

“Progress is the very heart of the significance of human life, for it means our evolution into greater and richer being; and these ages by insisting on it, by forcing us to recognize it as our aim and our necessity, by making impossible hereafter the attempt to subsist in the dullness or the gross beatitude of a stationary self-content, have done a priceless service to the earth-life and cleared the ways of heaven. Outward progress was the greater part of its aim and the inward is the more essential, but the inward too is not complete if the outward is left out of account. Even if the insistence of our progress fall for a time too exclusively on growth in one field, still all movement forward is helpful and must end by giving a greater force and a larger meaning to our need of growth in deeper and higher provinces of our being...”

Sri Aurobindo

The Supramental Manifestation

Centenary Edition
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This issue of PROGRESS includes services and projects that relate to research, education and ecology in Auroville. Unfortunately, due to the unforeseen quantity of material, Green work could not be included this time but will comprise the whole of the next issue which will appear in November. Afterwards, PROGRESS will be printed quarterly rather than monthly as originally intended. This decision was reached as a result of practical considerations such as printing and mailing costs and also the feeling that a comprehensive quarterly report would be more interesting and cohesive.

Our apologies to Fraternity for the errors in date in their section of the last issue. In the first sentence 1972 should read 1971; later on February 2, 1973, should read 1972; and the hopefully obvious typographical error later in the first paragraph should read 1973 instead of 1963.

Feedback received so far on the first issue has been appreciated, - more is welcome, pro and cons. If there are specific questions concerning any aspect of work in Auroville please let us know.

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SERVICES

Pour Tous

The Original inspirations for Pour Tous (For All) came from Clair, a young woman who had come to Auroville from the U.S. It was a very wide far-reaching idea in keeping with the Mother's wishes concerning the use of money and material goods in Auroville. The Mother envisioned an economic system based on contribution according to capacity, material support according to need and the evolution of consciousness necessary for this system to be effectively true. Inherent in such a system would be a movement away from the use of money as such within Auroville, - an ideal towards which we are achieved overnight as can be seen by following the development of Pour Tous.

When Pour Tous opened on February 28, 1974, one of the first functions was to establish a system to translate money coming into Auroville into material goods and to pay hired Tamil workers in goods rather than wages. This contact with the villagers determined the location of Pour Tous at the point where the community of Aspiration touches the village of Kuilpalayam. The effort to supersede wages did not eventually succeed. The Orientation then shifted to provision for Aurovilians on an individual account basis; Aurovilians would deposit a lump sum, either personal funds in the case of newcomers and visitors or "Prosperity" money from donations to Auroville which were at that time channeled through the Sri Aurobindo Society. Another function of Pour Tous from the beginning was the first emergence of what was later organized separately and called the "Free Store", a free exchange of goods of all kinds, new and used.

During this time the work of Pour Tous was mainly carried out by three people, Clair, Surabhi, another Aurovilian, and one paid worker. They were joined in February 1975 by Christine who still carries most of the responsibility for accounting, purchasing and distribution, and in July by Ramesh, a young Indian living in Pondicherry. Ramesh also joined Auroville about this same time and still does purchasing in the

market in Pondy. Meanwhile, Clair had to return to the U.S. but several other Aurovilians began to participate in the work. One idea that was successfully implemented for sometime was the incorporation of other services such as the bakery and laundry in Aspiration.

In January 1976 Auroville took its first step towards financial independence with the establishment of the Pour Tous Fund. Ironically, the Sri Aurobindo Society provided the catalyst for the establishment of this fund with a pledge for the continuation of a monthly sum to be paid directly to Pour Tous replacing the individual "Prosperity" allotments. In fact this monthly sum was stopped after the first month, an act which contributed to the deteriorating relations between Auroville and the society. Aurovilians began searching both within the community and abroad for some means of making up the deficit but the situation was further exacerbated a few months later in May when the Society froze the Pour Tous Fund bank account.

As activities surrounding Pour Tous grew to involve more people and work connected with other services, weekly meetings began taking place in the Pour Tous store. These meetings came to be known as Pour Tous Meetings and the name stuck even though they soon included many more people and began dealing with matters concerning all of Auroville.

When the crisis of the bank account occurred it was generally agreed that Auroville was faced with an opportunity to move towards a more collective system. Individual accounts were replaced with accounts by community and the old basis of direct exchange of money for goods was dropped in favour of a move towards the original concept of Pour Tous in which all money went into one general fund and was used according to the general need. This arrangement continued for quite a while with funds coming in equally from Aurovilians, Auroville production units and from abroad. Gradually, however, some of these sources of support, especially those within Auroville, ran into financial difficulties of their own and were unable to contribute fully. Though expenses were cut each month the deficit increased even more rapidly and debts mounted. The Pour Tous Fund group was enlarged in October 1977 with the addition of three people from different areas of Auroville and while this was of benefit in terms of better communication between Pour Tous and

the community as a whole the financial state continued to plunge. Finally it was seen that the direction could not be reversed within the existing system and the situation was put before a large gathering at the next Pour Tous meeting.

