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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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DIVINE SIGHT

Each sight is now immortal with Thy bliss:
My soul through the rapt eyes has come to see;
A veil is rent and they no more can miss
The miracle of Thy world-epiphany.

Into an ecstasy of vision caught
Each natural object is of Thee a part,
A rapture-symbol from Thy substance wrought,
A poem shaped in Beauty's living heart,

A master-work of colour and design,
A mighty sweetness borne on grandeur's wings;
A burdened wonder of significant line
Reveals itself in even commonest things.

All forms are Thy dream-dialect of delight,
O Absolute, O vivid Infinite.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 155)

तान्त्रिकसिद्धिप्रकरणम्

tāntrikasiddhiprakaraṇam

A CHAPTER ON TANTRIC PERFECTION

[*Tāntrikasiddhiprakaraṇam* is an incomplete Sanskrit text written by Sri Aurobindo. The available text has thirty-seven *sūtras* (short sentences) dealing with the *sādhana* of surrender to Kālī, the *śakti*. Nothing much is known about the date of this writing, but the text is found in a notebook of Sri Aurobindo which contains many of his other writings belonging to the period 1911-12.

It is being published here for the first time.

The translation and transliteration have been added.]

तस्मिंश्च शक्तिप्रकरणम्

tasmimśca śaktiprakaraṇam

Therein the Section on Shakti

शक्त्युपासना तान्त्रिकसिद्धिः ।

śaktyupāsanā tāntrikasiddhiḥ

The worship (*upāsanā*) of Shakti, the divine Force, is the basis of Tantric *siddhi* or perfection.

द्विविधोपासना साहमिति सा प्रकृतिरहं पुरुष इति । एते द्वे पूर्णे खण्डोपासनाप्यस्ति भेदप्रधाना द्वैतमयी साऽविद्योपासना न प्रवरा ।

dvividhopāsanā sāhamiti sā prakṛtiraham puruṣa iti ete dve pūrṇe khaṇḍopāsanāpyasti bhedapradhānā dvaitamayī sā'vidyopāsanā na pravarā

This worship is of two types: Worshipping the Shakti with the sense that I am She, and with the sense that She is Prakriti (Nature) and I am Purusha (the soul). These two are complete *upāsanās*. There is also the partial *upāsanā* which is separative and dualistic; that is the *upāsanā* of *avidyā* or spiritual ignorance which is not the best kind.

साध्यन्तु कालीभावो वा विभूतिभावो वा ।

sādhyanu kālībhāvo vā vibhūtibhāvo vā

What has to be achieved is either the state of identification with Kālī or the state of the *vibhūti*, the instrument of God.

साहमिति साधनस्य कालीभावो विभूतिभावस्तु प्रकृतिसाधनस्य ।

sāhamiti sādhanasya kālībhāvo vibhūtibhāvastu prakṛtisāadhanasya

When the *sāadhanā* proceeds with the sense of “I am She”, then it will lead to identification with Kālī. When the *sāadhanā* proceeds with the sense that I am Puruṣa and She is Prakṛiti, then it will lead to the state of the *vibhūti*.

द्वयोरपि साधनमात्मसमर्पणम् ।

dvayorapi sādhanamātmasamarpaṇam

The principal means for both of these forms of worship is self-surrender.

न मे साधनं तवैव साधनं न मे भारस्तवैव भारस्त्वमेहि त्वं कर्त्री शक्तिर्नाहं कर्ता नाहं शक्तस्त्वमेव साधनं कुरु कालीत्यात्मसमर्पणम् ।

na me sādhanam tavaiva sādhanam na me bhārastavaiva bhārastvamehi tvam kartrī śaktirnāham kartā nāham śaktastvameva sādhanam kuru kālītyātma-samarpaṇam

“This *sāadhanā* is not mine, it belongs to Thee; the burden of doing *sāadhanā* is not mine, it belongs to Thee. Come, O Kālī, Thou art the doer, not I; Thou the Force, I have no force of my own; do Thou the *sāadhanā*.” This attitude is self-surrender.

तस्य धर्माधर्मपापपुण्यमङ्गलामङ्गलप्रियाप्रियविचारं परित्यज्य निश्चेष्टस्य सुखासीनस्य काली शरीरं प्रविशति ।

tasya dharmādharmapāpapuṇyamaṅgalāmaṅgalapriyāpriyavicāraṁ parityajya niśceṣṭasya sukhāsīnasya kālī śarīraṁ praviśati

With this sense of self-surrender when the *sādhaka*, making no effort, sits happily abandoning the thought of *dharma* and *adharma*, virtue and vice, good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant, then Kālī enters into his body.

हुङ्काराट्टहाससिंहनाददर्शनशक्तिबोधैर्ज्ञातं भवति प्रवेशनम् ।

huṅkāraṭṭhaśasimhanādadarśanaśaktibodhairjñātaṁ bhavati praveśanam

From her terrible cry, her loud laughter and roar of a lion, from the vision of her and from the sense of invincible strength it is realised that She has entered into the body.

योगक्रियाप्रवर्तनेन वा ।

yogakriyāpravartanena vā

Or by a movement of some yogic processes also this is known.

सा प्रविष्टाहङ्कारमपनुदति ।

sā praviṣṭāhaṅkāramapanudati

She having entered removes the *ahaṅkāra* or ego.

तामसं निकृष्टमहङ्कारमपनुदति ।

tāmasaṁ nikṛṣṭamahāṅkāramapanudati

She first removes the lowest tamasic ego.

राजसं तदनन्तरमहङ्कारमपनुदति ।

rājasaṁ tadanantaramahāṅkāramapanudati

Next She removes the rajasic ego.

परस्ताद्राजसतामसमिति मिश्रमपनुदति ।

parastādrājasatāmasamiti miśramapanudati

After this She removes the mixed *ahaṅkāra* arising out of both *rajas* and *tamas*.

सात्त्विकमहङ्कारमपनुदति ।

sāṭvīkamahāṅkāramapanudati

Then She removes the sattwic ego.

गुणत्रयातीतं करोति ।

guṇatrayātītaṁ karoti

She lifts the *sādhaka* above the three *guṇas* or modes of Nature.

सर्वानशुद्धान् संस्कारानपनुदति ।

sarvānaśuddhān saṁskārānapanudati

She removes all impure *saṁskāras* or past impressions.

एतदेव चित्तशोधनम् ।

etadeva cittaśodhanam

This is what is known as the purification of the *citta* or the mind.

न साधुभावश्चित्तशुद्धिरहङ्कारवर्जनं तु संस्कारशोधनं च लक्षणम् ।

na sādhubhāvaścittaśuddhirahaṅkāravarjanam tu saṁskāraśodhanam ca lakṣaṇam

The purification of the mind does not consist of saintliness. Its signs are the removal of the *ahaṅkāra* and the purification from *saṁskāras*.

साधुरहङ्कारं सात्त्विकं रक्षति न तदर्पयति भगवते ।

sādhurhyahaṅkāraṁ sāttvikam rakṣati na tadarpayati bhagavate

For a saint keeps the sattwic ego with him without offering it to God.

एतत्पुण्यमेतत्पापमेतत्करिष्यामि नैतत्करिष्यामीति पापपुण्यबोधः सिद्धिविघ्नकरः ।

etatpuṇyametatapāpametatatkarīṣyāmi naitatkarīṣyāmīti pāpapuṇyabodhaḥ
siddhivighnakaraḥ

“This is *puṇya* or virtue, that is *pāpa* or vice, I shall do this and I shall not do that,” this sense of virtue and vice is an obstacle to any *siddhi* or accomplishment.

अज्ञानजो हि नास्ति पापं नास्ति पुण्यमीश्वरेच्छा वर्तते त्वाश्रित्य स्वभावम् ।

ajñānajo hi nāsti pāpaṁ nāsti puṇyamīśvarecchā vartate tvāśritya svabhāvam

For it arises out of ignorance. There is no such thing as vice and no such thing as virtue; there is only the Will of God which acts according to the inner nature.

न पापचित्तस्तान्त्रिकः सिद्धो भवति न पुण्यचित्तस्तच्चित्तस्तु सिद्धो भवति स एव तान्त्रिकः ।

na pāpacittastāntrikaḥ siddho bhavati na puṇyacittastaccittastu siddho bhavati
sa eva tāntrikaḥ

The Tantric whose mind is attached to vice cannot become accomplished (*siddha*), nor can one whose mind is attached to virtue. But one whose mind is concentrated on Her becomes accomplished; he alone is called a Tantric.

कष्टा तु चित्तशोधनक्रियानन्दमयी चित्तशुद्धिर्यै कर्तव्यं श्रद्धा कर्तव्या न व्याकुलता न साधनफलाकाङ्क्षा कथं न भवतीति कष्टमद्य भवेदिति ।

kaṣṭā tu cittaśodhanakriyānandamayī cittaśuddhirdhairyaṁ kartavyaṁ śraddhā kartavyā na vyākulatā na sādhanaphalākāṅkṣā kathaṁ na bhavatīti kaṣṭamadya bhavediti

Though the process of purification is difficult, purity of the mind is a blissful state. One has to have patience, faith and no over-eagerness; one should not have any desire for the fruit of the *sādhana*. To have the feeling “Why is it not happening, it must happen today”, makes it difficult.

सा प्रविष्टा ज्ञानं ददाति शक्तिं ददाति प्रेम ददाति ददात्यानन्दं ।

sā praviṣṭā jñānaṁ dadāti śaktiṁ dadāti prema dadāti dadātyānandaṁ

She having entered (into the body of the *sādhaka*) gives knowledge, gives strength, gives love and bliss.

अपूर्णानि त्वेतानि चास्थिराणि चित्तशोधने शुद्ध्यन्तु पूर्णानि भवन्ति ।

apūrṇāni tvetāni cāsthirāṇi cittaśodhane śuddhyāntu pūrṇāni bhavanti

All these things are incomplete and impermanent while the mind is being purified; but they become complete when the purity is established.

न सा पूर्णता सिद्धिः सिद्धिप्रतिष्ठा तु सिद्धिप्रवर्तनं च कालीसङ्गमः सिद्धिः ।

na sā pūrṇatā siddhiḥ siddhipratiṣṭhā tu siddhipravartanaṁ ca kālisaṅgamaḥ siddhiḥ

Even that completeness is not *siddhi*, but the basis of *siddhi* and movement towards *siddhi*; the true *siddhi* is the union with Kālī.

साधर्म्यमेव तत् प्रतिष्ठा साधर्म्यं सिद्धेः ।

sādharmyameva tat pratiṣṭhā sādharmaṁ siddheḥ

That is the *sādharmya* or identity of nature, which is the basis of the *siddhi*.

तत्साधर्म्यस्य चतुष्टयचतुष्कं लक्षणम् ।

tatsādharmyasya catuṣṭayacatuṣkaṁ lakṣaṇam

This identity of nature is defined by four quartets.

तद्यथा शुद्धिचतुष्टयं शक्तिचतुष्टयं ज्ञानचतुष्टयं सौन्दर्यचतुष्टयं च ।

tadyathā śuddhicatuṣṭayaṁ śakticatuṣṭayaṁ jñānacatuṣṭayaṁ saundarya-
catuṣṭayaṁ ca

They are: the quartet of *śuddhi* or purification; the quartet of *śakti* or strength; the quartet of *jñāna* or knowledge; and the quartet of *saundarya* or beauty.

समता शान्तिः सुखं हास्यं शुद्धिचतुष्टयम् ।

śamatā śāntiḥ sukhaṁ hāsyam śuddhicatuṣṭayaṁ

Śamatā or equality, *śānti* or peace, *sukha* or happiness, *hāsyā* or delight (or laughter) form the quartet of *śuddhi* or purification.

फलत्यागः कर्मत्यागः कामनात्याग इति समता ।

phalatyāgaḥ karmatyāgaḥ kāmanātyāga iti śamatā

Śamatā or equality is defined as: renunciation of the fruit, renunciation of the action, and renunciation of desire.

न त्वप्रवृत्तिस्त्यागः सा हि तामसी भगवति तु सन्न्यासो बुद्धौ निर्लिप्तबुद्धिरेव समो न त्यक्तप्रवृत्तिः स जडो न समः ।

na tvapravṛttistīyāgaḥ sā hi tāmasī bhagavati tu sannyāso buddhau nirlipta-
buddhireva samo na tyaktapravṛttiḥ sa jaḍo na samaḥ

Renunciation does not mean inactivity, for that is tamasic, but giving up one's actions to God. One whose intelligence is unattached has an equal mind, not one who abandons action; for inaction is inertia, not equality.

तद्यथा त्वं यत्प्रवृत्तिं दास्यसि तत्कर्म करिष्यति शक्तिर्यत्फलं दास्यसि तद्भोक्ष्यति यं कामं प्राप्ते दास्यसि तत्कामयिष्यति नाहं कर्ता नाहं कामविद्धो ज्ञाताहं भोक्ताहं पुरुषोत्तमोऽनुमन्ता तस्यानुमतं काली करोति तस्याः कर्म कामं फलमहं ज्ञास्यामि भोक्ष्यामि च समभावेन सुखमानन्द इति ।

tadyathā tvaṁ yatpravṛttiṁ dāsyasi tatkarma kariṣyati śaktiryatphalaṁ dāsyasi
tadbhokṣyati yaṁ kāmaṁ prāṇe dāsyasi tatkāmayiṣyati nāhaṁ kartā nāhaṁ
kāmaviddho jñātāhaṁ bhoktāhaṁ puruṣottamo'numantā tasyānumataṁ kālī
karoti tasyāḥ karma kāmaṁ phalamahaṁ jñāsyāmi bhokṣyāmi ca samabhāvena
sukhamānanda iti

This is how one should think: “Whatever impulse to action Thou givest, the Shakti will execute it; whatever fruit of action Thou givest She will enjoy; whatever desire

Thou puttest into the *prāṇa* will be Her desire. I am not the doer, I am not afflicted by desire; I am the knower, I am the enjoyer. The supreme Being gives the sanction and Kālī acts as He permits. Hers are the action, the desire and the fruit, and I shall know and enjoy them with an equal mind. This is happiness, this is bliss.”

स्थैर्यमनुद्वेगो धैर्यमिति शान्तिः ।

sthairyamanudvego dhairyamiti śāntiḥ

Śānti or peace is defined as undisturbed steadiness and patience.

तदपि चित्ते । उग्रभावोऽपि रुद्रकर्मा शान्तिसम्पन्नो भवेत् ।

tadapi citte ugrabhāvo’pi rudrakarmā śāntisampanno bhavet

That too is in the mind; even in the vehemence of a terrific action one should be at peace.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translation and transliteration by Sampadananda Mishra in collaboration
with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives)

“THOU ART, THOU LIVEST, THOU RADIATEST, THOU REIGNEST”

January 13, 1914

THOU hast passed, O Lord, like a great wave of love over my life, and when I was immersed in it I knew integrally and intensely that I had offered to Thee—when? I do not know, at no precise moment and most probably always—my thought, my heart, my body in a living holocaust.

And in that great love which enveloped me and that consciousness of perfect renunciation there was an immense serenity vaster than the universe and a sweetness so intense and so full of infinite compassion that tears began to flow slowly from my eyes. Nothing could have been more remote from both suffering and happiness, it was unutterable peace.

O sublime Love, centre of our life, Marvel of marvels, at last I find Thee again and live anew in Thee, but how much more powerfully, how much more consciously than before! How much better I know Thee, understand Thee! Each time I find Thee anew, my communion with Thee grows more integral, more complete, more definitive.

O Presence of ineffable beauty, thought of supreme redemption, sovereign power of salvation, with what joy all my being feels Thee living within it, sole principle of its life and of all life, wonderful builder of all thought, all will, all consciousness. On this world of illusion, this sombre nightmare, Thou hast bestowed Thy divine reality, and each atom of matter contains something of Thy Absolute.

Thou art, Thou livest, Thou radiatest, Thou reignest.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM, Vol. 1, p. 57)

“GREAT MOTHER”

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo.

Perhaps this poem is too simple and quiet to be successful, but it was meant to embody a sincere prayer of my inner being during the early period of my sadhana. It was in the morning after it had been sent, in its original form, to the Mother that she gave me for the first time the flower of Radha-consciousness.

Kindly give your opinion.

GREAT MOTHER

Great Mother, grant me this one boon I crave:
I will forgo all triumphs of the mind
And grandiose honours for which men have pined
If in its search for Thee my life be brave.

