

PROGRESS

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Auroville Association
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"The opposition between spirituality and material life, the division between the two, has no sense for me, as in truth life and the spirit are one and it is in and by the physical work that the highest spirit must be manifest."

The Mother
The Mother on Auroville

For this issue on Greenwork, information on the many individual communities has, with a few exceptions, been submitted to 'Progress' by someone living and working in each area. In describing the details of their community something of the

personality and flavor is communicated and for this reason, what they have written has been kept more or less in the original form. In some cases the background information is somewhat brief and there are several communities that are only recently established; hopefully, a more complete picture will evolve with the quarterly reports. For greater clarity the communities are in order according to watersheds, starting with the north-east and continuing counterclockwise.

Questions and comments are welcome and may be addressed to:

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GREENWORK

In Auroville one ordinarily speaks of the "greenbelts" when referring to those communities whose main purpose and work is afforestation and are mainly located in the future geographical greenbelt that will surround the city. From the beginning, however, afforestation communities were also involved in agriculture, fruit culture and vegetable growing, either for their own use or for sharing with others through Pour Tous. More and more, as Auroville continues to move towards self-sufficiency, these communities are developing a stronger emphasis on food production – related activities, finding a harmonious balance in intermingling this with afforestation and the many-faceted work of conservation and regeneration of the land. For this reason, the word "greenwork" seems more accurately descriptive of these various efforts to restore and make productive the ecologically devastated area in which Auroville is located.

Though the people and place may differ widely in personality and approach to the work there are many areas of agreement that form a strong basis of harmony and collaboration . One predominant feeling among those in greenwork is that their *raison d'être* in Auroville is to grow towards the ideals of Auroville; what has brought them into this particular facet of the city's development is the vision of the land as the body of Auroville and the conviction that the body must be healthy in order for the spiritual development to progress freely. Almost no one came with past experience in forestry or farming and some feel that when the initial stages of intensive work are over, they will move on to other areas. Meanwhile, the attitude is one of stewardship, not ownership, where care and consciousness and effort have

the possibility of reversing the circumstances that have brought about the present state of imbalance and ill health in the land.

There are many secondary motivations and affinities as well. One of the most important is interaction through work with the villagers whose skills are mainly land-oriented. This presents a constant challenge but a unique opportunity also to develop mutual respect, trust, friendship, understanding and more. It is interesting that a few years ago the villagers' opinion of Aurovilians vis-à-vis the land was that if the land was lying fallow, it must belong to Auroville. Now the situation has changed and continues to change as more villagers show a willingness to collaborate in caring for the land. In addition, there is the idea of altering the weather conditions through afforestation; the psychological need for the beauty and protection of plant life; the concern for the roads that are destroyed by erosion or become an ordeal by fire in the heat of the day due to lack of shade trees; the basic need to improve the quality of life and physical health by introducing different varieties and methods of growing vegetables, fruits and grains; the concern for the literal loss of the land by water and wind erosion and depletion of soil building materials as a result of overgrazing of grass, shrubs and trees by village animals; or the interest in improving the agricultural methods of our Tamil neighbors, realizing that Auroville is integrally affected by the conditions that surround it. These are only the more prominent aspects of greenwork and they are not in reality separate or exclusive, but touch the life of everyone here. To the degree that different areas of land are afflicted more acutely with some of these problems than others, or that the community or individual develops an interest in a particular area, emphasis in the work varies from place to place.

As a whole, progress in greenwork during the past 9 years has been the result of first-hand study and experimentation for the simple reason that nothing like Auroville has ever been tried before--- the very basis of the work is something entirely new. Even in the physical sense reclamation of land under these specific conditions is not a common well-documented experience. As greenwork is not a fund generating project, progress has also tended to move ahead in spurts depending on the availability of funds. After the abrupt discontinuation on the availability of funds. After the abrupt discontinuation in 1975 of financial support channeled through the Sri Aurobindo Society, the financial burden was initially borne (on a bare subsistence level) by individuals in greenwork communities, gradually but sporadically aided more and more since that time by contributions from other Auroville projects, by help from the German FAO (Tamil Fund) which subsidizes work aiding rural development in Tamil nadu and by donations from friends in India and abroad who contribute directly to the Pour Tous Fund. The exception to this is work done on government land within Auroville, i.e. land adjacent to public roads, land eroded beyond agricultural use, reservoirs and catchment areas. In these places the work is determined in collaboration with representatives of the Indian Forest Department and part of the expenses are reimbursed by the government. Greenwork meetings are held regularly to discuss work of common interest, to decide priorities for available funds and to share

experience. Those involved in growing food meet regularly as well with others in the newly formed Food Co-op.