At this meeting it was decided that all borrowing should stop and an entirely new idea called the “envelope system” was discussed and adopted. The envelope system is basically a separation of expenses into categories such as food, maintenance, wages, Matrimandir, children, etc. with a special envelope called “unspecified” to act as insurance for any of the others. People contributing money, both in Auroville and abroad, are asked to specify the envelope or category to which they wish to give their support. Once a week representatives from each community meet to bring in funds received and to decide on the distribution of funds in each envelope. These meetings are primarily made up of the representatives and those involved in services but are open to everyone. With a few modifications the envelope system continues to function as it was originally established just one year ago this month. It has survived the financial crisis surrounding its inception, erased the debts, brought more Aurovilians into active participation and engendered a broader understanding of the overall financial situation. The reasons for the modest success that has been made are obviously not primarily financial but seem to lie more in human terms of trust, openness and participation. This is not to say that there have not been rough times and serious difficulties, some of which have passed and others which continue, or that the system as such enjoys total support among Aurovilians. There are still giant steps to be taken before we can arrive at the ideals outlined by the Mother regarding the right place of money and material goods in Auroville.

The financial stresses of the past few years are generally felt to have ultimately been of benefit in a number of ways. From an individual point of view it has been necessary to carefully examine and re-examine one's trust needs; from a collective point of view it has presented the challenge of using money as a tool from personal attachment and its association with power. It has also forced an acute awareness of the importance of Auroville's growth towards self-sufficiency. Almost every productive project in Auroville from handicrafts which produce saleable articles require outside assistance in order to begin but have usually

been relatively quick to stand on their own and need additional assistance only in specific instances. Other projects such as agriculture require more constant and long term support because the condition of the land demands considerable investment for initial regeneration and because organic farming methods generally take longer to establish and are more risky due to the present imbalance of nature. At least in the early phases the costs can be even higher than methods employing the use of chemicals, but the organic method is the way indicated by the Mother and is Auroville's direction. Long term support of agriculture and vegetable gardening will always be necessary because production will never exceed of the community, but eventually this support can come from projects involved in saleable goods. Non-productive services which deal with the basic necessities, or what the community generally agrees are basic necessities, as well as such projects as afforestation and Matrimandir, are dependent to the greatest extent on donations and on the support of the system and are therefore the vulnerable.

The emphasis on growing more food products in Auroville has given rise to two recent developments. One, which began about six months ago, is a special fund called "Growing Food in Auroville" and is dedicated to raising the capital necessary to initiate more food growing projects and to develop existing project on a larger or more intensive scale. Funds received are divided equally between grain crops and vegetable gardens. The second development is the very recent organization called the Food co-op. People involved in food production projects receive funds according to need (not according to production, though there is a minimum limit), and all produce is distributed through Pour Tous. The idea is to provide support in the initial stages when expenditure is especially high and to break the circle of having to spend money in the local market for food which can eventually be grown in Auroville. The Food co-op is being tried as an experiment, those involved meet regularly and results will be evaluated at the end of a year.

Being extensively concerned with food, Pour Tous is as hopeful as the Bakery about the possibility of utilizing the old Takshanalaya building in Revelation. Christine and Larry and those who work with them are acutely aware of the necessity for improvement, especially of the Bakery, with regard to hygiene and efficiency. The combination of all food handling and processing in an adequate space with all necessary

equipment at hand would mean a considerable saving of money and energy. The idea already seems to have generated interest, new ideas and a willingness on the part of more people to participate in some way. An estimated 60,000 rupees is needed to adapt the building to this purpose, to construct storage space, an oven and other necessary facilities.

The Bakery

Traditional Indian cooking includes several delicious types of flat unleavened breads including the whole wheat chapatti, but the yeast breads are invariably white and as tasteless and unnutritious as their western counterparts. Many years ago in the Ashram the Mother installed a bakery and personally gave the recipe for whole wheat bread. In the early days of Auroville bread from the Ashram bakery was brought out daily by bus, but as Auroville grew this arrangement became impractical. In June 1975, Larry and Sundaranaicken, an American and a Tamil Aurovilian, built the first wood oven in Kottakarai to bake bread for their community and a few neighbors. The original requirement of 15-20 loaves three times a week gradually grew to include buns for Matrimandir workers, cakes for birthdays, cookies and about 80 loaves of both yeast and sour dough bread at each baking. During this period the bakery was supported partly by sales of bread in Pondicherry and nearby villages.

