

THE SADHANA OF THE GROUP-SOUL

**Towards a
SPIRITUAL SOCIOLOGY AND PLANNING**

**written for
The Auroville Planning Group
and
other interested persons
10 February 1972**

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INTRODUCTION

For the purpose of making a breakthrough in the evolutionary process, the wave of thinking we are accustomed to are certainly insufficient. If Auroville is going to make use of the sciences which have come of age in the more recent phase of man's development the strong urge is certainly to rethink the very sciences in all their dimensions. This cannot be done a priori, but only along with the processes which determine the coming of the next age. So, the process of spiritualising the sciences will probably run somewhat parallel to the new developments in human consciousness.

A spiritual sociology would have to start from two ends: the most cosmic and highest level, in order to break through the mental barriers that have been put up and to give form to new laws in accordance with a deeper truth of things; and on the low level of concrete. There is, however, a great danger that starting on the level of concrete is an impediment for a real breakthrough. We are so accustomed to think on a mental level that we may continue thinking in a quantitative, determinative and closed way for many centuries to come. The danger of starting at the cosmic and highest level is missing the link forever.

Questions as these can never be solved on the level we now live and think. We would have to rise considerably in consciousness already before being able to solve even the first questions of a spiritual sociology.

The way we choose to follow here is to begin where Auroville is supposed to be and try to derive from there some indications of what a new sociology will be like. We recognise some of the dangers in this approach. One of them is the time factor. It may take much longer to descend into matter of concrete problems. But that will only prove we have not yet transcended the polarity of the high and the low road.

This is a very first and incomplete report. Much more reading and reflecting upon the works of Sri Aurobindo and the words of the Mother is necessary, and also some small experiments on the basic level, before a new sociology can have an effect on planning for an evolutionary city. The concept of sociology will have to be collectively considered very carefully before we can make use of a sociology which will not do too much harm to what we are striving at. If it is not really a spiritual sociology it is both a waste of time and a barrier for the things that seek expression in Auroville. Next, the concept of planning will have to pass through a collective criticism for the same reasons. It may well be the outcome of the research that the concept itself is unfit for the things that are meant to embody themselves in Auroville.

Only then we can proceed by developing and suggesting ways to find and suggesting ways to find and use concrete data, those only which are relevant for such a new and spiritual science. All this might blossom out eventually in suggestions for the social living of a "race of the sons of god".

This introduction suggests the following parts as an outline for this report!

1. WHAT IS AUROVILLE? Definitions and search for its deeper reality.
2. SOCIOLOGY IN THE SPIRITUAL AGE. Transition from a mental to a subjective, and from a subjective to a spiritual society.
3. BEYOND PLANNING AND SPONTANEITY. An attempt to reach behind the mental polarity of planning and spontaneity – a search for the "third way".
4. AN ENVIRONMENT FOR THE RACE OF THE SONS OF GOD. Practical implications for a spiritual society.

1. WHAT IS AUROVILLE?

Definitions and Search for its deeper reality

Everything depends on our right view of the meaning and essence of Auroville. Because Auroville wants to be a new beginning on all levels, in all aspects of reality, nothing that is old and obsolete should interfere with its coming into existence. The sources for our knowledge are the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the words of, the Mother; and somehow our deepest convictions – those vague feelings and intuitions which we hardly dare to take seriously; further, those glimpses of truth which sometimes break through in discussions on the subject, when everybody involved suddenly feels something coming through the barriers men are so habituated to put up in front of its manifestation.

Especially the Mother has given many definitions which, however, do not “define”, but open up vistas. We look at some of these definitions and give a first indication of what this might mean for a sociology and for planning.

The problem is that so many aspects reach beyond what can be grasped by a systematic study, the “sociology”, if we want to keep using this term, would have to embrace even the cosmic, evolutive and theological dimensions. But for that we would need a consciousness as large as Sri Aurobindo’s. We may as well read his works.

Some of the major aspects of Auroville which we see in these definitions are:

- 1.1. The cosmic aspect. Auroville is the iceberg, of which nine tenths of its reality is on deeper levels. We cannot just close our eyes to it; we are here, or the contrary, in order to get an eye for it.
- 1.2. The evolutive aspect. That aspect where something of a “new creation” comes in, where it is said that all things must be seen and done in some “new” way.
- 1.3. The universal aspect. Pointing out the integrative tendency of Auroville. Where the danger of eclecticism comes in, and the necessity to go beyond that.
- 1.4. The existential aspect.
- 1.5. The experimental aspect. Auroville itself is an experiment and is meant to make experiments and studies for the sake of humanity at large.
- 1.6. The supracultural aspect. That means Auroville’s position with regard to the Human Cycle of cultures.