In the past few years, as responsibility for more land has been taken in hand, it has been possible to link up the various individual erosion control projects. In December of 1978 a special donation of Rs.8000 made possible the most extensive soil and water conservation project yet undertaken and for the first time people worked together on the land over the whole of Auroville. A network of water- retaining bunds was built beginning at the highest elevation around the Matrimandir and from other high points at Forecomers, spreading out in all directions with a team covering each watershed. Work was also begun in the area of Aspiration and Discipline. This project was basically successful because of its comprehensive and integrated approach and has been continued in the 1979 monsoon season with a series of donations totaling Rs.37, 000. This year efforts concentrate on repairing and strengthening what had been done before and extending the work over a larger area, beginning in places to include village land.

North – east

Fertile

Fertile began in true pioneer spirit in 1972 with a well drilled not far from some huge banyan trees, at the time unprotected and constantly attacked by villagers gathering leaves for their goats, branches for firewood, etc. A good pump was bought for the well, but with train strikes and other problems it took 8 months to come and when it finally arrived it was faulty and didn't work. Water for drinking and cooking and for the first trees was brought on a rented cattavandi (bullock cart) at the rate of Rs. 5 per barrel. The 1500 trees which had been planted in the monsoon in anticipation of the pump struggled to survive during the hot season and some 40% are still there against impossible odds. At the moment there are 25 acres of land fully reforested and many fruit trees and flowers in the area around the pump.

At first the settlers lived together around the pump site, but it soon became apparent that to protect the land it would be necessary to spread out. At the original site, called "7 Banyans" an Australian architect has lived with his family (Johnny, Jan, Jonas and Aurojina) doing many experiments in construction with native materials, including a Buckminster Fuller dome which was very beautiful but leaked in the rains; a big astrolubium later made into an algae tank but which is now a hyacinth pond with ducks and fish for the kids; and the first working methane gas tank in Auroville. He has trained a team of local roofers who now are expert enough to work independently putting up most of Auroville's innovative bamboo and keet (woven coconut leaves) structures. They do monsoon agriculture at Fertile and have a

vegetable garden which together with the fruit trees and milk cow make them almost self-sufficient several months a year.

Fertile Windmill

The first offshoot from Fertile was Fertile Windmill, begun by a lone Hungarian-Italian with a windmill set up by Abri workshop out of parts recovered from a collapsed government project. In this area there was literally not one blade of grass, not one tree apart from a few scraggly palmyras. Vijay was lucky enough to be joined by Perumal, an exceptional and humble villager who is now an Aurovilian, with his small family. Together they planted mangoes around the windmill, forest and cashew trees and a casuarina forest. Grants from government, Tamil Fund and personal fund raising paid for the work, especially that of surrounding the 25 acres with a thorn fence --- a project which has continued as a thorn nursery and supplied Auroville with 75,000 seedlings for living fences this year. Fields have been bunded for water conservation and a bullock-drawn water tank provides for trees too far from the windmill to be reached by pipes. An old cow served by a good bull has provided two excellent heifers and one of them is going to calve now. Fertile Windmill is now building a large water tank, considering installing a methane gas plant and is the home of Dee's successful leathercraft workshop (Bellaura Crafts; see issue No. 1 of progress), but the emphasis is on reforestation, water conservation and erosion control with a bit of monsoon agriculture on the side.

Dana

The second offshoot was another windmill right in the midst of a dense cashew-nut grove. This place, originally called "Fertile Etoile" is now called Dana and considered part of Revelation since Gerard moved there about 1 ½ years ago. Around the original trees and bunding work, Gerard has planted a good fence, added a diesel pump and started a papaya plantation. Last year the pruning of the cashew trees provided the bakery with much needed firewood while improving the trees.