In February 1977 the work moved into a new building (again of temporary construction) and a collaboration with Pour Tous provided necessary supplies through the general fund. A few months later in August, with the discontinuation of the bakery in Aspiration, the Kottakarai bakery began supplying all of Auroville, around 1000 loaves per week. Though there were a number of visitors and other part-time helpers, the bulk of the work was carried out by Larry and Sundaranaicken assisted by three paid helpers, two young boys and a woman.

Just over a year ago experiments in the making of tofu (soybean curd) resulted from the simultaneous arrival of a small donation and a visitor who had learned about tofu making in Taiwan. Supply of small quantities to several communities began slowly but demand soon

exceeded supply until a donation of a large quantity of soybeans near the end of the year made it possible to produce enough for everyone. Tofu has now become as much a staple food as the bread, is a major source of protein and has inspired many imaginative recipes.

At this time the existing facilities are barely able to support production, with hygiene a major problem due to the deteriorating conditions of the building. In August the situation was discussed at one of the general meetings with the resulting proposal for a shift to the old Takshanalaya building formerly used as a carpentry workshop. This building seems ideal as it is in an accessible central location, is constructed of permanent materials and has the necessary electrical supply for milling machinery. The idea has received enthusiastic community support and a number of volunteers but so far the plan has not been effectuated for lack of funds.

With the possibility of adequate space many ideas have come for other types of food processing such as drying, pickling and preserving, milling of our own grains, and for other uses of soybeans such as soy sauce and miso which require fermentation. The building is large enough to additionally house the food distribution functions of Pour Tous.

Toujours Mieux

Toujours Mieux started somewhat unusually with the arrival in late 1969 of a caravan from France bringing tools and machinery and Vincenzo, whose idea it was to set up a mechanical workshop in Auroville. At first it was a workshop in name only, for due to a lack of facilities work had to be carried on out of doors. They were soon able to move into a small keet and bamboo structure, then later into a somewhat larger one. The type of work undertaken in these early days varied from auto repair to manufacture of metal parts for the construction of huts in Aspiration, carpentry and electrical work.

In March 1972 a fire in the night destroyed all, -- except for a few hand tools and the will to continue. After the fire Vincenzo and Jean, who had joined Toujours Mieux in 1971 primarily to do book keeping, took up the work again and with the help of a bank loan were able to purchase new equipment. They were also able to design and construct a new workshop, an experimental dome with a steel framework and translucent polyester panels.

Even while construction was proceeding work began on the development of a leather buffing machine that was miraculously completed in just three weeks, in time to be exhibited in Madras at the annual (1974) International Leather Fair. The response was equally miraculous, -- 125 orders were received. To facilitate construction of the machines and leave themselves free to concentrate on designing, the work of building the machines was given under license to an Indian company. This eventually proved to be a costly mistake as the company's dealings were extremely unethical and they were turning out faulty machines. During this year Toujours Mieux worked with Auro electronics on a prototype leather measuring machine which was shown at the 1975 Leather Fair. The measuring machine was an obvious success but the reluctance of customers to place orders gave the first indication that something was wrong. When they realized that the source of the problem was the low quality machinery being sold by the Indian company in the name of Toujours Mieux they spent the next year breaking their contract, following up complaints and recalling all faulty machines for repair or replacement. After a year of refinement the machines for buffing and measuring were shown again at the 1976 Fair, winning first prize and restoring their reputation. Orders came in and confidence grew but could not offset the financial difficulties caused by the earlier setback in connection with the Indian company and by the production of too many design prototypes in a short time. This strain coupled with internal problems caused a split with Auroelectronics and a time of introspection for Toujours Mieux.

Meanwhile it had become necessary for Vincenzo to leave Auroville and Toujours Mieux was mainly in Jean's hands. He was basically satisfied with post achievement in terms of technical development but felt he had to seriously question the purpose of the workshop. The outcome was a

complete change of direction away from efforts to make money and towards providing service for Auroville with an absolute dedication to perfection in the work.

After about six months of working alone Jean was joined by Serge who had considerable mechanical experience in France. At first they had to charge for work based on local prices in order to bring the workshop out of debt, but this was gradually modified until at present the arrangement is completely impersonal and functions entirely through the envelopes. Projects or individuals are informed of the cost of labour, (everyone is asked to provide whatever materials are necessary), and all payment goes to the envelope.