1.1. The cosmic aspect.

Definition 1: Auroville is an endeavour to translate into physical forms what has been determined on higher levels.

This is the most exciting thing about Auroville. The City is ready, has “only” to come down into matter. The plans are there and nothing remains to be planned, unless the ways to bring them down among us and in us.

Describing a vision, Mother tells, “The whole organisation in respect of art and sports and food and all others were ready in the subtle physical – ready to come down and take body”. And, “La conception d’Auroville est purement divine et a précède de beaucoup d’années son exécution”. (“The conception of Auroville is purely divine and has preceded by many years its execution”).

Implications for a spiritual sociology: it suggests a need, first, for a “sociology of the subtle physical realm”. Source book – Savitri, II, 2, The Kingdom of Subtle Matter.

And, try to get a feeling for those powers and influences which apparently determine descents and ascents of realities from one plane to another. Sociology looks at the forces and determinants of the social reality, just behind the surface. A spiritual sociology would have to look at the cosmic forces as well and would not be able to come into existence outside the Yoga.

The sociologist would have to be open for the divine plans.

Implications for planning: the plans are ready. We just do not know them, which does not influence them. We might obstruct their descent by putting our own constructions between them, and their coming down. This may suggest the need for openness and receptivity. How a receptivity should be active and not just sitting down till things happen is a thing to be thought about or experimented with.

What Mother seems to have open in the execution of the divine plans are the details. Telling how the divine plans have been ready for years, she adds: “Naturellement dans les details de l’exécution la conscience humaine intervient”. (“Naturally, in the details of the execution the human consciousness intervenes.”)

The question of how far the sociologist should be able to reach behind the screens is open for discussion: is a psychic change sufficient, or can he grasp the Truth only through a spiritual one; and is he able to efficiently suggest anything before the supramental change? How far is one allowed to go when one knows he knows only small parts of the Truth? How long should one not speak at all? If one does, in what spirit, with how much confidence.

Definition 2: Auroville is a cosmic sacrifice, presided over by the Mother.

These kinds of definitions seem not to define much, but present us with a central truth of the concept. We cannot deal with them sociologically, but we may not leave them out. There is no sociology of sacrifice yet, even less one of cosmic sacrifice. So much the worse for sociology. Of the same type is Mother’s definition:

Definition 3: Auroville is a “dream” of the lord – and generally these “dreams” turn out to be true, – much more than the human so-called realities.

The concept of reality itself is upset in these descriptions of Auroville, and this may imply that a sociology will have to take different meanings of reality into account.

And what does it mean for planning? On which level of reality are we able to plan effectively? And what if our plans are continuously cut short by different realities intruding themselves upon our plans? Does this mean that we must be flexible; or should our whole concept of planning change; or be abolished, giving its place to something else?

1.2. The evolutive aspect.

Definition 4: Auroville is an ideal society for the flowering of the new race, the race of the sons of god.

Sociology is a science of the old race, the race of the sons of the earth. Science itself, like every single aspect of humanity, will have to grow into the new race. The problem is, what to do in the meantime? Do what we can; or wait; or try new things; or prepare ourselves in whatever field we think it will happen most?

One problem for the sociologist is how to find out now what Sons of God will need in terms of, e.g. physical environment in relation to their sociological conditions. They may not care. They may want forms which surpass our imagination. The Sons of God, the future Aurovilians, may want to plan things according to their own standards. For our planning now that would mean things have to remain open, as open and flexible as possible. Nothing to be fixed, just help create conditions so a race of the sons of God can come into existence as soon as possible. That means putting no obstructions in the way of anybody’s growth. It means considering all our mental efforts as pastimes, exercises, till things get serious.

“Auroville is an ideal society for the flowering...” – an ideal society is the aim. There have been so many attempts to establish that. Why did they fail? What was wrong with their plans?

Definition 5: Auroville wants to be a new creation, expressing a new consciousness, in a new way and according to new methods.

Definition 6: Auroville is a model town as the beginning of a new creation, being the effect in the outward world of the connection between supermind and the material being.