Fertile East

Around 1974 Patrick and Heidi moved into the area of about 15 acres called Fertile East. Water supply, provided by the original diesel pump and an electric pump added 2 years ago, has generally determined the rate of development as their feeling is to expand slowly according to their ability to give good care to the plants. There is a wide variety of fruit trees which are interplanted during the monsoon with seasonal crops, and many flowering and forest trees. The most recent development is the new heifer just born to their beautiful Sindhi milk cow.

Three Banyans

About a year after Fertile (or 7 banyans) had begun, George moved to 3 Banyans which touches the palmyra pond. He has planted trees for shade, an orchard for several kinds of fruit and tries to live in an equilibrium with nature along with Barbara and Satyam.

Two Banyans

In 1973 George helped Jean, Colleen and their young daughter Auroasha to settle next to him at 2 Banyans, a six-acre tropical homestead based on 150 fruits and nut trees, a small dairy producing milk and heifers, a small vegetable garden for the family and a poultry of twelve birds in a portable chicken house. Twenty acres of land have been reforested with drought- resistant species that are now being interplanted with valuable timber species.

Wind energy research has produced the first Auroville- made windmill with cloth sails which has provided the homestead with water for two and a half years. In the search for alternative building materials, an egg-shaped dome made of sun-dried mud bricks was constructed and has been used for poultry for nearly two years. In the barn there is a rat-proof grain storage with a flat roof made of mud supported by split palmyra trunks.

Erosion control and conservation work include bunding of fields and gully plugs in the whole watershed area on Auroville, village and government land and the deepening and repair of the walls of the government catchment pond which collects rain water during the monsoon for village use in the dry season. Road repair and causeway construction provide access to Auroville and village land.

Aurogreen

Between the communities of 2 Banyans and Fertile, which are trying to establish a sound eco-systems through their approach to water conservation and afforestation, there is Aurogreen with its concentration on organic agriculture, water conservation and animal husbandry--- can in no way be separated from each other but are interrelated and create one whole unit.

Aurogreen was started in 1975 and a year – round irrigation system is working based on a deep bore well completed a little more than 2 years ago. There are cashews, extensive orchards of mangoes, lemons, coconuts, papayas and many other fruit trees maintained by this system. Along with the trees there are also 2 ½ acres of vegetable gardens, bananas and extensive plantations of green fodder grasses for the cows. Another area of about 3 acres is presently being prepared for irrigation and will be used for crops and pulses.

Now, in November, there is a herd of 28 animals plus some recently born heifers. The dairy products from 13 lactating milk cows are distributed throughout Auroville.

Composting is a vital part of Aurogreen's land improvement program. Twenty tons per month are presently produced, utilizing the manure and bedding from the dairy as well as crop waste and Gliricidia shreadings. It is hoped to increase this considerably in the future because heavy applications of compost are required to restore the land which is practically devoid of nutrients. Even more critical, the soil lacks organic material to maintain the biological process necessary to plant life and which creates the moisture – holding and anti- erosion capacities. The Gliricidia tree, through its extensive deep root system and capacity to add nitrogen to the soil, plays a very vital part in the process. Another leguminous tree, Leucaena, is being inter-planted in the mango orchard and will be an additional source of cattle feed as well as timber.

Aurogreen is an approach within Auroville to show possibilities of irrigated farming in the organic way and will hopefully also influence indigenous farming methods.

Samridhi

Samridhi, started 2 1/2 years ago, concentrates its work on afforestation, agriculture, bunding and the care of a cashew grove. The main task involves trees—collecting seeds from Auroville forests, from India and from other countries with similar climates. Trees from Samridhi's nursery are distributed amongst Aurovilians and villagers. About 5000 trees have been planted in the area which totals about 27 acres. Experiments have been made on some species which were not watered at all, had not been composted and which survived the dry seasons. In 1979 a second well was drilled and handpump installed.

“The growing process in Samridhi goes slowly and almost naturally—nature takes care of itself and us along with it. We would like to see Auroville as a forest to provide us with shade, building materials for houses, tools, musical instruments, toys, etc.”