Beyond earth's crowded hours of brief delight,
Of passionate anarchy whose eyes are blind,
Let me on feet of calm devotion find
The lonely soul's sweet contemplative height.

And from the crest of that serenity
Whence Thy far infinite face can be divined,
An endless song let all my ardour be
To reach Thy beauty, leaving lust behind—
No stern forced worship but love self-consigned,
A river's leap towards the pristine sea.

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

A very beautiful poem grave and harmonious and true in thought and feeling with a fine close.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

DR. V–THE VISIONARY

WHO BELIEVED IN THE POWER OF SPIRITUALITY FOR HUMANITY

On July 7, 2006 a humble and noble doctor departed from our world, leaving us with an inspiring legacy of his vision: that unnecessary blindness caused by cataract can be avoided, that necessary medical services can be made available to the needy, irrespective of their ability to pay.

He was a great admirer of McDonald's success in franchising consistent product-service experience to its consumers around the world, service without discrimination. Recognising the core necessity of social marketing, he applied it in the field of eye care.

Dr. V used to reflect: "If Coca-Cola can sell billions of sodas and MacDonald's can sell billions of burgers, why can't Aravind sell millions of sight-restoring operations, and eventually, the belief in human perfection? With sight, people could be freed from hunger, fear, and poverty. You could perfect the body, then perfect the mind and the soul, and raise people's level of thinking and acting."

In his model of medical care and business management practice, he integrated economically-challenged patients' needs and comprehensive delivery management system with the efficiency of mass-marketing practices. And this he did, for over three decades, with 66% of his millions of patients having no means to pay. He offered, free of charge, a comprehensive cataract treatment that included medical evaluation and treatment, transport to and from a medical facility, lodging and boarding during the period of eye care, and supply of essential eye-care products. His systemic eye care proactively also included diabetes education and treatment.

It was not charity, it was compassion and humility. Human society had never before witnessed the totality of a need-chain, of so many patients so thoroughly addressed. His integral methodology took into account, at the patients' personal level, the issues of their economic plight, the inadequacy of their available support system and their domestic, cultural and social circumstances. In addition, at an external community level, his Community Outreach Programmes evaluated physical suitability and economic feasibility taking into account availability of infrastructure, electricity, water, and volunteers.

It is a great and daring endeavour to envision holistically, and successfully manage, all the interrelated aspects on a sustained basis in any undertaking. What is so unique about his accomplishments is that, in 1976, upon the mandatory government retirement age of 58, he started his mission with a modest 11-bed hospital in Madurai, India. By 1988, he had successfully created a network of eye care hospitals highly admired in the world, with 475 paying-beds and 1,525 free-beds. How aptly, "On a height he stood that looked towards greater heights"¹ applies to his glorious success!

By 1997 he established 651 paying-bed and 2,155 free-bed facilities and, not too long after that, on February 21, 2003, he opened his fifth eye care hospital with facilities for an additional 131 paying-beds and 600 free-beds. This he established close to his sacred place of pilgrimage, Sri Aurobindo Ashram. In reverence to his spiritual Guru, Sri Aurobindo, he named the network of his hospitals Aravind Eye Hospitals, popularly known as Aravind. As of 2003, Aravind had a total of 782 paying-bed and 2,755 free-bed facilities, the largest of its kind in the world. It is reputed to be *par excellence* the place where the quality of care is invariant for a paying or a non-paying patient, where everyone is treated with dignity and compassion. Thus in a few decades, Aravind has transformed into a global conglomerate Aravind Eye Care System (AECS) as the world's largest and one of the most admired self-sustaining organisations offering a wide spectrum of services for eye care, patient care, teaching, training, research, policy advocacy, capacity building along with manufacturing and distributing ophthalmic products and publications. AECS continues to grow in size, services and stature.

But his greater success is that this model is being adopted in an increasing number of developing countries. Aravind attracts students, physicians, scientists, health care officials and volunteers from around the world to come to its facilities in Tamil Nadu State in India to learn, teach, observe, practise—and become more efficient and effective in their respective endeavours. In the congenial environment of Aravind, the global participants tend to enrich each other with their diverse cultural heritage and facilitate working towards humanity's common problem with mutual respect and comradeship. It is a global centre of knowledge and expertise sharing, with participants from India, China, Bangladesh, Burma, Nepal, Tibet, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Egypt, Nigeria, Zambia, Kenya, Ethiopia, East Africa, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, Cameroon, Congo, Ghana, Bulgaria, Albania, Bolivia, Armenia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela along with UK and USA. UK and USA have been significant collaborators in this wonderful venture.

America plays a very special role in his scheme of things. Dr. V learned a lot from America in terms of medical practice, management of medical facilities and effective mass marketing through franchising. Several service-focused organisations in America voluntarily participated in his endeavour, bringing him closer to his goal in his early days. Many of the famed American medical institutions have collaborated with him. They, importantly, value greatly the training their own Ophthalmology Residents receive at Aravind. For instance, during January 2006—March 2007, 20 Ophthalmology Residents from US universities came to Aravind for their training.

Aravind is creating a new model for eye care as the core necessity of social marketing that addresses the fact that 45 million people in the world are blind and 90% of them live in developing countries where population growth continues unabated. Medically, three-quarters of all blindness is preventable or curable. In India alone, 12 million people are blind and 2–3 million are added every year—80% of them due to cataract, a curable disease. The devastating implication of blindness in the developing

countries is that the unmanageable financial burden leads to neglect and consequently to death within a few years. Thus, a curable cataract becomes a fatal disease when the patients are perceived to be “mouths without hands”.

It is worth noting that since it opened, Aravind has given sight to more than 2 million people and more than 16.1 million patients have benefited from services rendered. A while back Mark Tully from BBC, in his *Reports from India* had reported, “Aravind Hospitals perform 150,000 cataract operations in a year—more than the whole NHS [National Health Service], UK.” In 2005 alone, across all Aravind Eye Hospitals, 1,721,898 outpatient visits were handled, while 247,235 surgical and laser procedures were performed. As of 2006-2007 Aravind annually examines over 1.7 million patients and performs over 250,000 operations. This puts things in perspective, that not only Aravind’s contribution is amazing but also its rate of increase of contribution is simply astounding. The march continues.

“To do more with less” is a contemporary management mantra; however, the diligence with which it is practised at Aravind is unparalleled. Aravind is not only super-efficient, but utmostly effective in its performance to be self-sufficient. What motivates its staff is the practising vision of the Mother: “It is not what you do that matters, but the way you do it and the consciousness you put into it.” Pema Chodron said it so well, “True compassion does not come from wanting to help out those less fortunate than ourselves but from realising our kinship with all beings.” Aravind has demonstrated it convincingly.

Aravind’s management techniques include vision-driven and goal-focused inspiring collective leadership, focusing on Critical Success Factors (CSFs), monitoring and managing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), astute blending of strategic and short-term planning, streamlining procedures, standardising key functional processes, creative applications of modern technologies, prioritising resource allocations, minimising non-productive redundancies, preventing wasteful activities, institutionalising seamlessly their spiritually-oriented culture and work ethics. All these factors have enabled Aravind to bring down the cost of a cataract surgery to a mere \$10 compared to \$1,650 elsewhere.

Aravind’s workflow model is hierarchical and leveraged to derive the most value contributions from its doctors. The doctors are viewed as its most scarce resource, recognised to be very precious in value, and financially most expensive in cost considering that all the net profits are ploughed back into Aravind. This requires maximising the doctors’ contribution by helping them to devote their time primarily to medical activities. The tests that can be done by paramedical staff are done by the paramedics only, and counsellors help patients make informed decisions. Everyone is thoroughly trained in the required skills and all are very competent in their knowledge.

Dr. V also believed that “Intelligence and capability are not enough. There must be the joy of doing something beautiful.” When one comes to Aravind, it is not

surprising to experience that the environment is charged with purposefulness and that there is a subdued sense of dignity in work done by the staff members who are focused and cheerful.

Jack Welch, former Chairman and CEO of GE is famous for increasing the value of GE from \$13 billion to several hundred billion. He is also famous for his management skills. He emphasised the paramount value of employees in the success of GE, which is a valuable guidance to manage exceptionally. At Aravind, the core management team collectively values the merit of focusing and critically evaluating the potential, trainability, attitude, aptitude, and qualifications of their potential employees before hiring them. Their Human Resource Department under the leadership of Dr. Natchiar, sister of the founder of Aravind, addresses all the aspects of the employees' career-life-cycle at Aravind in terms of their hiring, retaining, training and helping them grow professionally. Thanks to her, Aravind is the employer of choice of their employees enabling Aravind to fulfil its destined role as envisioned by its founder. Apart from being an eye surgeon and an executive in the Aravind Eye Care System, Dr. Natchiar's role as the Director of Human Resources at Aravind is of utmost significance in establishing the superior work-ethics and spiritual-value culture for Aravind to attain consistently its audacious performance goals. It is no surprise that her visionary elder brother relentlessly groomed her from her early childhood for this kind of mission. His vision had to have a home to belong to and like a tree, it had to firmly plant its roots so that it could reach the sky.

Performance speaks for itself. The Aravind Eye Hospitals perform 5% of all cataract surgeries in India with less than 1% of all the ophthalmology resources of the country and still treat 66% of its millions of patients free of charge. In addition, AECS's Aurolab plant produces about 1 million intraocular lenses a year representing 10% of the world supply at \$5 a pair compared to \$150 elsewhere. Aurolab's products are used by eye care institutions and ophthalmologists in more than 120 countries. Aurolab turns a profit of 30% on its investment to fuel the continued growth of Aravind's capacity and its expanding scope of services while maintaining its self-reliance. At Aravind, a new paradigm of "compassionate capitalism/social marketing" is practised to serve the needy population of the developing countries where by far most of the world's population lives. Its goal is to make just an adequate amount of profit but generate a very high sales volume and thus make the profit sustainable. This is truly a win-win business model as it makes it possible to provide critical goods and services like eye care to millions of people and still achieve the three essential objectives of any business undertaking: to be viable, to be profitable and to be able to grow.

This is an astounding performance generating tremendous interest all over the world to learn about its success formula. Aravind has shared its fabled training programme with more than 200 hospitals in India and abroad. These hospitals now perform 5,000 to 10,000 surgeries a year, which is a vast improvement in their productivity. Furthermore, the Aravind model of management systems is taught as a

case study in various prestigious business institutes including Stanford, Harvard, Michigan, IMD Lausanne, and the Indian Institute of Management. It is not surprising that the worldwide demand for a comprehensive teaching of Aravind methodology by the hospital managers and administrators has led Aravind to develop a training programme. Aravind offers twice a year a structured and formal six-week training programme that is fundamental in its core but highly customisable to meet the disparate needs of diverse enterprises to develop and adopt suitable management strategies, action plans, and measures of performance to attain the goals consistent with the vision and mission of the organisations. It focuses on the eye care business, the dynamics of the interdisciplinary functions and their effective management. Professor Munson of Michigan touts it as a “must-course” for every eye hospital administrator.

Aravind, to promote global participation and collaboration for “eye care for all”, hosted in February 2005 a joint working group of Indo-US Vision Research Scientists under the aegis of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO) and the National Eye Institute, USA.

What has been conveyed so far is a narration of a saga of care and compassion. The caring and compassionate doctor who pursued an impossible dream without ever wavering, transformed it into a reality with his spirituality-guided principles. Coupled with that he made it all possible with sound management practices. He was Dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy who was called with affection and reverence simply Dr. V.

Dr. V’s pioneering work-methodology and its unparalleled results have won him worldwide admiration, respect, and many national and international awards. The Padmashree Award from the Government of India, the Medal of the Presidency of the Italian Republic, the Helen Keller International Award, the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness Organisation Award, and the Schwab Foundation’s Outstanding Social Entrepreneurs Award, are a few among them. He was the first Indian to be honoured with a fellowship by the Royal College of Ophthalmologists. He was the first Indian and Asian to be inducted into the Ophthalmology Hall of Fame of the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery.

Dr. V’s professional and personal aspects of life are intertwined and are very inspiring to any professional in pursuit of excellence and to any seeker of divinity through service to humanity. He exemplified a quest to be of service to a humanity in need of compassionate medical care, human bonding, and mutual respect overcoming all barriers of inequality and indifference with his innate spiritual calling based on the integral value system encompassing human unity, harmony, and beauty. He has the unique distinction of being invited as a distinguished speaker to a famous American institute on three different disciplines: Ophthalmology, Divinity, and Business Management. Dr. V’s life-story is better than a fiction, more fascinating than a fantasy and greater than a utopian idealisation. *Infinite Vision: Dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy*, a DVD written and directed by Dr. V’s grand-niece, Pavithra Krishnan, offers a

poignant portrait of Dr. V—person, professional, and partner of humanity.

What Dr. V contributed to humanity is great but how he managed to contribute that is of even greater significance. We can learn from him to be humble, to be compassionate, to be inspiring leaders. We can create our own integral spiritual-service-business model to fulfil our great dream of serving humanity and in turn inspire and enable others to transform their great dreams into reality and make this world a better place for all. He was not mired by the shortsightedness and the stereotyped perception of the developing countries as a set of insurmountable difficulties caused by their increasing population, highly inadequate infrastructure, low per capita income and limited spending money, vast majority of neglected elders as well as malnourished infant population, diseases in epidemic proportions and illiteracy. He knew difficulties but difficulties became the driving motivation for him to surmount them, to bring a ray of hope in the world of gloom and doom.

Dr. V's personal story is no less remarkable than the creation and the contributions of Aravind. Early in his professional career, he started with OB/GYN but rheumatoid arthritis caused his joints to deform with severe pain and made him remain bedridden in a Madras hospital for over a year. On recovery, he started all over again with great determination. He became an ophthalmologist. With great effort and will power, he had to learn even how to hold surgical instruments with his arthritic hands. Overcoming all the odds—internal and external—he marched on and eventually became the Head of the Department of Ophthalmology of the Government Medical College, Madurai. In his career, Dr. V performed more than 100,000 successful eye surgeries. In that frail and fragile-looking physical frame dwelt a mighty spirit that accepted no hindrance to its desire to serve. This is the inner dynamo that led him to undertake his life's mission when he was required to retire per the institute's regulation.

Dr. V was inspired by Sri Aurobindo's revelation, "There is a Power within that knows beyond our knowings."² Dr. V's guiding principle was that "Spirituality allows the divine force to work through each of us for a greater good." Thus, indeed, any work can become a means of self-transcendence when done in the right spirit. This is the Karma Yoga of the Gita.

When we read the following line from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*:

He made great dreams a mould for coming things...³

we begin to appreciate Dr. V's significance and his achievements become one more step leading to the time when:

The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine.⁴

Perhaps, it comes naturally to those who can be free from the trepidations of

self, influence of ego and attachment to self-interests so that they can invoke the spiritual force and effectively consecrate their entire being and all that they can be to the boundless Universal Force. Maybe, we can learn a little from Dr. V that great dreams can be transformed into reality with the utmost of sincerity of soul. He humbly explained the basis of his business-cum-service mission as follows: “When you grow to a level of spiritual consciousness, there is no exploitation.” The sincerity of his commitment was absolute and he devoted all his resources towards his great dream. It is interesting to note that even when Dr. V became world renowned and created the largest and very highly successful network of an eye care system in the world, he never took any financial gains from it for his personal benefit. He continued to maintain his spartan life style using the modest pension money that he received from his Government job of long ago. He practised the Gita’s:

To have no personal expectations of fruits of labour as they are but offerings to the Divine.

The following view about Dr. V expressed by Alan Robin MD, Associate Professor at the Wilmer Eye Institute, John Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore certainly represents the views of the millions around the world:

He was probably one of the greatest and most visionary ophthalmologists I’ve ever met. He was able to think outside the box and was able to conceptualise things that nobody had ever done. He was able to create a sustainable, profitable, health-care system in India that has enabled more people to be able to see and maintain their vision than anybody I’ve ever known. He has done more good for humanity than almost anybody I could imagine.

Dr. V used to call himself a country-boy; however, he was richly endowed with a value-focused family culture, a culture that became the foundation of his character. His philosophy was shaped by his difficult but ideals-driven childhood and the Integral Yoga teachings of Sri Aurobindo. If this country-boy could learn the ways of the Western economy and management and blend them effectively with spiritual principles, then why should not the world of business and management learn from him, from spiritual integration to improve itself and in turn improve the world?