Interesting for the activity of planning is the striking force of the idea that the coming about of the City would have to start with the consciousness, and that physical forms are “only” a consequence. It looks as if things will fall in their proper shape only when the consciousness is on the right level. So we would have to work on a “sociology of a new creation” and on a type of planning that is meant to draw down and rise to higher levels of consciousness.

We do not know yet what the “new methods” will be like. We may only be sure they are not identical with the “old methods”. As soon as we use these we may be sure (the only certainty we have left) that it is not “it”. This applies both to sociological and planning methods.

Definition 7: Auroville is an evolutionary city.

Sociology and planning themselves must become evolutionary disciplines. They may have to change fundamentally, not even keeping the same names. To be found out: how does a science grow along with its object of research? It becomes one of the objects itself.

The question even arises whether we still need these ways of grasping Truth in a new age. Methods of, questioning, field-work, etc. may have to be replaced by methods of intuition and direct insight into the Truth of things in a systematic way.

Definition 8: Auroville would be the cradle of superman.

A “sociology of superman” does not yet exist but would have to be developed first, before giving shape to Auroville. Or maybe it has to grow with the coming about of the first “true Aurovilian”. More fundamentally even, a “sociology of the cradle of superman” may have to be developed, i.e. the social conditions and structures that will encourage the growth. Basics for these sociologies may be derived from Sri Aurobindo’s writing on the subject of superman – a requirement for the near future.

Definition 9: Auroville is a city based on a spiritual quest.

It would be wrong to derive general conclusions or even indications from the position the beginners in the spiritual quest are in. The future city would then certainly be built on too much of the vital and mental attitudes. Questioning beginners does not look like the proper way. On what level to aim? Not the level of the beginners. Of those who are on their way? Or of those who have broken through their ego completely? It would give different concepts of the township altogether.

We might have to build – for the time being at least – not for a result but for a quest, for something that is on its way to break through. Planning the spirit: it may lead towards a “planning for no-planning”, the most difficult planning there is.

Definition 10: Auroville is a place where one will be able to think of the future only.

Plans would have to be determined by the future only. All determinants (variables as well as constants) would have to be derived from the future.

A sociology for Auroville would be a science of the future. It would not be a science of the laws that govern the behaviour of masses and groups now.

Definition 11: Auroville is meant not for the satisfaction of desires but for the growth of the true consciousness.

This settles some of the old disputes! e.g., is it best to plan on the level of the present settler, or to aim at the highest level so that he must grow beyond himself? It looks as if Auroville must start beyond where we are now. This requires some awareness of what the future realisations will be like.

1.3. The universal aspect.

Definition 12: **Auroville “university”.**

Definition 13: **Auroville, the free international city.**

Definition 14: **Auroville, a meeting place of east and west.**

Definition 15: **Auroville wants to be a universal town, where men and women from all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and nationalities.**

A sociology on this scale would have to incorporate all backgrounds and all cultural elements and it could not fall back on any presently given pattern: it would have to transcend all cultural differences. Not only being an intermingling of all different aspects, it should move toward something really new. It would not so much have to deal with the different cultures as much, with their superficial values, norms, habits, etc., but rather search for the soul and the “dharma” of each one. Especially a problem would be, or rather is, the integration with the Tamil dharma, the deepest and most inner aspect of the population living already on Auroville soil.

Both sociology and planning are western concepts. A “meeting place of east and west” would have to use the methods of both partners for a synthesis beyond them. The orient may have something which serves the function of sociology and planning in the west, but under a different name. The integration and synthesis of these functions should be an aim.

An interesting opportunity for experiments in Auroville is provided by the cultural pavilions of different countries. An exchange of views should be held with the countries who are ready to set up their pavilions, so that something of the deepest aspects of each culture is brought in rather than putting up just an exhibition.

Definition 16: **Auroville is the effort towards peace in sincerity and truth.**

Definition 17: **Auroville is the first attempt of the experiment of a transformation through sincerity – only transparent sincerity in men and among nations will permit the advent of a transformed world.**

Definition 18: **Auroville is the shelter built for all who want to hasten towards a future of knowledge, peace and unity.**

Definition 19: **Auroville is the place of unending education of constant progress, of a youth that never ages.**

Relevant words for planning in this context are: “The force is there, present as never before, it is the insincerity of men that prevents it from descending, from being felt”.