The Meadow

A year and a half ago Daniel and Amalia and Sara took over The Meadow where a large cashew grove with a handpump already existed. The Meadow is about 12 acres, half of which is for afforestation, partly planted, and half for agriculture. Amalia also does handloom work.

Peter's Place

Peter came one year ago and settled on 3 acres of land towards the head of the catchment area between the Meadow and Matrimandir; he was later joined by Robbie and Erica. With a handpump for water, they have planted trees, a fruit orchard and a vegetable garden. In addition, bunding work has been done over a large section of the catchment area starting from the casuarinas around Matrimandir and working downwards. Robbie is building his house single-handed and then will start to work on a hydraulic windmill to replace the handpump. This year bunding is continuing and afforestation is in progress on land already bunded.

Michale's Place

In June of this year Michael moved onto six and a half acres of land located in the palmyra forest between 2 Banyans and Samridhi. Inheriting a handpump, a half-completed house and a number of young trees from a succession of three previous occupants, he is now planting hedges, windbreaks and fruit trees. Emphasis is on food production, erosion control and afforestation of the surrounding area. Dreams for the future include a windmill for supply.

Utilite

Eight years ago only 2 mango trees stood on the several acres of severely eroded land that the Mother named Utilite (she indicated that the name should be kept in French). Bordered on one side by a rapidly growing canyon, much of the early work concentrated on bunding and intensive plantation of fast-growing drought-resistant shrubs and vines to control erosion.

In many ways Utilite developed as a very intensive experiment. Always small both in area and population, growth was more in terms of concentration and refinement than in enlargement and spreading out. There is an awareness of the necessity of balance, especially in the ratio of village workers to Aurovilians and between the elements of beauty and practicality.

On the practical side, work is being done in animal husbandry, fruit, vegetable and crop farming, and in alternate solar and wind technology. Most impressive visually is neatness and organization of everything from the pumphouse to the flower-lined paths.

Utilite has always been a nearly self-sufficient community. It was started by Mali, who is still there, and he has been joined over the years for differing lengths of time by a constant flow of visitors and newcomers to Auroville. Utilite sees itself in part as a training ground with a conscious aspiration for beauty, harmony and perfection.

North-West

Revelation

Revelation was originally settled in 1973 by Paul (now at Charanalaya). Though originally interested in doing carpentry, he gradually became more involved in work on the land putting in about 6000 forest trees. Later on others came to live and work there—in 1979 the community consists of 4 adults and 2 children.

In the past 2 years a lot of energy has gone into erosion control on about 100 acres. This work includes a large dam that retains water and top soil from 3 separate canyons. An experimental poultry was started few months ago with about 40 hens. Plantations on the land includes totally about 19,000 forest trees, 50 fruit trees, 15,000 sisal plants (a thorny agave) and 5,000 thorny shrubs, (the last two used as fencing). The present water supply is insufficient for both work and domestic needs but the community is expecting the arrival of some funds to remedy the situation. Other plans include extension of the windbreaks and fencing, planting of more fruit trees, improvement of the community area and planting of 11 acres with casuarina for all dual purpose of erosion control and firewood for the bakery.

Discipline

The Discipline adventure started in the early 1974 with a group of 7 people who put in 2 open wells and did some preliminary landscaping and planting. An American couple built the only surviving structure, a unique house in the shape of a ring with a tree in the center. For a while there was a succession of short term occupants until February of 1976 when, by coincidence, Meike, Joster and Edsat arrived just as the previous people were ready to leave. The family moved into the ring house and discovered the pros and cons of the design—the cons being the misconstruction of the roof which provided the luxury of indoor running water during the monsoon.

When Joster arrived there were 2 1/2 acres being cared for in 2 separate plots, one plot with an open well and the other with a handpump. From that beginning, starting with the handpump-bucket method for watering the first trees, little by little a 4-year plan crystallized and the following work has been complete: extension of the protected area from 2 1/2 to 22 acres, development of the monsoon crop area to 3 acres, irrigated vegetables and crops to 2 1/2 acres fruit trees to 2 1/2 acres—all made possible by the installment of a diesel pump on the open well. In addition there has been the development of the irrigation system involving 2 pressure tanks, pipes, channels, bullocks, a bullock cart and water tank, construction of a cowhouse and storeroom, plantation of mango and coconut trees, and continuous erosion control and afforestation work on 22 acres joining the area with the neighbouring communities of Kottakarai, 9 Palms and Revelation. Further erosion control efforts will involve some difficult and delicate canyon areas.