Human society does not embrace the paradigm change willingly or easily. From Pharaoh Akhenaton and his Queen Nefertiti to Socrates, to Giordano Bruno, to Niels Bohr we have a history of confronting paradigm change. However, money is a great equaliser as it has the tremendous potential to bring about the paradigm change quickly and widely. Transition from the “Luddites” of the world of Agriculture-Economy to Industrial-Economy, to Info-Economy has been relatively less violent, more pervasive, and conducive to the global togetherness due to the drive for money. The betterment

of global existence is enabled and gradually accelerated by the motivation of making money even with the triple-bottom-line of economic, social, and environmental considerations. Maybe such significant mind-set changes in our civilisation are paving a path of possibility for other commercial enterprises to emulate Dr. V's business model. Dr. V valued the utility of money but never hankered to amass money; he always strove to cut costs, increase efficiency, and build his market. Dr. V's pioneering practice of market-driving instead of being market-driven was his way of generating needed money. His unique approach was to give his customers a new hope with a deeply satisfying experience that changes their lives and attitudes towards themselves and towards others; he also made it affordable for them. His customers became his championing salesmen enabling him to change the global landscape of eye care. It is so remarkable that he not only created a new paradigm of "compassionate capitalism /social marketing", market-driving, and spiritually inspired integral management, but also a novel and effective method to make it prevalent.

Dr. V did not intellectualise spirituality; he simply exemplified, "All life is Yoga."⁵ Dr. V talked about his idea of leadership and the relevance of spirituality in work with Harriet Rubin of Fast Company. Ms. Rubin's gem of contribution is as follows:

Leadership begins with the pursuit of self-knowledge and a vision bigger than any that can fit in the prospectus of a single corporation. All his life, Dr. V. has resisted smallness. Yet there is nothing egotistic about him. He asks himself, "How can my work make me a better human being and make a better world?" That question is at the heart of the mystery of leadership. To answer it is to seek perfection.

"Two qualities for leadership are to be a visionary and to know execution," said Dr. V. "If I can go from consciousness to higher consciousness, then I'll be a leader." Dr. V's work was to fight blindness in the world and in himself. The two missions are one. He realised his destiny by his work. Helping people see is to achieve a new level of consciousness.

But spiritual teachings, inspirational and useful as they may be, still are not enough.

"I am not an idea man," Dr. V said "The task is not to aspire to some heaven but to make everyday life divine."

Many members of the hospital staff go to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. To quote Dr. V: "We feel that the higher consciousness is trying gradually to give us a system. We are all aware of the parts of the human body as they work. We take in food; we like the taste of it. Part of it is absorbed here, part of it there. But we are not aware of it. The higher consciousness works in the same way. Slowly, your system is built around it, but not according to human nature. At the hospital, we are slowly building

an organisation that seems to be linked with the higher consciousness.”

In Dr. V, we cannot help noticing his internalising the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He followed, “Self-giving is true prayer.”⁶ and “To know is good, to live is better, to be, that is perfect.”⁷ As Dr. V put it:

The goal of life, Sri Aurobindo also taught, is not to escape from the world to some higher heaven, but to transform life on earth into a divine life. This process is accomplished, not by the mind, but by surrendering the mind and the vital life forces to the Divine—allowing the divine force to work on the body, the mind, and the life forces, and to transform them.

What I am really talking about is spiritualism. Spiritualism is a progressive awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, a self, a soul that is something other than our mind, body, and life. Spirit is an inner aspiration to know, to enter into contact and union with the greater reality beyond, a reality that also pervades the universe and dwells in us. As a result of that aspiration, contact, and union, there is a conversion, a turning, a birth into a new being.

Dr. V has medically, financially, and from the management perspective achieved the remarkable success and implemented a new paradigm of “compassionate capitalism /social marketing”, market-driving, and spiritually-inspired integral management in the most difficult circumstances—the developing countries. Practised in the right spirit and done in the right way—this can potentially speed up a vast change in the developing countries creating a better world for all. This is a great dream, waiting at the threshold, to become a reality. He has thus, in a small way, paved the path for the world to discover its innate goodness and actualise its divine potential. In the words of Voltaire, in its positive sense, “All is for the best in this best of all possible worlds.”

When we think of Dr. V and his legacy, Aravind, we see a dynamic and exhilarating ideal unfolding into a concrete reality in an awareness that is beyond the matter of fact, with an enthusiastic commitment to the mission. It is a subtle enabler of a paradigm where work blends body, mind, and the soul’s silent prayer uniting the individual self with the collective endeavours of collaboration and cooperation for the betterment of humanity. This is the lasting legacy of Dr. V to humanity—his dream—the impossible dream—the great dream—a paradigm change—to progress towards collective living in the reality of global harmony, happiness and perfection.

For me, our personal interaction began on December 9, 2005 with my request to meet with him at Aravind-Pondicherry for an interview of 30 minutes. I was invited to speak at the “All Life is Yoga—Business and Management” Seminar in January 2006 at Auroville, India. Along with my Integral Management Model—SATORI, I was planning to talk about Dr. V’s pioneering and globally inspiring spiritual business management model. Upon my arrival, I noticed a stack of reference materials kept ready for me, so I politely conveyed that I would try to conclude my interview in

about 15 minutes and not take up his invaluable time. Smilingly, he looked at me and said, “You are here and I am here. Let us just talk.” And the time stood still for over two and half hours! What transpired there was beyond my wildest imagination and description. It was subsequently, when I came across the Mother’s statement, I fathomed our encounter:

When one speaks to the soul of a man, one always speaks to the same soul, whatever may be the differences of body, race or culture.⁸

That was an experience! On Dr. V’s anniversary, July 7, 2007, I humbly offer my prayers and homage.

ARUN VAIDYA

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6. The Mother, *Words of the Mother-II*, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 100.
7. The Mother, *Words of the Mother-III*, CWM, Vol. 15, p. 173.
8. The Mother, *Words of the Mother-II*, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 330.

Two other helpful sources:

www.aravind.org

Infinite Vision: Dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy, a DVD, produced by Aravind Eye Care System, 2004.

The first step is Karmayoga, the selfless sacrifice of works, and here the Gita’s insistence is on action. The second is Jnanayoga, the self-realisation and knowledge of the true nature of the self and the world; and here the insistence is on knowledge; but the sacrifice of works continues and the path of Works becomes one with but does not disappear into the path of Knowledge. The last step is Bhaktiyoga, adoration and seeking of the supreme Self as the Divine Being, and here the insistence is on devotion; but the knowledge is not subordinated, only raised, vitalised and fulfilled, and still the sacrifice of works continues; the double path becomes the triune way of knowledge, works and devotion. And the fruit of the sacrifice, the one fruit still placed before the seeker, is attained, union with the divine Being and oneness with the supreme divine nature.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Essays on the Gita*, CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 38)

DEVOTIONAL POETRY IN TAMIL

(Continued from the issue of December 2007)

20. Rhythm, Harmony

VARIOUS elements contributed to the brilliant popularity of the highly emotive, meaningful and mellifluous bhakti poetry, and later on these same elements have sustained its presence, all the while widening its parameters. The ability to craft effortlessly harmonious word-structures as well as a mastery of rhythm have helped bhakti hymnology in a great way. Among the latter-day Tamil poets who belong to this genre, two names stand out because of the intensity of their emotions. Arunagirinathar and Thayumanava belong to different centuries. Arunagirinathar may have lived in the 15th century and Thayumanava belongs to the 18th century. As with mystic poets, their lives are shot through with miracles of many hues.

Arunagirinathar's hymns are collectively referred to as *Tiruppugazh* and hold a place equivalent to that of *Thevaram* and *Tiruvachakam* in Shaivism. Born in Tiruvannamalai, Arunagirinathar seems to have spent his youth in erotic pursuits. Afflicted with disease and ashamed of himself, the young man leapt down from one of the spires of the Tiruvannamalai Temple. Suddenly he felt that Subrahmanya was holding him up and bringing him safely to the earth. The Lord smeared the Holy Ash on the young man's forehead and gave him a garland of beads for performing japa. From this mystic moment onwards, Arunagirinathar was blessed with a rare capacity to sing rhythmically complicated verses and he spent all his life praising Subrahmanya.

Among the Subrahmanya temples, Vayalur was a favourite with him. He travelled widely in India and in Sri Lanka. Arunagirinathar's last days are shrouded in mystery. A familiar version says that he was engaged in a debate with Sambhandandan in the court of his king Prabhuda Deva Raya. At one stage he had to answer the challenge of bringing the Parijatha flowers from Indra's court. So Arunagirinathar left his body unconscious, and entered the body of a parrot. When he returned as the bird with the flowers, his body had been burnt to ashes as the king thought the poet was dead. So the poet remained in the parrot's guise for the rest of his life.

The list of temples which has received the impress of Arunagirinathar's hymnology is long. As the Alvars sang of Narayana's form enshrined as an icon in various temples and the Nayanmars did so while visiting Shiva temples, Arunagirinathar sings of Subrahmanya's various exploits that have helped the destruction of Evil. Like the great rivers streaming through the land making it rich with plants and trees, these noble hymnologists moved from temple to temple furthering the devotion of the common man. Arunagirinathar's sprung rhythm created through complex sound-patterns is a never-failing delight. And for the same reason, the songs remain untranslatable into other languages.

However, the poems carry thought-provoking statements too, and one needs to absorb them for a fuller understanding of man, Nature and God. And the poems have an equal attraction for the followers of Vishnu, for most of the poems describe the deeds of Vishnu while referring to him as the uncle of Subrahmanya.

He directed an unequalled arrow
To make the oceans groan,
To cut down the ten heads of Ravana
Which were like mountains,
And acted as the ambassador
Of the Pandavas;

He came to save the elephant
Which was in distress in the pond;
He uprooted the Maruda trees;
And tore up the body of Hiranya
With his nail, because he derided
The child who spoke Narayana's name;
Verily a green mountain with the discus;
Muruga! You are the beloved nephew
Of one who danced on the snake!

You are the sun risen to chase away the evil
Of darkness that threatens the devotees;
In just one moment you circled the world
Where moves the moon daily!

I have no compassion or generosity;
Nor the ability to sing well of temples
Where you reside. Neither devotion
Nor capacity is my portion.
I have a heart that has as many bends
Seventy times more than that of a
Potter's wheel when it turns!
Mine is a heart of darkness.
Is there a day when I would reach
The shade of Shiva consciousness?¹

Subrahmanya was a living presence for the poet and so his songs create a three-D

1. All translations from Tamil in this essay are by Prema Nandakumar.

effect at times, as in this poem which seems to have compelled the Lord to appear in the court of Prabhuda Deva Raya:

You are the nephew of Vishnu under whose aegis
 Bhima carrying the mace, rained deadly shafts,
 One who played the flute to gather the herds,
 And as the charioteer of Arjuna blew the conch
 Golden, sounding like the Vedic chant,
 The one who rests on the wave-tossed milky sea,
 And has feet that strode the worlds,
 One who travels on the Garuda mount!

O Lord who resides in the devotional heart
 Of Prabhuda Deva Raya with flower garlands!
 Come thou dancing, as Adisesha in Atala world
 Sways, the Mount Meru on the earth swings,
 Kali dances in rhythm with Shiva who had swung
 His feet, competing with her and making her tremble,
 With the ghouls dancing around him,
 And the moon marking steps, as also Saraswati dancing,
 With Brahma himself a-swaying, the gods too joining in,
 Your mother-in-law Lakshmi too dancing,
 And your father-in-law dance in his cosmic form,
 And with your mount the peacock dancing
 Do thou come to this royal court!

Arunagirinathar is said to have composed 1600 poems but we have only 1200 of them available. He is also the author of the very popular works on Subrahmanya, *Kandar Anubhuti* and *Kandar Alankaram*. Among his other works are *Vel Viruththam* (Song of the Lance) and *Mayil Viruththam* (Song of the Peacock). Arunagirinathar's *Tiruppugazh* is a very popular work with devotional groups. Some of them make an annual pilgrimage to Tirupati and walk up the hill reciting the songs, and if we accompany them, a feeling that time has stood still in India wraps us up in folds of peace.

All the same, it is noticeable that poets like Arunagirinathar encouraged a style which led towards involved encrustations coating with unintelligibility what was the essentially simple, face-to-face style of the Alwars and Nayanmars. Fortunately, Thayumanava (18th century) regained the original simplicity of the Bhakti hymnology. He was born in Vedaranyam to Kediliyappa Pillai and Gajavalli. Pillai was a minister in the court of Muthukrishna Nayak, ruler of Tiruchirapalli. Quite early in life, Thayumanava mastered Tamil and Sanskrit and received initiation from Mauna Guru

Swamikal of Tiru Saarama Math. In Tiruchirapalli Thayumanava served under Muthukrishna Nayak's son Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak. On the ruler's death, he preferred to give up his post, lest there should be scandal when serving under Queen Minakshi. Taking to a life of itinerant travel, Thayumanava cultivated close ties with the Siddhas engaged in tapasya in Viralimalai.

There are several legends associated with Thayumanava. When travelling near Rameswaram he saw that the land was suffering from acute drought. Sorrowing for the people, he addressed the clouds:

If Shaivism is a superior religion,
And its Lord is the crescent-crowned Shiva,
If mastering the five senses in Realisation,
O clouds! Pour forth your bounty!

The answer came forth immediately as copious rains and everyone was happy. Thayumanava sang eight wonderfully evocative verses on the Goddess of Rameswaram one of which is composed using Sanskrit terms throughout with minimum Tamil usage to embroider the poem:

O Poorani Purathani Sumangali Sundari
Puranthaki Trayambaki, beautiful
Pungavi, a presence of Shiva, Shankari who resides
In the thousand-petalled lotus,
Narani, Mother beyond the human mind,
The very acme of sound beyond the gunas,
O Shakti! Your devotees hail you even thus.
Am I capable of praising them?
The spirit of Vedas! Shiva with matted tresses
Praises you, mother of all worlds!
Yet you are the eternal Virgin! The peacock
Who is the very image of Ananda!
You are the queen of Thevai,² praised by Ganga.
And by gracious women beautiful.
You were born as the darling of the Mountain King;
Uma, who grew up in the Himalayas!

Because of the miraculous downpour in Rameswaram, news of Thayumanava's presence was received by his elder brother at Tiruchirapalli. Shivachidambaram Pillai hastened to Rameswaram and requested Thayumanava to return home. Thayumanava

2. Thevai is another name for Rameswaram.

acceded and married Mattuvar Kuzhali. They had a son, Kanakasabapati. But as his wife died young, Thayumanava left his infant son with his brother and went on his travels once again. He stayed at Ramanathapuram for sometime. Once he was in samadhi, seated beneath a tree in a place called Kattoorani. Thinking he was dead, the locals consigned the body to flames. Thayumanava returned to consciousness but preferred to withdraw from the body. He left behind sterling disciples like Arulaiyar, Kotikkarai Jnani and Abhiyukthar.

The spiritual aspirant in Thayumanava comes through in his passionately anxious poems. The constant search for the One and the Advaitic union with the One is the theme of his poetry. Like the bhakti poets, he recognises even the Formless One to be endowed with the quality of Ananda.

The beginning of the heart's attraction to the Divine may be impersonal, the touch of an impersonal joy in something universal or transcendent that has revealed itself directly or indirectly to our emotional or our aesthetic being or to our capacity of spiritual felicity. That which we thus grow aware of is the Ananda Brahman, the bliss existence. There is an adoration of an impersonal Delight and Beauty, of a pure and an infinite perfection to which we can give no name or form, a moved attraction of the soul to some ideal and infinite Presence, Power, existence in the world or beyond it, which in some way becomes psychologically or spiritually sensible to us and then more and more intimate and real.³

Subscribing to the Shaiva Siddhanta concept of conceptualising Shiva as a pure effulgence of Ananda, Thayumanava scrupulously avoided credal argumentation. The One abides; the Many are also true! His vision of Shiva has given us some splendid verses:

What is the One that glows all over
Without any absence anywhere;
That which is full of Ananda;
And is filled with grace; that has willed
The universes to remain within
The space of its grace;
What is that one which has grown
As the life of life? Which remains beyond
Mind and speech? About whom
A million religions argue,
“Our god”, “my god”!
Which is macro of everything,

3. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part III, chapter vii.