In the world as it is a “conflict-sociology” is an apt instrument for analysis. In Auroville the conflict-sociology (for the transitional stage) would have to be transformed into a “peace-sociology”, or a “sociology of harmony”, and what a “sociology of sincere men” would look like the world has not shown yet.

About planning for peace and planning for truth: all aspects of reality would have to be taken into account in their right harmony and order, even the aspects hitherto unknown. Each limitation is untruth.

Definition 20: **Auroville is the ideal place for those who want to know the joy and liberation of not having personal possessions any more.**

Definition 21: **Auroville is the place where nothing will have the right to impose itself as the exclusive truth.**

A sociology in a world without possessions, or without authority, would be an interesting, but totally different one.

A planning that does not have to take possessions and the craving for them into account would be a totally flexible one. And not even planning would be allowed to impose itself. This stands for absolute openness.

Definition 22: Auroville is an extension of a laboratory – the Ashram –, a research centre where one is engaged in growing into the divine consciousness in order to change the human consciousness into the divine consciousness.

Definition 23: Auroville will be an experiment, it is to make experiments – experiments, researches, studies.

A sociology of change has been developed. This would have to be developed further into a sociology of change of consciousness.

When Auroville is the field work and the Ashram is the laboratory, the sociology would have to look closely into the laboratory to find the meaning of its fieldwork. Also the planning could learn some of the basic requirements of the near future from it. The sociology would be in a double research situation: it is the research of a research situation.

For many years to come the sociology would study a transitional situation, which would require both some knowledge of the status quo and of the status ad quem.

Planning should not be made for a final situation, to come soon, but for experiments as preparation. The sociology would accompany this planning for experiments by studying and analysing the experimental structures.

Further, if Auroville itself is an experiment, certainly any sociology and planning attempted would be experiments also – within a larger experiment.

Definition 24: Auroville is an invitation to the great adventure.

“and in this adventure you are not to repeat spiritually what the others have done before us, because our adventure begins from beyond that stage. We are for a new creation, entirely new, carrying in it all the unforeseen, all risks, all hazards, – a true adventure of which the goal is sure victory, but of which the way is unknown and has to be traced out step by step in the unexplored. It is something that has never been in the present universe and will never be in the same manner. If that interests you, well, embark. What will happen tomorrow, I do not know. You must leave behind whatever has been designed, whatever has been built up, and then on the march into the unknown. Come what may”.

1.6. The supracultural aspect.

Definition 25: Auroville, the advent and progress of the spiritual age.

This definition includes the title of the last chapter of one of Sri Aurobindo's major social works, *The Human Cycle*. In order to get a feeling of what Auroville is meant to be(come) and of the type of sociology that should accompany its growth and of the consequent planning processes, we must go into the substance of *The Human Cycle*'s outlines.

1.6.1. Sri Aurobindo uses several typologies which sometimes coincide, sometimes overlap but which all have the same aim: to show the process of cultures from their primitive beginnings to their outflow in a spiritual age. Using reason as the medium term in one of the typologies, he makes use of three types: the infrarational, the rational and the suprarational – or spiritual – society. It is clear that Auroville aims at breaking through the limitations of the rational type and wants to function on suprarational levels; which have still to be defined, but are certainly not rational.

The most worked out typology consists of six types, describing six distinct psychological stages of society; they form, taken together, a sort of psychological cycle through which a nation or a civilisation is bound to proceed. He terms them, respectively: symbolic, typal, conventional, individualistic or rational, subjective and spiritual.

1.6.2. Although this is generally considered a rational age, particularly in the West, some countries are still predominantly in the conventional stage.

However, it is not necessary, according to Sri Aurobindo, for each and every culture to completely pass through the rational stage. India, for example, might well pass through it very rapidly, just taking up its best fruits and then enter the subjective age to make itself ready for the spiritual stage.

What Sri Aurobindo aims at – and we may apply the same to Auroville – is the breakthrough, on a massive and collective scale from the conventional and rational stages towards the subjective as a preparation for the spiritual age. Auroville would belong, if it comes to its own soul, to the spiritual age. Interesting to note, however, is that probably the project will not move straight into the spiritual age; we will first have to go through the transition from rational to subjective, and only then from the subjective to the spiritual. That is, two transitions will have to be made. This distinction would help us to clarify some of the existing trends in Auroville more easily. Also, our sociology and planning would not have to be on the highest spiritual levels at once. We may experiment first on lower levels – those of the subjective stage – which are high enough for the time being.