Recently another open well was begun and completed to a depth of 6 1/2 meters. This will make possible the development of more acreage for irrigated crops in the dry season and for maintenance of fish ponds.

9 Palms

Late in 1973 Klaus and Ingrid (they now have 3 children) moved to an area near Discipline and with the winter monsoon began developing an area of about 6 acres by digging a well, bunding, planting trees, windbreaks, rice fields and putting in flower and vegetable gardens. From the beginning, except for some cement used in constructing the well, they have chosen to experiment with and rely solely on the locally available natural materials for every aspect of their life and work; in every respect they truly live “off the land”. In 1975, with help from funds generated through the Greenwork collective, they were able to develop an additional 10 acres, adding more acreage each year until they now care for about 40 acres. About 3 acre is devoted to monsoon rice crops, 3 acres to other local grains and 25 acres is mixed forest and fruit trees. The remaining 9 acres are badly eroded canyon areas which require considerable reclamation work. About a third has already been bunded and planted to retain soil and water. This year, as proof of the success of the previous bunding, the house is being flooded with all the conserved water and will have to be moved.

West

Existence and (New Name) (formerly Kaliland)

These two small Greenwork projects are located in garden-park areas at the outer edge of the Matrimandir Gardens. The emphasis of the work is land care and ecological regeneration; bunding, planting and protection tending toward integrated rural development with a “township” future.

Existence began in November of 1977 with intensive afforestation and protection of 2 acres of previously fallow land. It soon expanded to a little over 8 acres and was joined by another new area of about 7 acres now awaiting a new name. There have been about 400 forest and flowering trees, 6000 casuarinas and 40 fruit and nut trees planted. At present the trees are watered from 2 handpumps and a windmill is being worked on. Additional lands are now being conserved and planted.

Kottakarai

Kottakarai was founded in 1971 by a group of about 7 people, mostly American and Dutch, who had been living in the area where Bharat Nivas is being constructed. After moving to Kottakarai the first work was to dig a well and grow tree seedlings which were to be planted around Bharat Nivas. Later they were told that trees were not wanted there as they would spoil the view of the buildings, so they planted them around Kottakarai and thus got involved in afforestation.

The community has always supported a variety of activities; several crafts, the bakery, an ayurvedic village-dispensary, a library and pottery, to name a few. But

afforestation and agriculture, carried out mainly by Jaap, has always remained a focal point. This year the barn is being shifted to a new area, a bore well has just been completed and a causeway and road have been constructed. There are plans to convert the silkscreen workshop into a community kitchen and of course, erosion work continues, bunds made, trees planted....

At present Kottakarai looks like this: total area is approximately 60 acres of which 25 acres in agriculture land (red rice, varagu, kambu, ragi, grams, sesame), 12 acres are planted with casurina (for building and firewood for the bakery), 8 acres are young cashews, 5 acres are fruit trees, 2 1/2 acres is irrigated land and the rest is gardens and afforested area. There are 6 open wells, 1 bore well, 3 cistern wells for domestic purposes, 6 bullocks, 5 milk cows and heifers, 16 adults, 6 children and 20 Tamil Aurovilians.

Included in the Kottakarai area is Angiras' Garden where Pieter and Judy and their 3 children live and have an expanding orchard.

South-west

Aurodam

Aurodam is a young community that takes its name from the large (30 meters across) earth dam built across a deep canyon to the south-west of the Matrimandir. The dam was completed in August of 1978 and was the first stage of the continuing work of soil and water conservation in this severely eroded area. Since that time the community (now about 8 people) has planted many trees in the vicinity, introducing a number of water-tolerant plants around the catchment area behind the dam and completed some bunding but work has progressed slowly for lack of funds. A small area is devoted to agriculture but the most pressing work is conservation and it is hoped that much more bunding can be completed in the next year before the monsoon.