A consciousness all-capable,
 Is image of happiness, eternal;
 It is unbound by night and day;
 That is close to my thoughts,
 Looking upon everything as that space
 Of silence; to That, let us offer salutations!

The Infinite is total Ananda, he says in the decad on “Paripoorananandam”. Given to yogic practices, Thayumanava’s verses tend to be autobiographical. If one can gain total Ananda by immersing in the One, how can it be done? Unless the mind is cleansed completely, this would not be possible. And yet controlling the mind becomes the first and most difficult of all yogic practices. Not all are like Sri Aurobindo who could in one instant remove all thoughts from him when asked to do so by Yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele! Who has created this mind with innumerable desires and so hard to master, asks the aspirant and prays to Shiva to teach him a method to achieve mental control:

Does not the wide ocean restrict itself without a bank?
 And halahala poison turn to nectar?
 And the Vadavagni glow within that ocean?
 The skies above retain their poise
 Without falling down. And the day came
 When the mountain Meru bent as a bow.
 Obedient to the command of Indra
 The seven clouds wander around.
 Did not a stone become a damsel alive
 At the touch of Rama’s foot?
 Aren’t there innumerable siddhis occult
 Gained through the gem and mantra?
 Is it difficult for you to create a mantra
 To control my hapless mind?
 O Paripoorna-Ananda who are spread
 Wherever one turns to see?

This world abounds in miracles and yet the Lord delays the moment of transforming man’s mind into a divine instrument. But Thayumanava is not one to give up. Train the mind and perfect the instrument through meditation and prayerful aspiration! He delights in underlining the fact of the Supreme’s nature being All-Ananda. Saluting the Lord as Guru Dakshinamoorti, the poet refers to him as Chinmayananda. Pouring out his gratitude to his guru, Maunaswami, Thayumanava speaks of the ideal teacher in him, one who removes ignorance:

O my guru who taught me mantra,
 Yoga and Tantra too! One who belongs
 To the parampara of Tirumoolar!
 When your grace is assured
 The fierce tiger plays with a cow in peace;
 The elephant in rut obeys your glance
 And carries huge pieces of wood
 For raising a fire; the heavenly Kamadhenu
 Stands at your feet and announces
 The variety of food kept ready;
 Kings who rule over the vast earth,
 And great poets hail you: "King of sages!
 May you be ever victorious!"

Thayumanava does not use mythology in his poems. There are rare occasions when he uses the names of Vishnu and Brahma or the names of the Mother. He is constantly trying to reach out to Shiva Consciousness and this is always referred to in terms of supernal joy. The Lord is Satchidananda, Tejomayananda, Chit-sukhodayavilasa, Pooranananda, the Ananda-thooveli Vellam (Stream of rains from the skies of Shoreless Ananda). Though he does not make use of popular myths and legends, his poems continue to be favourites because of the simple and mellifluous poetical phrases. For the aspirants, the poems are instruments to understand meditational yoga better. How to remain silent, how to be disengaged, how to gain a sattvic state? What an impossible aim, muses Thayumanava:

Easy enough to control the elephant in rut;
 Bind up the mouths of the bear
 And fiery tiger; perhaps ride a lion as well.
 And play with the snake poisonous;
 Pour in blazing fire mercury, alchemise
 Metals to gold, sell it and eat heartily;
 One can wander invisible all over the world;
 Compel gods to be one's servitors;
 Achieve eternal youth, and even enter
 Another body. Walk on water,
 Sit in fire, and gain innumerable occult powers;
 But well nigh impossible to control thoughts,
 And sit still, immovable. O Lord
 Who is the very image of Knowledge
 Who has come to reside in my mind,
 Supernal Tejomayananda!

Thayumanava handles proverbs expertly to convey the deeper thoughts that get churned from his meditations. “When an elephant is lost, one searches in the pot”, “Struggling as a weed in the ocean”, “Use a deer to decoy a deer” and “As one who tries to sell grass in a flower market” are some of them. As with the intense practitioners of yoga, the despicable nature of the physical body is underlined in no uncertain terms by the poet thirsting for the Delight of Pure Knowledge.

The body is no more than a leather bag
 Stuffed with meat desired by crows,
 Vultures, dogs and jackals circling it;
 The stage for cupid’s dramas
 Made of two feet and nine holes; a box
 Which contains the note of servitude
 To lust and desire; a well overflowing with the dirt
 Of Pride, Karma and Maya;
 A hell where squirm awful worms;
 Rotten stuff on sale; the potter Brahma
 Created it to appear for a brief while
 As the rainbow and the lightning;
 A pot broken to smithereens by Yama
 In a jiffy! Must I consider this body as real?
 O Brahman who is difficult to understand!
 Lord of Pure Knowledge-delight!

Lines and phrases from Thayumanava’s “Para-apara Kanni” have become entwined with everyday conversational Tamil, marking their continued popularity. They are couplets that explain how the Transcendent One and the manifested reality are all the same. Three hundred eighty-nine couplets are available and most of them speak of the poet’s experiencing the Supreme as Delight Existence.

Honey that is ever sweet, my King; A stream
 Of Ananda, Paraapara, Flood of Silence!

You came to increase love in me and remained
 With me to safeguard my life, O Flood of Joy!

Enough of my poor heart reflecting on matters idle;
 O Paraapara, grant thy grace!

Equally popular are Thayumanava’s couplets addressed to a parrot. They are in the mode of bridal mysticism with the parrot as the intermediary between the aspirant

and the Supreme. All the couplets form themselves into an extended monologue with the parrot as the silent listener.

My Lord has no place, nor name, nor parents
Nor relations. Would He know me, O parrot?

If I give up running after other gods like a monkey
That hops, and am still, He might remember me.

O parrot, the love for my Lord has rendered as bitter
Even the nectar desired by gods!

The anxious aspirant engaged in austerities wonders how long is this pathway to the Supreme. For him it appears as if he were traversing an endless path, waiting through time that is incalculable. The couplets that deal with this mood conclude with the words: “When will the day be?”

When will the day be when I escape rebirth and watch
The camphor-scented face of my Lord?

In this group of couplets, Thayumanava renders his obeisance to the great Nayanmars like Tirujnanasambandar and Tirunavukkarasar, commentators like Shivavakkiyar, siddhas like Tirumoolar and Arunagirinathar. When would the day be when one is rid of the various karmas like Sanchita, Prarabhdha and Akamiya? When would one be free of the illusion that keeps the Lord behind the veil? Ah, for the day when one could hold the lamp of wisdom that is the Lord’s grace and envision His feet! For the day when one could go beyond the states of Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupti, Turiya and Turiyateeta and come face to face with the Lord’s feet?

Bridal mysticism comes to the fore in the verses of “Ananda Kalippu” (Ecstasy of Ananda). The Lord is all-auspicious, he is the source of beauty and joy, he has come to the aspirant as the Mauna Guru and taught him by the gesture of chin-mudra.

He asked me to hold on to him
If I wished to be free of the senses.
How can I describe the ineffable joy
When I held on to him and saw within?

The Lord has rendered the disciple “mad”, made him forget everything except him. Watching the world through his intelligence, the aspirant had only faced darkness. By the Lord’s Grace, now he was lost to himself! The Jivatman has merged in the Supreme totally. The One which is beyond the cosmos and is the Macro-Ananda, is yet tinier than the atom!

My heart was born there!
 It folded up and gained clarity there.
 I found the at-one-ment there itself
 And am now the advaitic One.

By avoiding the weight of latter-day legends and handling the Tamil language with a contemporaneous diction, Thayumanava gave a new life to the language which was increasingly getting locked up in punditry. Subramania Bharati who inaugurated the Tamil renaissance in the twentieth century recognised this aspect of the great yogi and mystic Thayumanava and gave expression to his gratitude in a gem-like poem:

You willed to live for ever,
 A symbol of sweet Tamil.
 You are young even today,
 Deathless like Tamil.
 You knew that the One is That,
 And That is utter Bliss.
 Part of the undying heavens,
 Abide with our transience too!

(To be continued)

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

...evidently there are two possibilities of the action of the intelligent will. It may take its downward and outward orientation towards a discursive action of the perceptions and the will in the triple play of Prakriti, or it may take its upward and inward orientation towards a settled peace and equality in the calm and immutable purity of the conscious silent soul no longer subject to the distractions of Nature. In the former alternative the subjective being is at the mercy of the objects of sense, it lives in the outward contact of things. That life is the life of desire. For the senses excited by their objects create a restless or often violent disturbance, a strong or even headlong outward movement towards the seizure of these objects and their enjoyment, and they carry away the sense-mind, "as the winds carry away a ship upon the sea"; the mind subjected to the emotions, passions, longings, impulsions awakened by this outward movement of the senses carries away similarly the intelligent will, which loses therefore its power of calm discrimination and mastery.

Sri Aurobindo

(Essays on the Gita, CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 98)

Auroville

The Beginning

AUROVILLE

The Beginning

1. The Irumbai legend

Irumbai is a small village on the edge of Auroville. The village temple is extremely old and is particularly associated with the legend of Kaduveli Siddha, a famous yogi who lived in the area some four or five hundred years ago.

According to the legend, Kaduveli Siddha was performing a harsh penance. Sitting under a peepal tree in yogic pose for days, the heat of his body was so intense that the rain gods suffered, no rains came and the people were exposed to hardship and drought. The situation was so bad that it finally came to the ears of the King, who ruled from Edayanchavadi village. No one dared disturb Kaduveli in his penance as he chanted the mantra of Eswara, and soon an anthill started to rise up around him. Finally a temple dancer, named Valli, devoted to the Lord Shiva, decided to do her best and get the attention of the yogi, and to rescue the King and his people from the adverse effects of his tapasya. She observed that occasionally the Siddha would, with his eyes shut, put out his hands to catch and consume the falling, withered peepal leaves. So she prepared some lightly fried appalams (flat salty wafers made out of green gram dhal), and started placing them in the yogi's outstretched hands, as he tried to catch the falling leaves. He started eating the appalams and got his taste back. Slowly he grew fatter until finally the anthill broke and he was once more exposed to the rays of the sun. Finally he opened his eyes. Valli was extremely happy and was able to take him back to her house where she kept him happy, dancing for him and learning songs from him. Meanwhile the God of Rain was relieved from the torture induced on him by the heat of the yogi's tapasya, the rain fell in plenty, and the people were happy once again.

In order to celebrate this event the King ordered a big Puja to be held at Irumbai temple, which was to be followed by a classical performance by Valli in which she would act out the cosmic dance of Lord Shiva, in the form of Nataraja. During the performance, however, one of her anklets fell off, and she started to lose her balance and rhythm. Kaduveli, who saw the Lord Shiva in Valli, picked up the anklet and put it back upon her feet. This exposed him to the ridicule of the King and court for having touched the feet of a dancing girl, and he was jeered at and heckled. Furious, he invoked the Lord Shiva to come out of his temple and prove his innocence in a rain of stone. Immediately the lingam in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple exploded, and wherever its fragments fell suddenly the land became desert. No greenery would grow around these spots, including a crater at a distance of three kilometres from the village, and they are still to this day known as 'Kaduveli'.

The King was suddenly frightened and begged the pardon of the Siddha, bowing down to him with all his entourage and pleading with him to soften the effects of his curse. This appeased Kaduveli, who, repenting of his anger, said that what was done was done, but that in the future, people from far-off lands would come and make the desert land green and fertile again. Today, there are villagers who feel that the Aurovilians are the people from far-off lands mentioned by the Siddha and that the curse is now beginning to leave them.

(The Auroville Adventure, pp. 3-4)

2. People from all over the world... living together in harmony

...It was in 1948-49, Mother used to go for drives and on a number of occasions she asked me to accompany her. On this particular occasion, the car stopped somewhere near the sea. She got out and sat on a small folding stool, while we sat on the ground around her. First of all, she looked at one of my portraits—I was sketching at this time—and made some corrections. Then she looked around and said, “I have a strong feeling, I envisage a time when there will be people from all over the world here, living together in harmony.” There was a very strong atmosphere, a sense of peace. And although I drove with her on other occasions, this is the one that stays in my memory.

[Editorial footnote in AT: Many years later, Bilkees wondered where exactly was this place where they stopped with Mother; she described it to Aster who concluded that it was indeed in Auroville, near Auromodel.]

BILKEES LATEEF

(Auroville Today, September 1992)

* * *

3. A Dream

There should be somewhere on earth a place which no nation could claim as its own, where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme truth; a place of peace, concord and harmony where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weaknesses and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the concern for progress would take precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the search for pleasure

and material enjoyment. In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their souls; education would be given not for passing examinations or obtaining certificates and posts but to enrich existing faculties and bring forth new ones. In this place, titles and positions would be replaced by opportunities to serve and organise; the bodily needs of each one would be equally provided for, and intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority would be expressed in the general organisation not by an increase in the pleasures and powers of life but by increased duties and responsibilities. Beauty in all its artistic forms, painting, sculpture, music, literature, would be equally accessible to all; the ability to share in the joy it brings would be limited only by the capacities of each one and not by social or financial position. For in this ideal place money would no longer be the sovereign lord; individual worth would have a far greater importance than that of material wealth and social standing. There, work would not be a way to earn one's living but a way to express oneself and to develop one's capacities and possibilities while being of service to the community as a whole, which, for its own part, would provide for each individual's subsistence and sphere of action. In short, it would be a place where human relationships, which are normally based almost exclusively on competition and strife, would be replaced by relationships of emulation in doing well, of collaboration and real brotherhood.

The earth is certainly not ready to realise such an ideal, for mankind does not yet possess sufficient knowledge to understand and adopt it nor the conscious force that is indispensable in order to execute it; that is why I call it a dream.

And yet this dream is in the course of becoming a reality; that is what we are striving for in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, on a very small scale, in proportion to our limited means. The realisation is certainly far from perfect, but it is progressive; little by little we are advancing towards our goal which we hope we may one day be able to present to the world as a practical and effective way to emerge from the present chaos, to be born into a new life that is more harmonious and true.

August 1954

(CWM, Vol. 12, pp. 93-94)

* * *

4. An International University Centre

The conditions in which men live on earth are the result of their state of consciousness. To seek to change these conditions without changing the consciousness is a vain chimera. Those who have been able to perceive what could and ought to be done to improve the situation in the various domains of human life—economic, political, social, financial, educational and sanitary—are individuals who have, to a

greater or lesser extent, developed their consciousness in an exceptional way and put themselves in contact with higher planes of consciousness. But their ideas have remained more or less theoretical or, if an attempt has been made to realise them practically, it has always failed lamentably after a certain period of time; for no human organisation can change radically unless human consciousness itself changes. Prophets of a new humanity have followed one another; religions, spiritual or social, have been created; their beginnings have sometimes been promising, but as humanity has not been fundamentally transformed, the old errors arising from human nature itself have gradually reappeared and after some time we find ourselves almost back at the point we had started from with so much hope and enthusiasm. Also, in this effort to improve human conditions, there have always been two tendencies, which seem to be contrary but which ought to complement each other so that progress may be achieved. The first advocates a collective reorganisation, something which could lead to the effective unity of mankind. The other declares that all progress is made first by the individual and insists that the individual should be given the conditions in which he can progress freely. Both are equally true and necessary, and our effort should be directed along both these lines at once. For collective progress and individual progress are interdependent. Before the individual can take a leap forward, at least a little of the preceding progress must have been realised in the collectivity. A way must therefore be found so that these two types of progress may proceed side by side.

It is in answer to this urgent need that Sri Aurobindo conceived the scheme of his international university, in order to prepare the human élite who will be able to work for the progressive unification of mankind and be ready at the same time to embody the new force which is descending to transform the earth. A few broad ideas will serve as a basis for the organisation of this university centre. ...

The most important idea is that the unity of the human race can be achieved neither by uniformity nor by domination and subjection. Only a synthetic organisation of all nations, each one occupying its true place according to its own genius and the part it has to play in the whole, can bring about a comprehensive and progressive unification which has any chance of enduring. And if this synthesis is to be a living one, the grouping should be effectuated around a central idea that is as wide and as high as possible, in which all tendencies, even the most contradictory, may find their respective places. This higher idea is to give men the conditions of life they need in order to be able to prepare themselves to manifest the new force that will create the race of tomorrow.

All impulsions of rivalry, all struggle for precedence and domination must disappear and give way to a will for harmonious organisation, for clear-sighted and effective collaboration.