1.6.3. Both the concepts of sociology and planning are fruits of the rational age. It would be interesting to study whether they belong to the fruits of this stage of culture which can be carried over into the next, c. q. the subjective age. It may be true that the subjective age will have to develop its own, now subjective and no longer rational, methods of analysis. The rational stage is an objective one, tending to analyse the world and all its elements as objects. That is how it is able to organise, to plan. The subjective age is a protest against this objectivation of life and man and society. Planning is typically a process of objectification. It might not fit in in an age which will stress the inner, the subjective, so strongly. For the spiritual age we would have the same question again, and the answer will be more clear even than for the subjective age. This would not necessarily mean that both sociology and planning – and the objective sciences in general – would not exist in the subjective age or the spiritual age, it may only mean that their basic approaches and methods will have to change fundamentally.

1.6.4. Interesting in this distinction which Sri Aurobindo makes between the subjective and the spiritual culture is that we may think of Auroville in two stages, the subjective one and only then the spiritual one. This may well be the truth behind the suggestion to build the city in two phases: Auromodel first, which may be meant as an experiment in subjectivity – the flower of the subjective age; and next, Auroville as the experiment in spirituality. In the same way we may think of our sociology and planning, and also of the concrete data, in two steps.

2. SOCIOLOGY IN THE SPIRITUAL AGE

2.1. Sociology and Integral Yoga

2.1.1. The way to create Auroville is yoga, Integral Yoga. All other approaches should be integrated into this one major and central approach. Integral Yoga from its side does not exclude a sociological approach since by nature it is integral. Sociology, however, should grow towards the heights and integrality of the yoga.

After this primary statement, which seems to be an obvious one, all the following statements are tentative. Much thinking and experimenting will have to be done before we will be able to speak of a spiritual sociology which is a worthy partner in the Integral Yoga. This report therefore is a first attempt to bring out some ideas on the subject.

2.1.2. A central idea seems this one: spiritual sociology is the knowledge and the experience of the group-soul. If it is true that sociology in general is interested in groups and masses as far as they are determined by and determine the social realities on physical, vital and mental levels, then a spiritual sociology would have to go beyond this and search for the soul of communities and groups, and how the dialogue of influence between this soul and the social realities takes place on all the levels.

Is a group-soul a chimera or a reality? If we take the group-soul as the point of departure for our spiritual sociology we would have to be very sure about it. We quote, therefore, Sri Aurobindo: "The nation or society, like the individual, has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul behind all these signs and powers for the sake of which they exist. One may say even that, like the individual, it essentially is a soul rather than has one: it is a group-soul that, once having attained to a separate distinctiveness must become more and more self-conscious and find itself more and more fully as it develops its corporate action and mentality and its organic self-expressive life."

2.1.3. With the parallel between the individual and the group drawn so smoothly, the suggestion of a parallel between the individual sadhana and the sadhana of the group presents itself. Here we would reach right into the heart of the matter of spiritual sociology and planning. Only, the group-soul sadhana would even be more difficult than the individual one: "The parallel is just at every turn, because it is more than a parallel; it is a real identity of nature. There is only this difference that the group-soul is more complex because it has a greater number of partly self-conscious mental individuals for the constituents of its physical being instead of an association of merely vital subconscious cells.

A small in-between summary:

1. Spiritual sociology is part of the Integral Yoga.
2. Spiritual sociology deals with the group-soul.
3. The group-soul is identical in nature with the individual soul, only more complex.
4. Spiritual sociology is the (collective) sadhana of this group-soul.

2.1.4. Who builds Auroville? It is done through the group-soul, which, by coming to the front, surrenders its being to the Mother. The first thing to be attained, then is the awareness of the group-soul. As in the individual sadhana, the first phase of the effort should be directed towards this emergence of the group-soul. The group-soul will take over our mental workings and develop its own way. The development of Auroville must go from inside towards the outside, from the inner to the outer. Things must first get an inner awareness, then they will translate themselves according to their own truth into the outer.

It seems that even here we can draw the parallel with the individual sadhana: first the group itself, the population of Auroville must reach a stage of love, of devotion in the heart, of mental quietude, of being open for the deeper truth, in order to get a collective awareness of the collective psychic being – which again is identical in nature with the individual psychic being – and to bring it to the front.

