is the root *bhi*, meaning tension, whereas the root *bhu* means appearance in the space, which is a kind of occupation of space, and therefore has the meaning of becoming; and finally the root *bhri* means to sustain itself in spite of everything, to bear. The other set of roots: *ma*, to measure, to create, where *mi* is to measure but already to diminish by this measurement; whereas *mu* is to measure and to bind by this measurement; and *mri* is even to depart from by the act of measurement, that is to die.

In these few examples we are trying to go beyond the significance of the mind to the basic vibrations and their meanings in a systematic way; the difficulty is obvious here, for any time one can mix the grammatical, structural meaning and its influence with etymological. After comparing the whole system of roots and grammatical structures with their systematic change in meaning we will find an absolutely marvelous picture of meaning-sound correlation in Sanskrit, which makes it a true language in a sense of what sounds that is. It is not only a symbolic but factual, true embodiment of meaning. Sanskrit language can be a true guide to a new science of language. We believe that systematic approach to etymology, where Sanskrit language is essential for its discovery, may lead us to a new understanding of the origins of all Indo-European languages, or even shed some light on the origins of all languages. It may also prepare a firm and scientific ground for understanding of what the language of new humanity could be. The true language of a new human race, where the sound and meaning are one, where one says exactly of what one truly is.

To the Students, Young and Old

The Mother

There are, in the history of the earth, moments of transition when things that have existed for thousands of years must give way to those that are about to manifest. A special concentration of the world consciousness, one might almost say, an intensification of its effort, occurs at such times, varying according to the kind of progress to be made, the quality of the transformation to be realised. We are at precisely such a turning-point in the world's history. Just as Nature has already created upon earth a mental being, man, so too there is now a concentrated activity in this mentality to bring forth a supramental consciousness and individuality.

Certain beings who, I might say, are in the secret of the gods, are aware of the importance of this moment in the life of the world, and they have taken birth on earth to play their part in whatever way they can. A great luminous consciousness broods over the earth, creating a kind of stir in its atmosphere. All who are open receive a ripple from this eddy, a ray of this light and seek to give form to it, each according to his capacity.

We have here the unique privilege of being at the very centre of this radiating light, at the fount of this force of transformation.

Sri Aurobindo, incarnating the supramental consciousness in a human body, has not only revealed to us the nature of the path to follow and the way to follow it in order to reach the goal, but has also by his own personal realisation given us the example; he has provided us, so to say, with the proof that the thing can be done and that the time has come to do it.

Consequently, we are not here to repeat what others have done, but to prepare ourselves for the blossoming of a new consciousness and a new life. That is why I address myself to you, the students, that is, to all who wish to learn, to learn always more and always better, so that one day you may be capable of opening yourselves to the new force and of giving it the possibility to manifest on the physical plane. For that is our programme and we must not forget it. To

understand the true reason why you are here, you must remember that we want to become instruments that are as perfect as possible, instruments that express the divine will in the world. And if the instruments are to be perfect, they must be cultivated, educated, trained. They must not be left like fallow land or a formless piece of stone. A diamond reveals all its beauty only when it is artistically cut. It is the same for you. If you want your physical being to be a perfect instrument for the manifestation of the supramental consciousness, you must cultivate it, sharpen it, refine it, give it what it lacks, perfect what it already possesses. That is why you go to school, my children, whether you are big or small, for one can learn at any age — and so you must go to your classes.

Sometimes, if you are not in a very good mood, you say, "How boring it is going to be!" Yes, perhaps the teacher who is taking your class does not know how to amuse you. He may be a very good teacher, but at the same time he may not know how to entertain you, for it is not always easy. There are days when one does not feel like being entertaining. There are days, for him as for you, when one would like to be elsewhere than in school. But still, you go to your class. You go because you must, for if you obey all your fancies you will never have any control over yourselves; your fancies will control you. So you go to your class, but instead of going there and thinking, "How bored I am going to be; I am sure it is not going to be interesting", you should tell yourselves, "There is not a single minute in life, not one circumstance that is not an opportunity for progress. So what progress am I going to make today? The class I am going to now is on a subject that does not interest me. But perhaps that is because something is lacking in me; perhaps, in my brain, a certain number of cells are deficient and that is why I cannot find any interest in the subject. If so, I shall try, I shall listen carefully, concentrate hard and above all drive out of my mind this aimlessness, this superficial shallowness which makes me feel bored when there is something I cannot grasp. I am bored because I do not make an effort to understand, because I do not have this will for

progress.” When one does not progress, one feels bored, everyone, young or old; for we are here on earth to progress. How tedious life would be without progress! Life is monotonous. Most often it is not fun. It is far from being beautiful. But if you take it as a field for progress, then everything changes, everything becomes interesting and there is no longer any room for boredom. Next time your teacher seems boring to you, instead of wasting your time doing nothing, try to understand why he bores you. Then if you have a capacity of observation and if you make an effort to understand, you will soon see that a kind of miracle has occurred and that you are no longer feeling bored at all.