To make this possible, the children should be accustomed from a very early age not merely to the idea itself, but to its practice. That is why the international university centre will be international; not because students from all countries will be admitted

here, nor even because they will be taught in their own language, but above all because the cultures of the various parts of the world will be represented here so as to be accessible to all, not merely intellectually in ideas, theories, principles and language, but also vitally in habits and customs, art in all its forms—painting, sculpture, music, architecture, decoration—and physically through natural scenery, dress, games, sports, industries and food. A kind of permanent world-exhibition should be organised in which all countries will be represented in a concrete and living way. The ideal would be for every nation with a well-defined culture to have a pavilion representing that culture, built in a style that is most expressive of the customs of the country; it will exhibit the nation's most representative products, natural as well as manufactured, and also the best expressions of its intellectual and artistic genius and its spiritual tendencies. Each nation would thus have a very practical and concrete interest in this cultural synthesis and could collaborate in the work by taking responsibility for the pavilion that represents it. Living accommodation, large or small according to the need, could be attached, where students of the same nationality could stay and thus enjoy the true culture of their native country and at the same time receive at the university centre the education which will introduce them to all the other cultures that exist on earth. In this way, international education will not be merely theoretical, in the classroom, but practical in all the details of life.

...

The first aim will therefore be to help individuals to become aware of the fundamental genius of the nation to which they belong and at the same time to bring them into contact with the ways of life of other nations, so that they learn to know and respect equally the true spirit of all the countries of the world. For, in order to be real and workable, any world-organisation must be based on this mutual respect and understanding between nation and nation as well as between individual and individual. Only in order and collective organisation, in collaboration based on mutual goodwill, is there any possibility of lifting man out of the painful chaos in which he finds himself now. It is with this aim and in this spirit that all human problems will be studied at the university centre; and the solution to them will be given in the light of the supramental knowledge which Sri Aurobindo has revealed in his writings.

April 1952

(CWM, Vol. 12, pp. 39-42)

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5. The Supramental Realisation

In order to know what the Supramental Realisation will be like, the first step, the first condition is to know what the supramental consciousness is. All those who

have been, in one way or another, in contact with it have had some glimpse of the realisation to be. But those who have not, can yet aspire for that realisation, just as they can aspire to get the supramental knowledge. True knowledge means awareness by identity: once you get in touch with the supramental world, you can say something about its descent, but not before. What you can say before is that there will be a new creation upon earth; this you say through faith, since the exact character of it escapes you. And if you are called upon to define realisation, you may declare that, individually speaking, it means the transformation of your ordinary human consciousness into the divine and supramental.

The consciousness is like a ladder: at each great epoch there has been one great being capable of adding one more step to the ladder and reaching a place where the ordinary consciousness had never been. It is possible to attain a high level and get completely out of the material consciousness; but then one does not retain the ladder, whereas the great achievement of the great epochs of the universe has been the capacity to add one more step to the ladder without losing contact with the material, the capacity to reach the Highest and at the same time connect the top with the bottom instead of letting a kind of emptiness cut off all connection between the different planes. To go up and down and join the top to the bottom is the whole secret of realisation, and that is the work of the Avatar. Each time he adds one more step to the ladder there is a new creation upon earth.... The step which is being added now Sri Aurobindo has called the Supramental; as a result of it, the consciousness will be able to enter the supramental world and yet retain its personal form, its individualisation and then come down to establish here a new creation. Certainly this is not the last, for there are farther ranges of being; but now we are at work to bring down the supramental, to effect a reorganisation of the world, to bring the world back to the true divine order. It is essentially a creation of order, a putting of everything in its true place; and the chief spirit or force, the Shakti active at present is Mahasaraswati, the Goddess of perfect organisation.

The work of achieving a continuity which permits one to go up and down and bring into the material what is above, is done inside the consciousness. He who is meant to do it, the Avatar, even if he were shut up in a prison and saw nobody and never moved out, still would he do the work, because it is a work in the consciousness, a work of connection between the Supermind and the material being. He does not need to be recognised, he need have no outward power in order to be able to establish this conscious connection. Once, however, the connection is made, it must have its effect in the outward world in the form of a new creation, beginning with a model town and ending with a perfect world.

6. A first physical step

Auroville came into existence on the physical plane as an outcome of the First World Conference of Sri Aurobindo Society held in August 1964 in Pondicherry.

It was only then that it dawned on everyone that the coming of Auroville was inevitable.

Among the resolutions passed during the Conference, was this one:

“To develop a township near Pondicherry for those who want to prepare for a new life.”

(A Glimpse of the Mother’s Love and Action & Archival material)

* * *

7. A report

We publish in the issue some pictures of Auroville, our new project. This project which has been inspired by “A Dream” of the Mother is for a full township named after Sri Aurobindo, “Auroville”, which is the “City of Dawn”. This township, situated about 3 to 5 miles from the Ashram, will contain not only residential houses but also industrial establishments, an air-strip, medical and educational buildings, guest houses, restaurants, shopping centres, an artists’ colony, a labour colony, orchards, farms, flower gardens and all that goes to make up a complete town. There will be in addition separate Pavilions where the culture of different countries will be expressed in architecture and living.

April 1965

(Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education)

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8. A house in Auroville

[The Mother’s letter to Huta]:

My dear little child,

Quite willing to give you your house in Auroville, but it must be built first.

You must keep the amount of which you spoke for that purpose.

LOVE.

10 June 1965

(Huta: The Spirit of Auroville,¹ pp. 5-6)

* * *

1. This and all other passages from *The Spirit of Auroville* are copyright Huta.

9. A childhood dream

I wrote to the Mother about my childhood dream, which I had suppressed for a long time.

She confirmed on 21.6.65:

In your yesterday's letter you spoke of a dream of your childhood "the most beautiful spot of the world".

This was also a dream of my own childhood. So our dreams have met for realisation.

Now it is only to be worked out. When we know how to wait, we put Time on our side.

(Huta: *The Spirit of Auroville*, pp. 8-9)

* * *

10. The plan

On Friday June 25th, in the morning after our work on Savitri, the Mother opened her diary in which she kept my letters. There were also some blank sheets of paper. She drew several sketches in front of me. Out of them she gave me [...] two.

This one is in the shape of a flower, a hibiscus, to which the Mother has given the significance, 'Godhead—Pure and Perfect, it puts out its force in the world.'

Then she pointed to each petal and counterpetal, and explained:

This drawing is divided into four petals with small semi-circles between their divisions. They are meant for Civil Services like Post Offices, Banks, Telecom, Telegraph and so on. The four petals represent four Powers of the Supreme Mother: they are Mahakali, Maheshwari, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati.

Mahakali: Industrial area. Small industries will be in this place. The big ones will be on the seaside. And further towards Madras the land will be extended covering some 50 miles or so. Also, the land of Auroville will be extended towards Lake Estate southward.

Big industries will be far away from the inner parts, which must be in total silence and peace. They must not be affected by smoke and noise from heavy machinery.

Maheshwari: the Residential area. Here the ground must not be levelled but be kept as it is with hillocks. There will be tall trees, grass, flowers, small ponds, fountains, rockeries—all natural things—nothing should be artificial.

Mahalakshmi: Cultural zone. In this area there will be art galleries, studios, museums, exhibition halls, an auditorium, schools, colleges and so on. Musicians, dancers, painters, sculptors and other artists will have their houses—surrounded by natural beauties. The artists will be undisturbed and free to create new things.

...

Mahasaraswati: International zone. Pavilions of all countries which present their customs and cultures.

(Huta: *The Spirit of Auroville*, pp. 10-11)

* * *

11. *Have you heard of Auroville?*

Have you heard of Auroville?

For a long time, I had a plan of the “ideal town”, but that was during Sri Aurobindo’s lifetime, with Sri Aurobindo living at the centre. Afterwards, I was no longer interested. Then the idea of Auroville—I gave the name Auroville—was taken up again, but from the other end: instead of the formation having to find the place, it was the place—near the lake—which gave birth to the formation, and until now I took only a very minor interest in it, for I had received nothing directly. Then our little A took it into her head to have a house there, by the lake, and to have a house for me next to hers, and to offer it to me. And she wrote me all her dreams: one or two sentences suddenly stirred an old, old memory of something which had tried to manifest—a creation—when I was very young and which had again started trying to manifest at the very beginning of the century, when I was with Théon. Then all that was forgotten. It came back with this letter; all at once, I had my plan for Auroville. Now I have my overall plan, I am waiting for B to draw the detailed plans, for I had said from the beginning: “B will be the architect”, and I wrote to B. When he came here last year, he went to see Chandigarh, the town built by Le Corbusier, up there in the Punjab, and he was not very happy. It seems quite ordinary to me—I know nothing about it, I haven’t seen it, I only saw some photographs which were horrible. And while he was speaking to me, I could see that he felt, “Oh, if only I had a town to build!...” So I wrote to him: “If you want, I have a town to build.” He is happy. He is coming. When he comes, I shall show him my plan and he will build the town. My plan is very simple.

The place is up there, on the Madras road, on top of the hill. (*Mother takes a paper and begins to draw.*) We have here—naturally, it is not like that in Nature, we shall have to adapt ourselves; it is like that up there on the ideal plane—here, a central point. This central point is a park which I saw when I was very young—perhaps the most beautiful thing in the world from the point of view of physical, material Nature—

a park with water and trees, like all parks, and flowers, but not many; flowers in the form of creepers, palms and ferns, all varieties of palms; water, if possible running water, and possibly a small cascade. From the practical point of view, it would be very good: at the far end, outside the park, we could build reservoirs which would be used to supply water to the residents.

So in this park, I saw the “Pavilion of Love”. But I dislike this word, for man has turned it into something grotesque; I am speaking of the principle of Divine Love. But that has changed: it will be “The Pavilion of the Mother”—but not this (*Mother points to herself*)—the Mother, the true Mother, the principle of the Mother. I say “Mother” because Sri Aurobindo used that word, otherwise I would have put something else, I would have put “creative principle” or “principle of realisation” or—I do not know.... It will be a small building, not a big one, with only a meditation room downstairs, but with columns and probably a circular shape. I say probably, because I am leaving that for B to decide. Upstairs, the first floor will be a room and the roof will be a covered terrace. You know the ancient Indo-Moghul miniatures, with palaces where there are terraces with small roofs supported by columns? You know those old miniatures? Hundreds of them have come into my hands.... But this pavilion is very, very beautiful, a small pavilion like this, with a roof on a terrace, and low walls with couches against them to sit on, to meditate in the open air in the evening, at night. And below, downstairs, at ground-level, a meditation room, simply—something quite bare. There would probably be at the far end something which would be a living light, perhaps the symbol in living light, a constant light. Otherwise, a very peaceful, very silent place.

Nearby, there would be a small dwelling, a small dwelling which would nevertheless have three floors, but not large-sized, and that would be the house of A, who would serve as a guardian. She would be the guardian of the pavilion. She wrote me a very nice letter but she did not understand all that, of course.

That is the centre.

All around, there is a circular road which separates the park from the rest of the town. There would probably be a gateway—in fact there must be one—in the park. A gateway with the guardian of the gate. The guardian of the gate is a new girl who has come from Africa, who wrote me a letter telling me that she wanted to be the guardian of Auroville in order to let only the “servants of Truth” enter (*Mother laughs*). It is a very nice plan. So I shall probably put her there as guardian of the park, with a small house on the road at the entrance.

But the interesting thing is that around this central point, there are four big sections, like four big petals (*Mother draws*), but the corners of the petals are rounded and there are small intermediate zones—four big sections and four zones.... Naturally that is only in the air; on the ground, it will be an approximation.

We have four big sections: the cultural section, to the North, that is to say, towards Madras; to the East, the industrial section; to the South, the international section; and

to the West, that is to say, towards the lake, the residential section.

To make myself clear: the residential section, where there will be the houses of the people who have already subscribed and of all the others who are coming in large numbers to have a plot in Auroville. That will be next to the lake.

The international section: we have already approached a certain number of ambassadors and countries for each one to have its pavilion—a pavilion from every country. It was an old idea. Some have already accepted, so it is on the way. Each pavilion has its own garden with, as far as possible, a representation of the plants and products of the country which it represents. If they have enough money and enough space, they can also have a sort of small museum or permanent exhibition of the country's achievements. The buildings should be constructed according to the architecture of each country—it should be like a document of information. Then, depending on the money they wish to spend, they could also have accommodation for students, conference-rooms, etc., a cuisine of the country, a restaurant of the country—they could have all kinds of developments.

Then the industrial section. Already many people, including the Government of Madras—the Madras Government is loaning money—want to start industries, which will be on a special basis. This industrial section is to the East and it is very big, there is plenty of space; it will go down towards the sea. In fact, to the North of Pondicherry there is quite a large area which is totally uninhabited and uncultivated; it is by the sea, going up the coast towards the North. So this industrial section would go down towards the sea, and if possible there would be a kind of wharf—not exactly a port but a place where boats could come alongside; and all these industries, with the inland transportation they need, would have a possibility to export directly. And there, there would be a big hotel—B has already made a plan for it; we wanted to build the hotel here, on the site of the “Messageries Maritimes”, but after having said yes, the owner said no; it is very good, it will be better over there—a big hotel to receive visitors from outside. Already quite a number of industries have registered for this section; I do not know if there will be enough room, but we shall manage.

Then, to the North—that is where there is the most space, of course—towards Madras, the cultural section. There, an auditorium—the auditorium which I have dreamt of building for a long time; plans had already been made—an auditorium with a concert-hall and a grand organ, the best of its kind today. It seems they are making wonderful things. I want a grand organ. There will also be a stage with wings—a rotating stage, etc., the best of its kind. So, a magnificent auditorium, there. There will be a library, there will be a museum with all sorts of exhibitions—not inside the auditorium: in addition to it there will be a film-studio, a film-school; there will be a gliding club. Already we almost have authorisation from the Government, and the promise, so it is already well on the way. Then towards Madras, where there is plenty of space, a stadium. We want this stadium to be the most modern and the most perfect possible, with the idea—it is an idea I have had for a long time—that twelve years—

the Olympic Games take place every four years —twelve years from 1968—in '68 the Olympiads are taking place in Mexico—twelve years later we would hold the Olympic Games in India, there. So we need space.

Between these sections, there are intermediate zones, four intermediate zones: one for public services, post office, etc.; one zone for transport, railway station and possibly an aerodrome; one zone for food—that one would be near the lake and would include dairies, poultry farms, orchards, cultivated lands, etc.; it would spread and include the Lake Estate: what they wanted to do separately would be within the framework of Auroville. Then a fourth zone. I have said: public services, transport, food, and the fourth zone: shops. We do not need many shops, but a few are necessary in order to obtain what we do not produce. They are like districts, you see.

And you will be there at the centre?

A hopes so (*Mother laughs*). I did not say no, I did not say yes; I told her, “The Lord will decide.” It depends on my state of health. A removal, no—I am here because of the Samadhi, I shall stay here, that is quite sure. But I can go there on a visit; it is not so far, it takes five minutes by car. But A wants to be quiet, silent, aloof, and that is quite possible in her park, surrounded by a road, with someone to stop people from coming in; one can stay very quiet—but if I am there, that is the end of it! There would be collective meditations, etc. That is to say that if I get a sign, first the physical sign, then the inner command to go out, I shall drive there and spend an hour, in the afternoon—I can do that now and then. We still have time because, before everything is ready, it will take years.

That is to say that the disciples will stay here?

Ah! The Ashram stays here—the Ashram stays here, I stay here, that is understood. Auroville is...

A satellite.

Yes, it is the contact with the outside world. The centre on my drawing is a symbolic centre.

But that is what A expects: she wants a house where she would be all alone next to a house where I would be all alone. The second part is a dream, because myself all alone.... You only have to see what is happening! It is true, isn't it? So it does not go with the “all alone”. Solitude must be found within, it is the only way. But as far as living is concerned, I shall certainly not go and live there, because the Samadhi is here; but I could go there to visit. For example, I could go there for an inauguration or for certain ceremonies. We shall see. It will be years from now.

In short, Auroville is more for outside?

Oh yes! It is a town! Consequently, it is the whole contact with outside. An attempt to realise on earth a more ideal life.