Since the “rebirth” of Toujours Mieux work has included repairing and building bullock carts, wheelbarrows and similar transport equipment, preparing shuttering for cementing the inner chamber of Matrimandir, designing and building water tanks and such unusual items as a dough – mixer for the bakery, a shearing machine for incense sticks and molds for making candles. One day someone asked them to build a windmill. This took a long time, involved considerable study and was the catalyst that sparked interest in developing alternate energy systems. The workshop is offered for use by anyone interested in building alternate energy equipment and for any other kind of mechanical work. There are some supplies available and communities having extra usable materials are invited to bring them to Toujours Mieux to be available for others, -- a sort of mechanical free store. Jean Offers to share whatever experience and knowledge he has including what is being learned at Djaima, Rajamani, a young Tamil Aurovilian who has been with Toujours Mieux since he was a boy, is in the workshop. Rajamani has become expert in all aspects of mechanics and in fact, according to Jean, is the one really in charge, -- Jean is only a “consultant”.

Abri Mechanical Workshop

The history of Arbi actually goes back as far as 1971 when Pieter, a young man from Holland, took over responsibility for the tractor

service. His idea was to provide maintenance for vehicles such as lorry, bus and several vans that were then operating in Auroville. A centralized location was chosen for a garage and the main building constructed with funds from the German FAO. Upon completion in December 1972, Mother gave the name Abri, meaning "Shelter".

In the years that followed Abri gradually passed through several phases, becoming for sometime a training center and labor pool for Tamil workers, especially for construction skills and mechanics, which necessitated expansion of the building. Later on, as emphasis on the construction and training aspect diminished, the mechanical side developed into a workshop for repair and servicing of vehicles of all kinds also continued, especially of one young Tamil man, Mani, who by now has probably repaired just about everything in Auroville!

When Jack left for the States about two years ago Pieter returned, having worked elsewhere in Auroville during Abri's "Construction period" and together with Mani took up the vitally necessary work of repair and maintenance of Auroville's pumps and water supply systems with a secondary emphasis on vehicles. Unfortunately, repair has so far taken precedence over maintenance for several reasons. Partly, many pumps were not in good condition due to the previous lack of regular servicing, but mainly there haven't been sufficient funds for parts and additional experienced help to break the cycle of costly and time-consuming breakdowns which result from lack of regular servicing (which in turn cannot be done because funds and time are going into repairs). At present Abri is supported by direct payment at cost for parts and labor, when possible through the individual or project concerned, otherwise through the envelopes.

One of Pieter's dreams is to have a bullock cart equipped as a travelling workshop complete with tripod for lifting. At present he and Mani travel to pump sites by motorcycle, (averaging around 300 kms. Per week just within Auroville!), carrying heavy tools and parts with them, often having to make several trips back to Abri for additional equipment.

Even if everything was running smoothly, however, Pieter is under no illusion that all his problems would be solved, --- in Auroville nothing is

predictable, not even machines. He sees the real challenge as being aware at each moment of every detail of the work.

Abri Electrical Workshop

The first workshop in Auroville specifically for electricity was set up at Matrimandir in 1973 and was originally intended only for service to the construction site. It was originally intended only for service to the construction site. It was organized by Toine who had studied electrical engineering in Holland, and he began by training several young Tamil men in basic electrical technology while he himself studied local Indian regulations. Electricity in rural areas of India still something of a "luxury", not in any sense the taken-for-granted commodity to which one is accustomed in the technically affluent est. Since in these areas there is usually a lack of qualified electricians, much of the early installations in Auroville was not of high standard. Breakdowns were (and still are) a common occurrence and Tonie soon found his services in great demand in all over Auroville. He and his helpers began the slow process of improving the existing connections in one area or community at a time, a work which was later aided by a donation from Holland. This improvement is still going on, the community of Aspiration was completed in August of this year and work is now in progress at the Matrimandir Nursery.

In 1976 part of the electrical workshop moved from Matrimandir to Abri; the final move, except for equipment necessary for Matrimandir construction, came in August 1978. At Abri the electrical workshop occupies an office and two storerooms, sharing the building with the mechanical workshop. In the more convenient space it has been possible to do additional training of local people, several of whom have become sufficiently qualified to work as electricians in their own villages maintain and repairing connections, especially pumpsets. A few of the trainees have remained at Abri, -- there are now six paid helpers, all having come as unskilled laborers, -- but much of the work still falls to Tonie and Dakshinamurti, a Tamil Aurovilian. To keep pace with Auroville's growth two more qualified electricians needed, but they are difficult to find and command high salaries.