Charanalayam

Charanalayam is the most recently started community in Auroville. Begun in April of 1979 by Paul, who was previously at Revelation, it is located in an area that the Mother once considered for the center of the city and which may eventually become a forest reserve and botanic garden. The contours of the land offer interesting possibilities but at the moment such dreams require a vivid imagination as the area is seriously eroded, much is a desert where only a few thorny shrubs struggle to survive. The District Forest Officer has estimated that if steps are not taken soon the entire region will be totally uninhabitable.

Paul has so far planted more than 200 trees on about 5 acres, a tree nursery and erosion control work are underway. A second open well has been started to enable part of the land to be irrigated and Paul plans to begin some agriculture as well.

Auro-Orchard

In 1968 the Mother asked Gerard to come from Mountain Paradise, as Ashram orchard in the north, and take up the work of developing 50 acres that was one of the first pieces of land purchased for Auroville. He was joined by Mercier who had considerable background in agriculture to compliment Gerard's experience in fruit trees and working in India.

After the first few months the project had no financial support and when Gerard asked Mother how they should sell the produce and use the earning to develop further. But this did not solve the immediate problem of capital so Gerard then asked her if he should borrow some money. Her answer was very interesting and bears repeating. First she said, "Yes, it is all right. If you like I will speak to some people about helping you." Then she was silent for some time. When she looked up she said, "Do you want my true advice? Don't borrow money! You will see that if you work with concentration, sincerely and efficiently, you will always automatically have a little surplus. With this surplus you will be able to develop the place." Gerard said, " But Mother, it will take such a long time..." She answered, " Yes -- we are not in a hurry, if it takes time it is not important."

It has taken nearly 10 years to bring the 50 acres under cultivation. Two borewells were added to the existing one and a system combining channel irrigation and sprinklers covers about one third of the total area. The irrigated land is planted primarily in vegetables, lemons and some intensive crops, the remaining land is taken up with mango, cashew and casurina trees and seasonal agriculture. All of the land is bunded and broken into small plots intermixing crops with trees for better balance and for wind protection.

The original aim of both Gerard and Mercier (who left in 1974) was to develop an organic farm but though they tried many experiments they found they could not make it work. The reasons are primarily financial, having always been dependent on the sale of the produce, and the cost of organic fertilizers has increased prohibitively. Another factor is that for a farm of this size a tremendous quantity of organic matter is needed. Gerard feels that to purchase large amounts of compost from the surrounding villages contributes to a situation where the people, often ignorant of the value of the compost of their own crops, prefer to sell it. They then buy the government subsidized chemical fertilizers and pesticides (in India DDT is still used extensively) which are applied to land in the Auroville area. They are naturally carried by wind and water throughout the vicinity, a problem which increasingly concerns many people. In addition to farming a small herd of cows is kept as much for the manure as for the milk, and in 1976 a poultry was introduced, now with the maximum of 1200 birds.

At this stage of development Auro-Orchard has been able to give monthly Rs. 1000 to Rs. 1500 in produce to Auroville.

South

Forecomers

Forecomers is, as the name suggests, the first community founded in Auroville. Perhaps symbolically, the first settlers, Bob and Deborah, having pick of all Auroville land, chose one of the most inhospitable and eroded parts though also one of the most beautiful. Forecomers was then a cluster of mango trees and some cashews surrounded by rocky ground with no topsoil, burned by the sun and scored with deep canyons.

At first, transportation to and from Pondy for needed materials was by cycle over nearly impassable rocky and sandy roads. Slowly now people come to live in the community and help in the work, trees were planted, agriculture was begun and the first cultural events in Auroville took place at an open-air theater. One of the major undertakings was the constructions of large earth dam across a deepening canyon but the first one proved to be one of those “learning opportunities” when it went down with the first monsoon rains. Another “first” for Auroville was experimentation with algae for animal and human consumption.

In the first intervening years Bob and Deborah eventually left and there has been a succession of occupants in the Forecomers area which has grown from about 20 acres to about 100 acres. Hundreds of trees have been planted, a considerable proportion of land developed for crops, vegetables and flowers and extensive erosion control work has been done. In 1976 Obi arrived and has been a permanent presence ever since. Planting and conservation work has continued including the construction of another small dam and the area now under control totals about 150 acres. Just recently a vertical-axis windmill made of oil drums was erected. Five people now live and work in the community.