What a sociology and planning can do in this context, having reached a silence and devotion themselves, is to become conscious instruments for the experiments and the other means of bringing about and strengthening the awareness of the group-soul. The creating of an environment – in architecture, agriculture, horticulture, etc. – should accompany this growth of the group-soul from stage to stage of consciousness, which can “plan” its next step and the physical environment fitted for its embodiment in matter. Sociology, planning, the sciences, art and architecture then become integrated parts of the development and the outer expression of the group-soul.

2.1.5. What this amounts to is to realise a collective awareness of the Truth itself behind the superficial levels, the Truth that wants to realise itself among and in the collectivity. Not even a “search for the truth” must be aimed at, not a nervous going hither and thither to experiment on particles of the Truth, but simply an openness in which Truth can work according to its own nature: “Mind is on the surface existence. Men work along the surface and try to find the Truth behind it by more thorough study. The true method is: to enter into direct contact with inner truth and (...) na.ake an outer creation which is not a search for the Truth, but rather Truth’s own creation, that is to say, the power of Truth to realise itself by way of human instruments in an external manifestation”.

Planning and action are then seen as an outflow of the process in which the group-soul grows into awareness of its own being. The external environment will fall in line with the inner development. “The first thing that all must accept and recognise is that the invisible and higher power (that is to say, which belongs to a plane of consciousness that can be called anyway, under any name, it does not matter, veiled for most people, yet one can have it...) this power is capable of governing material things in a way much more truer much more happy, much more salutary for all, than any material power.”

The point of Truth can hardly be overstressed. One more quotation, from Satprem: “These builders of the new world will understand, and that quickly, that this City of Truth will not be and cannot be so long as they are not themselves and totally in the Truth, and that this earth to be built is first and before all the field of their own transmutation. One does not cheat Truth. One can cheat men, give speeches and make declarations of principles, but Truth doesn’t cares it catches you red-handed and at every step throws your lie back in your face (...). It is a Truth of matter (...). There are never any ‘material problems’, there are only inner problems”.

The small in-between summary continued:

5. In spiritual sociology the direction is from the inner to the outer.
6. The group-soul will, at every step of its growth, create its own environment.
7. Not only the group itself, but spiritual sociology and planning as functions of the group-soul should first realise the collective mind’s silence and the heart’s love and devotion.
8. The basic attitude of the sociology and planning must be surrender to the Truth, so they can work from its standpoint, in its process and as instruments of its infallibility.

2.2. The group-soul and some considerations

2.2.1. After tentatively defining the field of a spiritual sociology within Integral Yoga and determining its object as the group-soul, we may now discuss some of the ways of dealing with the group-soul. We would have to find a framework of going about, and tools to be applied. It should again not be a mental framework, but one which is fully determined by the object (the group-soul) and therefore is an extension into the collective of what the individual sadhana means for the individual. Here we give only some preliminaries; groups that are going to work on and in the group-soul will come to their own discoveries on this subject, to a collective awareness of the below surface processes and forces, and many changes and corrections may be suggested to what is given here.

2.2.2. A first, obvious statement is: the group-soul does not become real to a group all of a sudden – it will not fall from heaven or emerge from the depths in one movement. Its coming about is usually a slow process, although it may be a fast one, but in any case is a process of several phases. These phases identify the transitions from the state Auroville is in now to that of the group-soul

which will ultimately inhabit the Central Circle. In the first chapter it was suggested already that Auroville may grow in two stages: first the transition into the subjective stage (Auromodel?) and then into the spiritual stage (The Central Circle). Now we must go into detail, trying to determine the different phases in this two-step process. How this will influence the planning and the growth of Auroville is to be studied in the next two chapters.

2.2.3. Another consideration should be made before we go into a description of phases. Many people seem to come to Auroville for their own sadhana. At this point, as far as this is true and as long as this is truer a collective yoga would not come into everyone's scope yet. Therefore we must stress the point again that the individual soul and the group-soul are identical in nature, and therefore an individual sadhana in the Integral Yoga seems an incomplete one without the group-sadhana. The danger of interference with anybody's private way would therefore not exist, It is just that it cannot be done in a mere private way.

2.2.4. One more point of consideration in this context is how much the two processes, the individual and the collective, are simultaneous. Some individuals may reach a psychic level of development, which has not yet been realised for the group-psychic. But the relationship may work both ways: in order to develop personally one can work on the group-soul and the other way round. This may be true for every transition: first some individuals realise it in themselves and then the group as a group breaks through. But the inverse may also be true, that the transition of the group causes or stimulates the breakthrough of the individual consciousness from one stage to another. The Mother says about this that, "There is between the collectivity and the individual an interdependence from which one cannot be totally free (...) One can try to go ahead much faster (...) yet in spite of everything, the realisation even for him who is on the top (...) depends on the realisation (...), on the condition of the human collectivity."