At present the electrical workshop operates on a financial basis similar to the mechanical workshop. But the financial bind which touches all Auroville's services also prevents the ideal form being achieved in terms of preventive maintenance and a more rapid upgrading of electrical materials and equipment.

Still, there has been time for invention.... In an effort to introduce more modern techniques and equipment, Tonie has designed a simple compact panelboard for pumpsets that is now being tried out in Auroville. This device prevents overloading of the motor and has already received much attention and praise from the local electrical authorities. The electrical service has also contributed towards the improvement of the fuse-protection systems on the distribution transformers used by the electrical Board. This improved design is now adopted widely and has improved reliability of electrical supply.

Multi-purpose Health Center

Until recently the medical facility actually located in Auroville was the Health Center near Aspiration. The original intention of this center was to provide health care to all residents of Auroville and to aid integration of Tamil Aurovilians but it has gradually come to serve mainly the Tamil community and villagers. The only other clinic is a small one in the village of Kottakarai which, though aided and partly staffed by Aurovilians, also primarily serves the villagers.

Early in 1977 Dr. Kamala Tewari came to Auroville and began working at the Aspiration Health Center, with one morning a week at Kottakarai and one morning at Matrimandir. Though her training was in allopathic medicine, especially obstetrics and gynecology, she is knowledgeable in the field of homeopathy which she prefers. As she came into contact with more Aurovilians and developed a deeper understanding of their problems, nutritional needs and particularly their attitudes and feelings about health and medicine, an idea began to evolve for a "multi-purpose" health center.

The basic idea is to have a place (a room is presently being prepared in Certitude) where all kinds of health care can be offered such as homeopathy, acupuncture, polarity, Ayurveda, physio-therapy, nature care, etc. Anyone with experience and training in these techniques is welcome to use the center. A schedule will probably be arranged on a rotating basis so that someone would be on hand or on call at all times. As special importance is given to prevention, there will also be offered the possibility of self-help and active participation by Aurovilians as part of the growth towards increased consciousness of the body, of its particular needs, sensitivities and responses in the totality of the being. A library is being amassed of books and information pertaining to all kinds of medicine as well as nutrition and exercise. Dr. Tewari hopes that in the future special emphasis can be given to nutrition and child care, two aspects that she feels to be of particular importance in Auroville.

Maison d'Auroville

Tough located in Pondy, the new Maison d'Auroville is precisely what the name suggests, -- a house for Aurovillie. Initiated by Ramesh (who also does purchasing for Pour Tous), it opened on the 6th of January, 1979, with the aim of providing a place where Aurovilians can go for something cool to drink, a wholesome but inexpensive meal, or just to relax for an hour or two in the heat of the day. A variety of hot and cold drinks are offered and the vegetarian food is simple but varied, delicious and thoughtfully prepared. The atmosphere is relaxed, the décor is quietly pleasing, the kitchen is clean, and everybody wonders how we did without it before !

Open only to Aurovilians and their guests, Maison servers an average of 50 people per day between 7:30 am and 8:00 pm. At present all food purchasing, preparation and service is carried out by Ramesh, four paid workers and several helpful volunteers.

Plans for the future involve opening a house with similar arrangement where Aurovilians could stay overnight or for short periods, -- a welcome idea.

RESEARCH and EDUCATION

Djaima

Djaima, one of the newest communities in Auroville, is the first ecological experimental farm devoted to research and applications in the alternative energy. In April 1978 twelve people, three with engineering and one with scientific backgrounds), took up 17 acres of eroded ecologically devastated land to see how they could work towards this ideal which was described by the Mother:

“We are told that in a few billions of years,
earth will have become a kind of moon. The
movement must be the opposite, earth must become more
and more like a resplendent sun, but a sun of life.
Not a sun which burns: a sun which illumines – a
radiating glory.”

(Agenda, October 4, 1958)

The first year with its unprecedented sand storms and then torrential record-breaking rains provided a vivid sample of forces of nature which they had set out to turn to the advantage of the land. But it was all taken with a positive attitude and did not preclude the considerable progress they were able to achieve. The work that has been done so far is in some ways similar to that which is necessary to the establishment of any new community in Auroville, i.e. digging a well, installing pumps and water systems, fencing, planting of trees, construction of living space, -- but in Djaima it has all been done in a relatively short time and there are many aspects which pertain especially to the ecological experiment being made. These aspects include bunding for boundaries and erosion control, use of natural plant material for fencing, road repairs, a nursery for all types of plants from forest trees to vegetables, a bamboo grove for future use in construction in Auroville, orchards, vegetable gardens, grain cropping, poultry (on small scale), fish ponds, algae cultivation especially for poultry feed, construction in collaboration with Toujours Mieux of several tools