This remedy is good in almost every case. Sometimes, in certain circumstances, everything seems dull, boring, stupid; this means that you are as boring as the circumstances and it clearly shows that you are not in a state of progress. It is simply a passing wave of boredom, and nothing is more contrary to the purpose of existence. At such a moment you might make an effort and ask yourself, “This boredom shows that I have some thing to learn, some progress to make in myself, some inertia to conquer, some weakness to overcome.” Boredom is a dullness of the consciousness; and if you seek the cure within yourself, you will see that it immediately dissolves. Most people, when they feel bored, instead of making an effort to rise one step higher in their consciousness, come down one step lower; they come down even lower than they were before and do stupid things, they make themselves vulgar in the hope of amusing themselves. That is why men intoxicate themselves, spoil their health, deaden their brains. If they had risen instead of falling, they would have made use of this opportunity to progress.

In fact, the same thing holds true in all circumstances, when life gives you a severe blow, one of those blows which men call a misfortune. The first thing they try to do is to forget, as if they did not forget only too soon! And in order to forget, they do all kinds of things. When something is very painful, they try to distract themselves — what they call distracting themselves, that is, doing stupid things, lowering their consciousness instead of raising it. If something extremely painful happens to you, never try to deaden yourself; you must not forget, you must not sink into unconsciousness. Go right to the heart of the pain and there you will find the light, the truth, the strength and the joy which are hidden behind this pain. But for that you must be firm and refuse to let yourself slide.

In this way every event in life, great or small, can be an opportunity for progress. Even the most insignificant details can lead to revelations if you know how to profit from them. Whenever you are engaged in something which does not demand the whole of your attention, use it as an opportunity to develop your faculty of observation and you will see that you will make interesting discoveries. To help you to understand what I mean, I shall give you two examples. They are two brief moments in life which are insignificant in themselves, but still leave a deep and lasting impression.

The first example takes place in Paris. You have to go out into this immense city; here all is noise, apparent confusion, bewildering activity. Suddenly you see a woman walking in front of you; she is like most other women, her dress has nothing striking about it, but her gait is remarkable, supple, rhythmic, elegant, harmonious. It catches your attention and you are full of wonder. Then, this body moving along so gracefully reminds you of all the splendours of ancient Greece and the unparalleled lesson in beauty which its culture gave to the whole world, and you live an unforgettable moment — all that just because of a woman who knows how to walk!

The second example is from the other end of the world, from Japan. You have just arrived in this beautiful country for a long stay and very soon you find out that unless you have at least a minimum knowledge of the language, it will be very difficult for you to get along. So you begin to study Japanese and in order to become familiar with the language you do not miss a single opportunity to hear people talking, you listen to them carefully, you try to understand what they are saying; and then, beside you, in a tram where you have just taken your seat, there is a small child of four or five years with his mother. The child begins to talk in a clear and pure voice and listening to him you have the remarkable experience that he knows spontaneously what you have to learn with so much effort, and that as far as Japanese is concerned he could be your teacher in spite of his youth.

In this way life becomes full of wonder and gives you a lesson at each step. Looked at from this angle, it is truly worth living.

Bulletin, November 1953

Self

Sri Aurobindo

He said, "I am egoless, spiritual, free,"
Then swore because his dinner was not ready.
I asked him why. He said, "It is not me,
But the belly's hungry god who gets unsteady".
I asked him why. He said, "It is his play.
I am unmoved within, desireless, pure.
I care not what may happen day by day."
I questioned him, "Are you so very sure?"
He answered, "I can understand your doubt.
But to be free is all. It does not matter
How you may kick and howl and rage and shout,
Making a row over your daily platter.
"To be aware of self is liberty,
Self I have got and, having self, am free."

'Collected Poems'