Pitchandikulam

From its inception in 1973 Pitchandikulam has been an experiment moving in a number of directions simultaneously. Located near a natural, monsoon-filled pond one of the continuing works has been water and erosion control. As with many greenwork communities the land is divided between farming, afforestation and living space with an emphasis on tree planting. One particular aspect of the work has been the development of close relationships with the Tamil villagers, encouraging imagination and creativity in their work and daily life. Another has been the experimental plantation of large areas with forest trees that were then left on their own except for protection. Early results show natural grasses beginning to return and some indigenous trees germinating naturally.

Sharnaga

Sharnga, the Sanskrit work for the bow of Krishna, began with the digging of the first well and fencing of the first areas to be developed during the summer of 1976. In February 1977 Bernard, Claude and their two children moved into a storeroom bringing with them from Auromodel the beginning of a dairy – ten milk cows. During this year trees were planted, (watered by bullock cart until the pump was installed and electricity connected), and construction was completed of their unique water-surrounded house.

Part of the work on the land has been afforestation and conservation. But as the aim has always been to develop the area into a farm, there has been much energy directed towards animal breeding, first of dairy cows in a mutually beneficial collaboration with the government artificial insemination program, and lately with horses. After the completion of the second well, ponds were dug as part of a fish breeding experiment. Though this has not been continued due to lack of necessary equipment the ponds attract many wild birds and Auroville children who enjoy fishing. Recently funds were received to develop a poultry for about 60 birds. Eggs, lemons and milk are regularly contributed to Pour Tous.

In addition to the Aurovillian family there are also 2 Tamil families living on the farm and sharing the work.

Aspiration Farm

The first development of this region as a farm was in 1975 when an American named Jim came to work near an old grove of large mango trees located by a deep canyon at the southern edge of Aspiration. Calling the area Mango Grove, he did some decorative planting and limited agriculture on nearby fields but concentrated mainly on algae culture experiments and research in areas such as composting.

When Jim left for the US in 1978 a team of people from Aspiration took charge of the 10 acres; 4 people live there now 3 others come over from Aspiration to work. The main 10 acres which is located along the canyon descending to the sea, is linked by a small bridge developed as a meadow. An irrigation system is being improved for the compound and should be operating by the end of this year. At present there is a jet pump, a centrifugal pump which delivers water from 4 open water tanks and 2 engines, one electric and one diesel.

The activities developed over the past year are: planting of windbreaks and hedges for beauty and protection, bunding and other conservation efforts to stabilize the canyons, cultivation of monsoon crops and cow grass, experimentation with adaptability of different vegetables, creation of a hen house with 62 hens and 7 cocks (producing 230 eggs per week) under natural conditions, maintenance and harvesting of mango, cashew and other fruit trees, care of ornamental trees and flowers, composting with an innovative 3-storey device and stocking of urine from 6 animals.

Plans for the future include: replacing the irrigated crop area (except for the cow grass) with an orchard, production of algae for animal consumption and establishment of a dairy both for milk production and for valuable manure.

Amba Garden

Amba Garden is another project that has its originating impulse Auroville's need to develop self-sufficiency. In April of 1978 Krishna Tewari, a retired Indian Army officer, took up an area of about 20 acres near Auromodel and began the work of soil and water conservation, afforestation and agriculture which includes cultivation of cereals, fruits and vegetables. The fruit and vegetable section has been quite productive in spite of the lack of adequate water. Application for a power connection, made nearly 16 months ago, is still to materialize though the bore well is all set to take the submersible pump. The fund situation has not permitted a diesel pump to be procured in the interval.

Nearly 200 coconut seedlings are ready to be put in soon. A fencing of barbed wire on granite stones is also being put up to enclose about 5 acres of land initially. Preparations were made during the summer for the planting of about 500 trees during the present monsoon. Continuation of the contour bunding and the construction of a dam on a canyon in the eastern corner of the garden are part of the soil and water conservation work. Future plans are for the addition of a dairy and poultry, hopefully before the end of the year.