In the old formation which I had made, there had to be a hill and a river. There had to be a hill, because Sri Aurobindo's house was on top of the hill. But Sri Aurobindo was there at the centre. It was arranged according to the plan of my symbol, that is to say, a point in the middle, with Sri Aurobindo and all that concerned Sri Aurobindo's life, and four big petals—which were not the same as on this drawing, it was something else—and twelve all around, the town itself; and around that, there were the residences of the disciples; you know my symbol: instead of lines, there are bands; well, the last circular band formed the area for the disciples' residences, and each one had his own house and garden—a small house and a garden for each one. There was some means of transport, I wasn't sure if it was individual transport or collective transport—like those small open tramcars in the mountains, you know—going in all directions to take the disciples back towards the centre of the town. And around all that, there was a wall, with a gateway and guardians at the gate, and one could not enter without authorisation. There was no money—within the walls, no money; at the various entrances, there were banks or counters of some sort, where people could deposit their money and receive tickets in exchange, with which they could obtain lodging, food, this, that. But no money—the tickets were only for visitors, who could not enter without a permit. It was a tremendous organisation.... No money, I did not want any money.

Look! In my plan I forgot one thing. I wanted to build a housing estate for workers, but the housing estate was to be part of the industrial section, perhaps an extension along the edge of the industrial section.

Outside the walls, in my first formation, on one side there was an industrial town, and on the other, fields, farms, etc., to supply the town. But that represented a real country—not a big country, but a country. Now it is much reduced. It is no longer my symbol; there are only four zones and there are no walls. And there will be money. You see, the other formation was truly an ideal endeavour.... But I counted on many years before trying to start. At that time I thought twenty-four years. But now it is much more modest, it is a transitional attempt, and it is much more realisable. The other plan was... I almost had the land; it was in the time of Sir Akbar, you remember, from Hyderabad. They sent me some photographs of the State of Hyderabad and there, in those photographs, I found my ideal spot: an isolated hill, quite a big hill, and below it, a large, flowing river. I told him, "I want this place", and he arranged the matter. Everything was arranged. They sent me the plans, the papers and everything, saying that they were giving it to the Ashram. But they laid down one condition—it was virgin forest, uncultivated land—the place was given on condition, naturally, that we would cultivate it—but the products must be utilised on the spot; for example,

the crops, the wood, must be utilised on the spot, not transported; nothing could leave the State of Hyderabad. There was even C, who was a navigator, who said that he would obtain a sailing boat from England to go up the river to fetch the products and bring them to us here. Everything was very well planned! Then they set this condition. I asked if it was not possible to have it removed; then Sir Akbar died and that was the end of it, the matter was dropped. Afterwards, I was glad that it was not done because, now that Sri Aurobindo has departed, I cannot leave Pondicherry. I could only leave Pondicherry with him provided that he accepted to live in his ideal town. At that time, I had spoken of this project to D, the person who built Golconde; and he was enthusiastic, he told me, "As soon as you start to build, call me, I shall come." I had shown him my plan; it was based on an enlargement of my symbol; he was most enthusiastic, he thought it was magnificent.

It was dropped. But the other one, which is just a small intermediate attempt, we can try.

I have no illusions that it will keep its original purity, but we shall try something.

Much depends on the financial organisation of the project?

For the time being, E is taking care of that, because he receives the money through the Sri Aurobindo Society and he bought the land. A fair amount of land has already been bought. It is going well. Naturally, the difficulty is to find enough money. But, for example, the pavilions—each country will bear the expenses for its own pavilion; the industries—each industry will provide the money for its own business; the residents—each one will give the money necessary for his land. The Government—Madras has already given us the promise—will give between sixty and eighty per cent: one part grant, that is to say, gift; one part loan, free of interest and repayable over ten years, twenty years, forty years—a long-term repayment. E knows all about it, he has already had quite a few results. But according to whether the money comes in quickly or comes in little by little, it will go more or less quickly. From the construction point of view, it will depend on B's plasticity; the details are all the same to me—only I would like this pavilion to be very beautiful. I can see it. For I have seen it, I have had the vision of it; so I shall try to make him understand what I have seen. And the park too, I have seen it—these are old visions which I had repeatedly. But that is not difficult.

The greatest difficulty is the water, because there is no river nearby, up there. But they are already trying to channel the rivers; there was even a project to channel water from the Himalayas across the whole of India: F had made a plan and had spoken about it in Delhi; they objected that it would be rather expensive, obviously! But, anyway, even without such grandiose things, something must be done to supply the water. That will be the greatest difficulty; that will take the most time. All the rest, light, power, will be done on the spot in the industrial section—but water cannot be

made! The Americans have seriously thought of finding a way to use sea-water, because the earth no longer has enough drinking water for man—the water which they call “fresh”: it is ironical; the amount of water is not enough for the needs of man, so they have already started chemical experiments on a large scale to transform sea-water and make it utilisable—obviously, that would be the solution to the problem.

But that already exists.

It exists, but not on a sufficiently large scale.

It does in Israel.

Do they do that in Israel? Do they use sea-water? Obviously, that would be the solution—the sea is there.

We shall see. It would have to be brought up.

A yachting club would be rather nice?

Ah! Certainly, with the industrial section.

Near your port, there.

It will not be a “port” but, well... Yes, the visitors’ hotel with a yachting club nearby, that is an idea. I shall add that. (*Mother writes it down.*)

It will surely be a success.

Now look! A shower of letters, my child! From everywhere, from all over the world, people are writing to me: “At last! This is the project I was waiting for”, etc. A shower.

There is also a gliding club. We have already been promised an instructor and a glider. It is a promise. It will be in the industrial section, on top of the hill. Of course, the yacht club will be on the sea, not on the lake; but I had thought—because there is much talk of deepening the lake, it is almost filled up—I was thinking of a hydroplane station, there.

We can also have boating on the lake?

Not if there are hydroplanes. It is not big enough for boating. But it would be very good for a hydroplane station. But that depends: if we have an airport, it is unnecessary; if we do not have an airport.... But already, in the Lake Estate project, there was an airport. G, who has become a squadron leader, has sent me a plan for an airport too, but for small planes, whereas we want an airport which can handle a regular service to Madras, a passenger airport. There has already been much talk

about it. There were discussions between Air India and another company; then they could not come to an agreement—all sorts of petty, foolish difficulties. But all that, with the growth of Auroville, will fall away quite naturally—people will be only too glad to have an airport.

No, there are two difficulties. Small sums of money we have—to be precise: what the Government can loan, what people give to have a plot—it is coming. But it takes massive sums, you know, it takes billions to build a town!

23 June 1965

(CWM, Vol. 13, pp. 251-261)

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12. *Happy dream and true*

I kept dreaming endlessly about the Mother's magnificent Vision. I asked her whether the dream of Auroville would turn out to be true. She replied on 16.7.65:

Huta, dear little child of mine
The happy dream will turn out to be true.
LOVE

(Huta: *The Spirit of Auroville*, pp. 15-16)

* * *

13. *The first message*

*Auroville wants to be a
universal town where men
and women of all countries
are able to live in peace
and progressive harmony,
above all creeds, all politics
and all nationalities.*

*The purpose of Auroville
is to realise human unity.*

8-9.65.



Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities.

The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.

(CWM, Vol. 13, pp. 187-88)

[About the words “A universal town”, the Mother specified, “A universal town—not international: universal”.]

* * *

14. Some practical details

Begging is not permitted in Auroville. Persons found begging on the road will be distributed as follows: children to school, the old to a home, the sick to the hospital, the healthy to work.

A school, a home, a hospital and special work areas will be arranged for this. They will not be mixed with the others, because some people may come from outside and begin to beg in the street.

There are no police. We have... we haven't found the word... a band of guards, a battalion of guards, something like the firemen in Japan, who are gymnasts and who do everything when there are accidents—anything, earthquakes—they do everything. They climb up into houses. Instead of police, there will be a kind of battalion of guards, who will go out regularly into the various parts of the town to see if they are needed. And if they come across people begging, they will be distributed as I said. There will be a school for the children, a home for the old, a hospital for the sick and disabled, and a place where work will be provided for all those who... There will be every possible kind of work, from sweeping to... anything, and work that is needed, they will do it, according to their abilities. This has to be organised.

A special school for the children to teach them to work, to teach them the things that are indispensable for them to be able to work.

No prison, no police.

September 1966

(CWM, Vol. 13, pp. 261-62)

* * *

15. *Some comments*

Mother reads a disciple's notation of comments she made about her conception of Auroville.

"Auroville will be a self-supporting township.

"All who live there will participate in its life and development.

"This participation may be passive or active.

"There will be no taxes as such but each will contribute to the collective welfare in work, kind or money.

"Sections like industries which participate actively will contribute part of their income towards the development of the township.

"Or if they produce something (like foodstuffs) useful for the citizens, they will contribute in kind to the township, which is responsible for feeding its citizens.

"No rules or laws are being framed. Things will get formulated as the underlying truth of the township emerges and takes shape progressively. We do not anticipate."

I thought I had said more than that because I said a good deal about it, inwardly—on the organisation, the food, etc. We are going to make experiments.

Some things are really interesting; first of all, for example, I would like each country to have its pavilion, and in the pavilion there will be the cooking of that country—that is, the Japanese will be able to eat Japanese food if they want to, etc. But in the town itself there will be food for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians, and there will also be some attempt to find the food of tomorrow.

The whole process of assimilation which makes you so heavy—it takes so much of a person's time and energy—that should be done *beforehand*, you should be given something which is immediately assimilable, like the things they are making now; for example they have vitamin pills and proteins which can be assimilated directly, nutritious elements which are found in one thing or another and which don't have much volume—a huge quantity is needed to assimilate very little. Now that they are skilful enough in chemistry, it could be simplified.

People do not like this simply because they take an intense pleasure in eating; but when you no longer take pleasure in eating, you still need nourishment without wasting your time on it. An enormous amount of time is wasted—time in eating, in digesting, and all the rest. And there, I would like an experimental kitchen, a kind of culinary laboratory for experimenting. People would go to one place or another according to their tastes and inclinations.

And they don't pay for their food, but they should offer their work or their produce: those who have fields, for example, should give the produce from their

fields; those who have factories should give their products; or one gives one's labour in exchange for food.

That in itself eliminates much of the internal exchange of money. And for everything we would find things like this. Basically, it should be a city for study, for study and research into a way of life which is both simplified and in which the higher qualities will have *more time* to develop.

It is only a small beginning.

Mother goes through the text sentence by sentence.

"Auroville will be a self-supporting township."

I want to insist on the fact that it will be an experiment, it is for making experiments—experiments, research, study. Auroville will be a city that will try to be, or will tend to become, or attempt to be "self-supporting", that is to say...

Autonomous?

"Autonomous" is understood to mean some kind of independence which breaks off relations with others, and that is not what I mean.

For example, those who produce food, like Aurofood—of course, when we are 50,000 it will be difficult to provide for all the needs, but for the moment we are only a few thousand at most—well, a factory always produces far too much, so it will sell outside and receive money. Aurofood for example wants to have a special relationship with the workers—not at all the old system, something which would be an improvement on the communist system, a more balanced organisation than sovietism, that is, something which does not err too much on one side at the expense of the other.

There is one thing I wanted to say: the participation in the well-being and life of the town as a whole is not something calculated on an individual basis; that is, this individual should give so much, it is not like that. It is calculated according to the means, the activity, the capacity for production; it is not the democratic idea which cuts everything up into equal pieces, which is an absurd machinery. It is calculated according to one's means: one who has much gives much, one who has little gives little; one who is strong works hard, one who is not strong does something else. You see, it is something truer, deeper. That is why I make no attempt to explain now, because people will start to make all kinds of complaints. All this must come about automatically, so to speak, with the growth of the city, in the true spirit. That is why this note is extremely concise.

For example, this sentence:

"All who live there will participate in its life and development."

All who live there will participate in its life and development according to their capacities and means, not mechanically—so much per unit. That's it, it must be something living and true, not a mechanical thing; and according to each one's capacities: that is, one who has material means, such as those provided by a factory, should give in proportion to its production, not so much per individual, per head.

"The participation may be passive or active."

I do not understand what "passive" means; I said it in French and it has been put into English. What could that mean, "passive"?... It would be something more like planes or different levels of consciousness.

You meant that those who are wise, who work within, do not need to...

Yes, that's it. Those who have a higher knowledge do not need to work with their hands, that is what I meant.

"There will be no taxes as such, but each one will contribute to the collective welfare in work, kind or money."

So that is clear: there will be no taxes, but each one will have to contribute to the collective welfare by his work, in kind or in money. Those who have nothing but money will give money. But to tell the truth, "work" can be inner work—but one cannot say that, because people are not honest enough. The work can be an occult, completely inner work; but for that, it must be absolutely sincere and true, and with the capacity for it: no pretension. But not necessarily a physical work.

"Sections like industries which participate actively will contribute part of their income towards the development of the township; or if they produce something (like foodstuffs) that is useful to the citizens, they will contribute in kind to the township, which is responsible for feeding its citizens."

This is what we were just saying. The industries will participate actively, they will contribute. If these industries produce articles which are not constantly needed and therefore in amounts or quantities that are too great to be used within the city but which will sell outside, they, of course, should participate with money. And I give food as an example; those who produce food will give what they produce to the town—in proportion to what they produce, of course—and the town is responsible for feeding everyone. That means that people will not need to buy food with money; but it must be earned.

It is a sort of adaptation of the communist system, but not in a spirit of levelling;

according to the capacity, the position—not the psychological or intellectual, but the inner position of each one.

What is true is that materially every human being has the right—but it is not a “right”.... The organisation should be such, should be so arranged, that the material needs of everyone are assured, not according to ideas of rights and equality, but on the basis of the minimum needs. And once that is established, each one should be free to organise his life according to—not according to his financial means, but his inner capacities.

“No rules or laws are being framed. Things will get formulated as the underlying truth of the township emerges and takes shape progressively. We do not anticipate.”

What I mean is that usually—always so far, and now more and more—men lay down mental rules according to their conceptions and ideals, and then they apply them (*Mother brings down her fist to show the world in the grip of mind*), and that is absolutely false, it is arbitrary, unreal—and the result is that things revolt or wither and disappear.... It is the experience of life itself that should slowly elaborate rules which are as flexible and wide as possible, to be always progressive. Nothing should be fixed.

That is the great error of governments; they make a framework and say, “There you are, we have set this up and now we must live by it”, and so of course they crush life and prevent it from progressing. Life itself must develop more and more in a progression towards Light, Knowledge, Power, little by little establishing rules that are as general as possible, so that they can be extremely flexible and change with the need—and change as quickly as the needs and habits do.

(silence)

The problem finally comes down to this: to replace the mental government of the intelligence by the government of a spiritualised consciousness.

30 December 1967

(CWM, Vol. 13, pp. 262-67)

* * *

16. Some answers

[Mother answered these questions orally in 1965. When she read the notation on 8 October 1969, she changed answers 12 and 17 to read as printed here.]

1. Who has taken the initiative for the construction of Auroville?

The Supreme Lord.

2. Who participates in the financing of Auroville?

The Supreme Lord.

3. If one wants to live in Auroville, what does it imply for oneself?

To try to attain the Supreme Perfection.

4. Must one be a student of yoga in order to live in Auroville?

All life is yoga. Therefore one cannot live without practising the supreme yoga.

5. What will be the Ashram's role in Auroville?

Whatever the Supreme Lord wants it to be.

6. Will there be camping-grounds in Auroville?

All things are as they should be, when they should be.

7. Will family life continue in Auroville?

If one has not gone beyond that.

8. Can one retain one's religion in Auroville?

If one has not gone beyond that.

9. Can one be an atheist in Auroville?

If one has not gone beyond that.

10. Will there be a social life in Auroville?

If one has not gone beyond that.

11. Will there be compulsory community activities in Auroville?

Nothing is compulsory.

12. Will money be used in Auroville?

No, Auroville will have money relations only with the outside world.

13. How will work be organised and distributed in Auroville?

“Money would no longer be the sovereign lord; individual worth would have a far greater importance than that of material wealth and social standing. There, work would not be a way to earn one’s living but a way to express oneself and to develop one’s capacities and possibilities while being of service to the community as a whole, which, for its own part, would provide for each individual’s subsistence and sphere of action.” [Extract from the Mother’s essay “A Dream”]

14. What will be the relations between the inhabitants of Auroville and the outside world?

Each person is allowed full freedom. The external relations of residents in Auroville will be established for each one according to his personal aspiration and his activities within Auroville.

15. Who will own the land and buildings of Auroville?

The Supreme Lord.

16. What languages will be used for teaching?

All the spoken languages of the earth.

17. What will be the means of transport in Auroville?

We do not know.

(CWM, Vol. 13, pp. 188-90)

* * *

17. *The Mother's Shrine*

I went to the Mother on 24 December [1965]. After our work she told me:

The place for the Mother's Shrine is chosen. It is really a very nice place.

Mother, the Truth must win.

If there is anything certain, then it is the Truth and that must win and it shall win.

Mother, first the Truth must have its place in Auroville and the rest will follow.

My child, the Lord is arranging everything. Look, while we are talking, He is right here and smiling at us.

Mother, what then are we waiting for? Please ask Him to do the needful for the Truth soon...

Her blue-grey eyes sparkled with amusement as she said:

Soon! Well! We must wait and see....

Mother, what about the money? Oh, if I had sufficient money, I would give it straight away for the purpose, but...

She held my hand and said with a smile:

All will be done.

(Huta: *The Spirit of Auroville*, p. 29)

* * *

18. *Auroville is going well*

Auroville is going well and is becoming more and more real, but its realisation does not proceed in the usual human way and it is more visible to the inner consciousness than to the outer eye.

January 1966

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 190)

* * *

19. *Another message*

Blessings for
the birth, growth,
life and influence
of Auroville.

16 March 1966

(Original message put up at Aspiration)

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20. *The city is already there*

It seems to be going quite well. A very widespread collective response, and from the two opposite sides: the whole Communist side is moving, and the whole financial, American side is moving. There is an effervescence.

It's sure to work, I *know* it exists—the city is already there (it has been for many, many years). Interestingly, my creation was with Sri Aurobindo in the centre, then when Sri Aurobindo left, I let it all rest, I didn't budge anymore. Then it suddenly started coming again, as if to say, "Now is the time, it must be done." Very well. The Muslims would say, "It's fated." It's fated, it's sure to exist. I don't know how much time it will take, but it seems to be going fast.

The city already exists.

...

And that's precisely what I want—that these two countries [Russia and America] clashing with each other should come here, and each of them have a pavilion of their culture and ideal, and that they should be here, face to face, and shake hands.

(Conversation of 23 April 1966)

* * *

21. *The Lord's Dream*

In a letter I asked the Mother how the gigantic project of Auroville could be materialised without sufficient money. She replied on 18.4.66:

When the Lord has decided something it is bound to happen whatever are the resistances.

Caught in our human nature, I was not yet convinced about the Mother's supreme Vision. Everything seemed to me a dream. I expressed my feeling to her. She gave me an assurance:

20.5.66

My very dear little child Huta,

You say that Auroville is a dream. Yes, it is a "dream" of the Lord and generally these "dreams" turn out to be true—much more true than the human so-called realities!

With all my love.

(Huta: *The Spirit of Auroville*, pp. 56-57)

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22. An experience in relation to Auroville

This is the experience I have had these last few days, yesterday or the day before. The feeling of an irresistible Power governing everything: the world, things, people, everything, without needing to move materially, and that this excessive material activity is only like the foam that forms when water flows very fast—the foam on the surface; but that the Force runs on underneath like an all-powerful stream.

There is nothing else to say.

One always comes back to that: to know is all right, to speak is good, to do is all very well, but to *be* is the only thing which has any power.

You see, people are restless because things do not move quickly; so I had this vision of the formation, of the divine creation in the making, under the surface, all-powerful, irresistible, and in spite of everything, of all this outer turmoil.

6 July 1966

(CWM, Vol. 10, pp. 229-30)

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23. Not the last rung

Humanity is not the last rung of the terrestrial creation. Evolution continues and man will be surpassed. It is for each individual to know whether he wants to participate

in the advent of this new species.

For those who are satisfied with the world as it is, Auroville obviously has no reason to exist.

August 1966

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 191)

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24. The cradle of the Superman

We would like to make Auroville the cradle of the Superman.

1966

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 191)

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25. At the service of Truth

Auroville should be at the service of Truth, beyond all social, political and religious convictions.

Auroville is the effort towards peace, in sincerity and Truth.

20 September 1966

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 191)

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26. World peace, friendship, fraternity, unity

Auroville is an attempt towards world peace, friendship, fraternity, unity.

20 September 1966

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 191)

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27. Good will and love

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

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

16 December 1966

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 191)

* * *

28. At last a place...

Auroville: At last a place where one will be able to think only of the future.

January 1967

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 192)

* * *

29. Hastening towards a future...

(Message to be carved in stone and placed in or beside a lotus pond at Promesse.)

Auroville is the shelter built for all those who want to hasten towards a future of Knowledge, Peace and Unity.

16 March 1967

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 192)

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30. Conditions for living in Auroville

From the psychological point of view, the required conditions are:

(1) To be convinced of the essential unity of mankind and to have the will to collaborate for the material realisation of that unity;

(2) To have the will to collaborate in all that furthers future realisations.

The material conditions will be worked out as the realisation proceeds.

19 June 1967

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 192)

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31. Planning for 1968

On 7 September 1967 I went to the Mother in the afternoon. She told me:

We are planning for 1968. We haven't decided who will lay the first stone, but it is very interesting to find who it will be.

(Huta: *The Spirit of Auroville*, p. 63)

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32. The power to prevent war

[Excerpt from a conversation:]

The nations have got hold of the means to destroy everything. And they try in complete falsehood and by means of falsehood to avoid war, and instead of avoiding it, they attract it, of course; all this attracts it. So when I saw this it was suddenly shown to me:

That is why there is Auroville. Auroville is the effort towards peace in sincerity and Truth.

It became clear like that. This as almost the sole and last hope of avoiding the catastrophe. This is the importance of Auroville. If Auroville is successful, that is to say, if nations consent to understand that it is a means of avoiding war, Auroville will have the power to prevent war.

20. 9. 1966

(*Gazette Aurovillienne*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, p. 13)

* * *

33. That is why Auroville

I had a revelation, in the sense that it was more of the order of a vision.

For external reasons, I was looking at the sorry state in which all countries find themselves, the truly painful and dangerous conditions of the earth, and there was a sort of all-embracing vision showing how nations (men taken as nations) have acted and are increasingly acting in a growing Falsehood, and how they have used all their creative power to create such formidable means of destruction, with, at the back of their minds, the really childish notion that the destruction would be so terrible that no one would want to use them. But they don't know (they ought to know, but they

don't) that things have a consciousness and a force of manifestation, and that all those means of destruction are pressing to be used; and even though men may not want to use them, a force stronger than they will be pushing them to do so.

Then, seeing all this, the imminence of the catastrophe, there was a sort of call or aspiration to bring down something that could at least neutralise that error. And it came, an answer ... I can't say I heard it with my ears, but it was so clear, so strong and precise that it was indisputable. I am obliged to translate it into words; if I translate it into words, I may say something like this: "That's why you have created Auroville."

And with the clear vision that Auroville was a centre of force and creation, with ...(how can I explain?) a seed of truth, and that if it could sprout and develop, the very movement of its growth would be a reaction against the catastrophic consequences of the error of armament.

I found this very interesting because this birth of Auroville wasn't preceded by any thought; as always, it was simply a Force acting, like a sort of absolute manifesting, and it was so strong that I could have told people, "Even if you don't believe in it, even if all circumstances appear to be quite unfavourable, *I know that Auroville will be*. It may be in a hundred years, it may be in a thousand years, I don't know, but Auroville will be, because it has been decreed." So it was decreed—and done quite simply, like that, in obedience to a Command, without any thought. And when I was told that (I say, "I was told," but you understand what I mean), when I was told that, it was to tell me, "Here is why you have made Auroville; you are unaware of it, but that's why..." Because it was the *last hope* to react against the imminent catastrophe. If some interest is awakened in all countries for this creation, little by little it will have the power to react against the error they have committed.

I found this very interesting, because I had never thought about it.

And naturally, when I was shown that, I understood; I perceived how the creation of Auroville has an action in the invisible, and what action. It's not a material, outward action: it's an action in the invisible. And since then, I have been trying to make countries understand it, of course not outwardly because they all think they're much too clever to be taught anything, but inwardly, in the invisible.

It's fairly recent, it dates from two or three days ago. I had never been told this. It was said very clearly—"said", I mean seen, shown like this [*gesture of a scene offered to the sight*]. So my interest in Auroville has considerably increased since then. Because I have understood that it isn't just a creation of idealism, but quite a practical phenomenon, in the hope ... in the will, rather, to thwart and counterbalance the effects—the frightful effects—of the psychological error of believing that fear can save you from a danger! Fear attracts the danger much more than it saves you from it. And all these countries, all these governments commit blunder upon blunder because of that fear of the catastrophe.

All this is simply to tell you that if nations collaborate in the work of Auroville, even to a very modest extent, it will do them good—it can do them a lot of good, a

good that can be out of proportion to the appearance of their actions.

You speak of the imminence of a catastrophe, but still Auroville will take some time to be realised?

No! I am speaking of the countries' collaboration in *creating* something. It's not when Auroville has been completed: it's the nations' collaboration in creating something—but creating something founded on the Truth instead of a rivalry in Falsehood's creation. It's not when Auroville is ready—when Auroville is ready, it will be one town among all other towns and it's only its own capacity of truth that will have power, but that ... remains to be seen.

No, the point is a combined interest in building something founded on the Truth. They have had a combined interest (combined without any mutual liking, of course) in creating a power of destruction built on Falsehood; well, Auroville means diverting a little of that force (the quantity is minor, but the quality is superior). It's truly a hope—it's founded on a hope—of doing something that can be the beginning of a harmony.

No, it's *right now*, right now. The force of propagation is far greater, it's out of proportion to the transmitting centre, which, on a world scale, is so to say unknown and almost nonexistent. But the centre, the power of radiation and propagation is out of proportion, it's rather remarkable: the response is everywhere, everywhere; a response from new Africa, a response in France, a response in Russia, a response in America, a response in Canada, and a response in numerous countries, in Italy ... everywhere, everywhere. And not just individuals: groups, tendencies, movements, even in governments.

What's proving to be the most refractory (and the irony of it is wonderful) is ... the United Nations! Those people are outdated, oh! ... They haven't yet gone beyond the "materialistic, anti-religious movement", and they made a derogatory remark about the Auroville brochure, saying it was "mystic", with "religious" tendency. The irony is lovely!

...

(*silence*)

But I was the first to be very interested, because it came like that [*gesture of irresistible descent*], with all-powerful authority: "That's why Auroville has been created."

(*Mother goes into a contemplation, then resumes*)

I see all kinds of very amusing things pass by; just now, this reflection: "Ah, it's a Tower of Babel in reverse." [*Mother laughs*] That's interesting! They united and

divided in the construction, so now, they come together to unite in the construction. That's it: a Tower of Babel ... in reverse!

(Mother stops for an instant, as if she saw something)

One suddenly sees... It's a certain region, there, a region in the earth atmosphere, vast and imperishable, where things take on a new importance, which sometimes belies appearances, and one sees a sort of great, immense current carrying circumstances and events along towards a goal ... always the same goal, and through very unexpected paths. It becomes very vast, and despite the horror of details, as a whole it takes on a very smiling Rhythm....

Now I know, I remember, this whole experience came after I saw a book that was published quite recently in India, in English, which they entitled *The Roll of Honour*, and in which there is a photo and a short biography of all those who died in the fight against the British, for India's freedom. There were photos everywhere, lots of them (some were only photos the police took after they had just been killed and were lying on the ground). And it all brought a certain atmosphere: the atmosphere of those disinterested goodwilled people who meet with a tragic fate. It had the same impression on me as the horrors of the Germans during the war over there. These things are obviously under the direct influence of certain adverse forces, but we know that the adverse forces are, so to say, permitted to work—through the sense of horror, in fact—in order to hasten the awakening of consciousness. So then, that experience, which was very strong and was very like the one I had when I saw the photographs of German atrocities in France, put me in contact with the vision of the human, terrestrial, modern error (it's modern: it began these last one thousand years and has become more and more acute in the last hundred years), with the aspiration to counterbalance that: How to do it? ... What is to be done? ...And the answer: "That's why you have created Auroville."

There is a perception of forces—the forces that act directly in events, material events, which are ... illusory and deceptive. For instance, the man who fought for his country's freedom, who has just been assassinated because he is a rebel, and who looks defeated, lying there on the edge of the road—he is the real victor. That's how it is, it clearly shows the kind of relationship between the truth and the expression. Then, if you enter the consciousness in which you perceive the play of forces and see the world in that light, it's very interesting. And that's how, when I was in that state, I was told, clearly shown (it's inexpressible because it isn't with words, but these are facts): "That's why you have created Auroville...."

(Conversation of 21 September 1966)

* * *

34. *The Unesco resolution*

Unesco passed three unanimous resolutions inviting participation and support to Auroville.

The first resolution was presented in 1966 on behalf of India by Mr. Poushpa Dass who interestingly hailed from a place near Pondicherry.

While introducing this resolution, Mr. Poushpa Dass said:

A little more than 50 years ago, Aurobindo, a young and ardent partisan in the struggle for the liberation of India, moved by the Grace while in the prison of Calcutta where he was interned, came to take refuge in the South, at Pondicherry, then a French territory. There he took the decision to give up all political activities so as to consecrate himself to a life of concentration and meditation. Very soon disciples came to join him and thus was created one of those astonishing spiritual communities known in India as 'Ashrams'. There, Sri Aurobindo lived, meditating and writing. There reigned around him, by his subtle influence, an atmosphere of deep faith and peace of heart. From all parts of the world people came in search of 'that knowing which we know all the rest', and where one single look of the Master changed the entire life.

From 1926, Sri Aurobindo who had retired from active life to enter into the silence of the sages, confided the direction of the Ashram to [...] a French lady who thus became the Mother of the Ashram. Since 1950, when the Master left his body, the Mother animates this astonishing collectivity where 'the multifarious play of life' goes on alongside the most implacable renunciations, where people, carrying in their secret heart the nostalgia of that immutable serenity which shines on the faces of sages and happy souls, mingle in the atmosphere of intense work and joy.

They are 1200, coming from all the corners of the world: engineers, architects, foremen, doctors, advocates, accountants, teachers, artists, agriculturists, and simple folk—all of them exercise the same productive activity for the good of the community that they have joined, in the same way as they would for their own good in their ordinary social life. Thus they form a vast industrial and commercial collectivity with its stadium, swimming pool, hospital, playground, school, cinema, foundries, its workshops for mechanical constructions and prefabricated concrete, its press, automobile workshop, bank, stores, dairy farms and poultry farms, etc.

Now this extraordinary institution, unique in the world, by its natural progression, seeks on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of our organisation and in harmony with its aims and principles, to enlarge its action and to radiate still further. It wants to regroup, in a vaster centre, a real town where people of the entire world will be ready to live according to the ideal of Sri Aurobindo's thought. It will be a town of beauty, of culture, of research, where each one will be able to live in harmony and freedom.

‘Auroville’, for that will be its name, will stretch some kilometres from the north of Pondicherry. It will be on the Coromandel Coast, facing the Bay of Bengal, a vast territory covering 20 sq. kilometres, offering, by virtue of its geography, an infinite variety of possibilities for housing. An area of great natural beauty will be preserved intact all around the city. At the centre of the town there will be the Park of Unity, a circle of gardens overhanging a lake.

All this, you will say is a mental construction, a dream. Perhaps. But does it not awaken an echo in the greatest depth of our soul? Don’t we find there again that marvellous world of our hopes of long ago, the kingdom glimpsed and then lost, the castle where the beautiful princess sleeps, expecting the look of him who will awaken her? Don’t we all carry in some part of our secret heart, the nostalgia of that immutable serenity, of that pure light, of that indefinable joy which radiates on the face of those happy beings and sages, of that smile which illumines the face of the Buddha?

Since those who live at Sri Aurobindo Ashram approach a certain perfection and marvellous plenitude, why should Auroville be different? For, in fact, the will to live, ‘the aspiration for happiness’ and the desire of an incessantly renewed quest translated by the great questions ‘Why am I here? Where am I going? Do I have an aim? What is the meaning of my life? What is my own position considering the fact that I exist and I live?’ are the only references which will ever be demanded for entry into Auroville and the only baggage truly necessary to sojourn there. All the rest will be given including the spirit of sacrifice, faith, hope and love.

That is why the Government of India wish that the General Conference, acting in conformity with the aims of our organisation, whose ideals we solemnly reaffirm on this 20th Anniversary, give to this unique and exceptional project in some respect unprecedented, its moral support and its confidence.

The General Conference of Unesco, unanimously passed the following resolution in November 1966:

The General Conference.

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

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

Appreciating that one of the aims of ‘Auroville’ will be to bring together in

close juxtaposition the values of different civilisations and cultures,

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

(*A Glimpse of the Mother's Love and Action*, pp.132-37)

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35. *The first talk*

This is perhaps the very first talk on Auroville delivered over All India Radio on November 11, 1967. It was given by Navajata, General Secretary and Treasurer of Sri Aurobindo Society. It is of special significance because the entire talk was first read out to the Mother and approved by her.

The main aim of Sri Aurobindo Society which has sponsored the project of Auroville is to work for 'the advent of a progressive universal harmony'. Auroville is being established to give a concrete shape to this ideal. Introducing the project, the Mother, President of the Society, declared:

Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities.

The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.

It proposes to realise this unity in diversity and not in uniformity. It will bring together those who believe in progressive universal harmony and want to work for it. In fact, "the first condition for living in Auroville is to be convinced of the essential unity of mankind and the will to collaborate in the material realisation of that unity." Named after Sri Aurobindo, Auroville literally means the 'City of Dawn'.

Provision is made for 50,000 residents in the main town, 20,000 in the model villages in its green belt, and 30,000 in its subsidiary projects like World Trade Centre, etc.

The site selected covers areas both in Pondicherry and in Madras States, and provides a beautiful panoramic view with the sea on the east and a number of lakes on the west and north, with the centre of the town on a high level land.

Architects and engineers from different countries have volunteered their service free. Mr. Roger Anger of France is the Chief Architect.

The town is divided into four zones: Residential, Cultural, International and Industrial. Nothing necessary for Life is forgotten.

The activities in the project cover a very wide range: industrial, agricultural, educational, artistic, and others. Each nation will participate in the projects in which it specialises. Each resident will be free to choose the work for which he has special aptitude, and will be given the necessary training for it.

The work in Auroville will not be a field which one is compelled to accept for earning one's livelihood but a joyful means whereby to express oneself while doing at the same time service to the whole group.

There will be no unemployment and no beggars. The township will provide for both field of work and the basic needs of all. Rules will be as few as are unavoidable. Guiding principles will help each person to develop self-discipline in freedom. Auroville will also participate in the design of integrated living programme of Unesco. There will be an integrated effort and a practical research towards creating conditions, where each individual can occupy the place for which he is best suited, develop himself to his highest possibilities, inner and outer, and give his maximum to mankind.

Permanent cultural pavilions for each country and also for each State of India are an important feature of Auroville activities. To give an example, the Japanese pavilion will have a Japanese garden, houses built in the Japanese style, a lake, a boat pier, a meditation house, rooms for the Tea ceremony, guest rooms, library, museum and an exhibition hall for Japanese handicrafts, works of art, etc. One will experience in this pavilion, the aesthetic sense and culture of Japan in a living manner. Thus each country and each State of India will plan its own pavilion.

Auroville will also have an International University, perhaps the first in the world, established specifically for world unity. In fact the whole of Auroville will be a living university.

An institute of integrated health sciences with a clinic will be another feature of Auroville. It will synthesise allopathic, ayurvedic, yunani, homeopathic, biochemic, naturopathic and other health knowledge in the light of actual experience and add new dimensions to human research. The patient will obviously receive the best care and treatment possible.

...

Regular conferences, seminars on different aspects of world welfare, youth camps and other similar activities will bring together those interested in a collective effort towards a new and better life.

A physical education department covering all games and sports, model agricultural villages revolutionising agricultural life by synthesising aptitudes of workers, suitability of land and technical assistance, for a better life and optimum production, a handloom village for the handloom weavers in the area, a model fisherman's village, a film studio with an artists' colony, a World Trade and Information Centre, industries, all with a changed outlook and consciousness, are some of the other highlights of the project which will help to usher in a new era in every aspect of life.

Here is the dream city of which you and I have dreamt as little children and hoped that someone someday will fulfil it.

And now it is on the way to fulfilment—the city of happiness, harmony and progress with no politics, no economic exploitation, no rich or poor, no employer or employee, but all sons of God.

On 28th February 1968, will be held the ceremony for laying the foundation stone of this unique town. On this occasion, people will come from all over the world, bringing love in their hearts and the soil of their country in their hands for placing it in the lotus of mosaic specially made for the purpose, as symbolic of their cooperation in this project which has been unanimously accepted by the General Assembly of Unesco.

Auroville invites all those who are dreaming of a better humanity and a better world to participate in this saga of world progress.

(A Glimpse of the Mother's Love and Action, pp. 138-42)

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36. Transparent sincerity

One must have an absolutely transparent sincerity. Lack of sincerity is the cause of the difficulties we meet at present. Insincerity is in all men. There are perhaps a hundred men on earth who are totally sincere. Man's very nature makes him insincere—it is very complicated, for he is constantly deceiving himself, hiding the truth from himself, making excuses for himself. Yoga is the way to become sincere in all parts of the being.

It is difficult to be sincere, but at least one can be mentally sincere; this is what can be demanded of Aurovilians. The force is there, present as never before; man's insincerity prevents it from descending, from being felt. The world lives in falsehood, all relations between men have until now been based on falsehood and deceit. Diplomatic relations between nations are based on falsehood. They claim to want peace, and meanwhile they are arming themselves. Only a transparent sincerity in man and among nations can usher in a transformed world.

Auroville is the first attempt in this experiment. A new world will be born; if men are willing to make an effort for transformation, to seek for sincerity, it is possible. From animal to man, thousands of years were needed; today, with his mind, man can will and hasten a transformation towards a man who shall be God.

This transformation by the help of the mind—by self-analysis—is a first step; afterwards, it is necessary to transform the vital impulses: that is much more difficult,

and especially to transform the physical. Every cell in our bodies must become conscious. This is the work I am doing here; it will enable the conquest of death. That is another story; that will be the humanity of the future, perhaps after hundreds of years, perhaps sooner. It will depend on men, on nations.

Auroville is the first step towards this goal.

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 268)

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37. Preparations for the Foundation Ceremony

[About the foundation ceremony of Auroville, Gilbert Gauché asked if the foundation stone could have the shape of a rocket, made by the Ashram children. Mother replied:]

The idea is good and will be perfected during the execution, which could be entrusted to Tanmaya's students, who are capable of a coordinated effort.

[About the shape:]

It would be better to let the children make their own suggestions.

[Regarding the invitation to the inauguration ceremony of 28 February 1968, Gilbert suggested this text:]

"The 650 children of the Ashram representing several nations invite you to the laying of the foundation stone of Auroville, the town dedicated to the youth of the world in order to establish peace and fraternity in the humanity of tomorrow."

[Mother changed the end of the sentence to read like this:]

...to establish a union of comprehensive harmony.

[She explained:]

It is all right; I have changed the terms of the invitation so as not to use words which have lost their force, because they have been used too often.

(Gazette Aurovillienne, Vol. VIII, No. 2, p.17)

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38. *A brochure*

...They wanted to make some kind of brochure on Auroville, to distribute to the press, people in the government, etc., on the 28th, and before that, there's a conference of all nations ("all nations" is an exaggeration, but anyway they say "all nations" in Delhi), in two or three days. And X is going there, and she wants to take papers on Auroville. They had prepared some texts—always lengthy, never-ending: speeches and more speeches. So I asked, I concentrated to know what should be said. And then all of a sudden Sri Aurobindo gave me a revelation. That was interesting. I concentrated to know the why, the how, etc., then all of a sudden Sri Aurobindo said...

[*Mother reads a note:*] India has become...

It was a vision of the thing that was translated into French words right away.

India has become the symbolic representation of all the difficulties of present-day humanity.

India will be the site of its resurrection, the resurrection of a higher and truer life.

And the clear vision: the same thing which in the history of the universe has made the earth the symbolic representation of the universe so as to be able to concentrate the work at one point, the same phenomenon is occurring now: India is the representation of all human difficulties on earth, and it is in India that there will be the... cure. And it is for that—it is *for that* that I have been made to create Auroville.

It came, it was so clear and tremendously powerful!

Then I wrote that. I didn't tell them how or why, but I told them: put that at the beginning of your paper, whatever it is; you can say anything you like, but this comes first.

(*silence*)

It was very interesting. It remained the whole time, for more than an hour, such a strong clear vision, as if everything were becoming clear all of a sudden. I have often asked myself the question (not "asked", but there was a straining to understand why it had become such a chaos here in India, with such sordid difficulties and all that like an accumulation), and everything became clear like that right away. It was really interesting. And then immediately it came: that's why you created Auroville. I didn't know it, you know, I was acting under pressure, and it was taking on greater and greater proportions (it's becoming really terrestrial), and I wondered why... For some time I used to think that it was the only real possibility of preventing a *war*, but

that seemed to me a slightly superficial explanation. And then all of a sudden it came: ah, that's it!

And so, since it contained all that power, I said, "Put that". We will see—they'll understand nothing, but it doesn't matter, it will act.

(A conversation of 3 February 1968)

* * *

39. Preparing the Charter

Ah, now let's get down to work. You know what we have to do?... Prepare the "Auroville Charter"! It will be put into the earth; when the soil from all the countries is thrown in, they will put a metal box with a parchment with this written on it. So it has to be written... I have a few little ideas.

And then there is the charter prepared by A and the charter prepared by B, you have to read them to me, we will see.

[Mother hands over A's charter]

Auroville Charter

1. Auroville is the first crucible of planetary man.

Ah! "Planetary", it sounds like one of B's disciples! B likes "planetary" very much.

2. Auroville offers itself for the discovery of the profound sources of the unity of man and the universe, of knowledge in joy and love.

I don't understand! It doesn't matter.

3. Everything in Auroville belongs to the whole earth and the members of Auroville are all the beings of the earth.

4. This day, Auroville is solemnly consecrated to serve for ever the union of heaven, earth and life.

Heaven? What heaven?

Here's the other one. *[Mother hands over B's charter]* It's more literary!

Dedication of Auroville

1. *We do solemnly found this city as the first seat of a planetary society...*

Ah!

...the society of tomorrow.

2. *We do solemnly consecrate this city as the constantly renewed synthesis of the latest conquests of science and the most ancient wisdom.*

3. *We do solemnly establish as the chief function of this city the preparation of each child towards his highest spiritual and planetary destiny...*

Aïe!

...so that this city may become the cradle of a new humanity.

Is that all? It's better, but that's not it.

Me, I didn't put any solemnities... I didn't write it down, because it's never mental, so it's not organised. [*Mother looks for some scattered little pieces of paper*] From the mental point of view, it has no value, it's not organised, but some things did come. In fragments, not in sequence [*Mother goes on sorting bits of paper*], I don't even know anymore what I said... it's not organised; I don't know what order I will put it in... Ah! [*Mother pulls out a piece of paper*]...

First there is a material point which A has attempted to say in an awkward way: that everyone is a citizen of Auroville. The truth is here (we're not going to put any solemnities, it's not necessary)...

[*Mother unrolls a large parchment on the ledge of the window, facing the Samadhi, then, ... she sets about recopying the charter, making comments all the while.*]

1. Auroville belongs to nobody in particular.

Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole...

There, that's the material fact. Auroville belongs... I didn't put "to no country" because India would be furious. I put "belongs to nobody"—"nobody" is a vague term which I put precisely so as not to put "to no human being" or "to no country". And I put "Auroville belongs to humanity *as a whole*", because it is the equivalent of nothing! Because we cannot come to an agreement all together, it's impossible! I did it on purpose.

And then, I don't speak of "citizens" or anything like that. I say:

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

They are all going to wince at "Divine", but I don't care! You know, it's the explanation of the Matrimandir at the centre. The Matrimandir represents the Divine Consciousness. All that is not said, but that is the way it is.

And then:

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

And then:

3. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries...

All discoveries, you know: philosophical, spiritual, moral, scientific, all—taking advantage of the past.

...of all discoveries from without and from within, it wants to boldly spring towards future realisations.

And finally there are two versions:

4. Auroville will be the site of the search for knowledge and ways of living which will lead to a human unity based on mutual understanding and goodwill.

On another piece of paper it's written:

To give a living embodiment of a concrete human Unity.

So we are going to change it a bit:

4. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity.

There.

...

It is not I who have written all that... I've noticed something very interesting: when that comes, it's imperative, there is no arguing; I write it, I am *compelled* to write it regardless of what I am doing. And then, when it's not there, it's not there!

Even if I try to remember, there's nothing, it's not there!... Consequently, it's obvious that it doesn't come from here: it comes from somewhere up there.

7 February 1968

(From a conversation with a disciple)

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40. A linguistic problem

I was not involved in Auroville, but one day the Mother said to me, "You know, there is a hitch about the opening ceremony of Auroville. All the communist countries led by Russia are refusing to participate because in the charter there is one line that says 'We accept to be servitors of the Divine Consciousness.' This concept they cannot accept." She asked me to go to Madras and speak to the Russian Consul-General.

I enquired, "Mother, why did you pick me?" She replied, "You just go, and don't ask why." I persisted, "Mother, I don't know what to say. How would I know what to say?" She said, "Yes, I know, that's why you are going. Don't think of what you are going to say. You just go and I'll put the words in your mouth." So I went.

I was really struck by the warmth with which the Consul-General welcomed me. He said, "Auroville is such a beautiful concept, such a beautiful idea, we like it very much, but this one line we cannot accept. This word 'Divine' to us means God and our philosophy says that there is no God. So we cannot accept because of that."

Now the Mother put words in my mouth and what I said was not my idea. I said, "All right, if you don't accept that let us see what you can accept. Do you accept the concept of progress?" He replied, "Certainly, certainly, our whole philosophy is based on progress." I said, "Oh, I'm very happy to know that. I know very little about your communist philosophy, but I am happy to know there is this idea of progress. But progress towards what?" He said, "Why do you have to progress towards anything? You can just go on progressing." I said, "What about the concept of progress towards perfection?" He exclaimed, "Ah! That is a very good idea. Progress towards perfection. Ah! That is wonderful. You have given us a new slogan for our party—Progress Towards Perfection." He was thrilled with the idea. I added, "Finally we come to an Ultimate Perfection. What do you say to that?" He frowned and said, "Now you are becoming a philosopher. Ultimate Perfection means nothing to me. Just nice sounding words. It doesn't mean anything, an empty phrase; it just sounds good without any meaning. What is Ultimate Perfection?" I replied, "Well, I don't know what it means and what it does not mean, but what I know is, we have other words like that—we

have ‘zero’, we have ‘infinity’—they also mean nothing and yet we have to accept them, especially in mathematics. You Russians are great mathematicians. If you remove zero or remove infinity, they will shoot you. You can’t do without that.” He said, “Ah! You have caught me nicely. It is a fact, you are right. Zero and infinity also mean nothing. All right, we accept Ultimate Perfection.” I said, “That is the Divine.” He asked, “Is that so?” I replied, “The Divine is the Ultimate of everything. If you take perfection, it is Ultimate Perfection. You can take it anyway, give it a name, it is the Divine. Why should you object?” He said, “Oh that puts quite a different picture on it. All right, we accept. We will come.”

The story has nothing to do with my wisdom. It was what came from the Mother. When I came back and reported what I said, the Mother told me, “Udar, you have done very well. You have said exactly what I wanted you to say.”

(Shyam Kumari: *More Vignettes*, pp.194-95)

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*The theme of the February issue is:
“Auroville— The Flowering”*

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[*Our thanks to Alan, Bindu, Gilles, Huta, Narad, Shyam Kumari...*]

The world will be made better only in proportion as we make ourselves better. The Vedantic truth that the world is only a projection—a function—of our consciousness is as pragmatically true as it is spiritually true. The ills that humanity suffers from—collectively and individually—stem from the errors that lie at the roots of our ignorant nature. We must be cleansed of these evils—individually first of all—if we ever hope to see a clean world outside. A yoga of self-purification is the condition precedent to a yoga of perfection.

But, in the end, a Higher Destiny leans over earth's children and its ways are beyond calculation.

16 August 1967

The Mother

(Words of the Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, pp. 297-98)

With Compliments from Well-wishers

So long as you do not have the power to change the world, it is useless to say that the world is wrong. And if you abolish in yourself the things that are wrong in the world, you will see that the world will no longer be wrong.

The Mother

(Words of the Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 298)

With Compliments from B.