Sri Aurobindo has also said that a double movement is necessary: with the effort for individual progress and realisation there must be united an effort to lift up the whole, enabling it to make the indispensable progress that would bring in a greater progress of the individual – a progress of the mass allowing the individual to take one step more."

2.3. Phases of the group-soul's development.

A first and rough description of the phases in which the group-soul might develop – and therefore of the phases in which Auroville might come into existence – is:

2.3.1. From Many Egos Towards many Selves

Many people who join Auroville have gone through a considerable development in their lives. For each one this is very different and also the motives which bring people together on the Auroville soil are different. Still, we may make some generalisations, guided by Sri Aurobindo's analysis of the processes of cultures.

It seems, then, that we have reached a state in which cultures stuck in a conventional or a rational, objective phase of their development are in the process of breaking open. Sri Aurobindo speaks about a subjective age as the next step in The Human Cycle. People who leave their old ways behind and search inward for meaning and depth, may be said to be in this transitional stage, between the old objective ways and patterns, and new subjective ones. This transition has two characteristics: it is a protest against the old, and a search for the new. It is a protest against being dominated by traditional and fixed or externally determined or rational ways of living. It is a search for reality in depth. The individual studies the world and himself anew and, "in his study of himself, and the world he cannot but come face to face with the soul in himself and the soul in the world and find it to be an entity so profound, so complex, so full of hidden secrets and powers that his intellectual reason betrays itself as an insufficient light and a fumbling seeker (...). The need of a deeper knowledge must then turn him to the discovery of new powers and means within himself. He finds that he can only know himself entirely by becoming actively self-conscious and not merely self-critical, by more and more living in his soul and acting out of it rather than floundering on surfaces".

This process is a crucial one for the individual. He has to come to terms with his past and to reorganise all the parts of his being around a new centre, which in the beginning is still vague and subconscious or superconscious. Such a reorganisation is really the movement from the ego, which operates on the surface of the being; toward the self, which – being deep within – is the goal of the subjective impulse. All this consumes much energy and the tendency to somewhat close oneself off from the social dimensions is inevitable.

In this phase the individuals in the group are still largely unaware that they are part of a larger soul, and the group-soul cannot yet emerge. Quite a few elements of the now existing population – their behaviour pattern, social life – can be understood against the background of this first level of awareness, one that is preparatory for the emergence of a group-soul.

2.3.2. From Many Actualising Selves to An Objective Awareness of the Group-soul

The group-soul, Sri Aurobindo states, is more complex than the individual soul – though being identical with it in nature – “because it has a great number of partly self-conscious mental individuals for the constituents of its physical being, instead of an association of merely vital subconscious cells. Therefore it also seems more crude”, he adds, “more primitive and artificial in the forms it takes”. And, “it has a more difficult task before it, it needs a longer time to find itself, it is less fluid and less easily organic”. For the time being the group-soul is very much subliminal and a huge effort is required to become aware of it, all the more so because all the constituent persons must be willing to work towards that awareness of something that goes beyond their first interest. It seems we have come now to a stage of development in Auroville where we must take up this “more difficult task” in a conscious way.

When the group-soul succeeds in getting out of the stage of vaguely conscious self-formation, Sri Aurobindo describes, its first definite self-consciousness is objective much more than subjective. And so far as it is subjective, it is apt to be superficial and loose and vague. As an example of this objectiveness Sri Aurobindo shows how it comes out very strongly in the ordinary emotional conception of the nation about its most outward and material aspect, the passion for the land and the soil, just for the shell of the body. In “Auroville this objectiveness would show in the tendency to lay great stress on the land, the structures, the outward aspects of communities and buildings, instead of on the inner process.

2.3.3. From An Objective Awareness to A First Subjective Awareness of The Group-soul

When we move away from the outer appreciations and when we begin to feel that the real body is the men and women who compose the unity a body ever changing yet always the same like that of the individual, we are on the way to a truly subjective communal consciousness. For then, Sri Aurobindo writes, we have some chance of realising that even the physical being of the community is a subjective power, not a mere objective existence. “Much more it is in the inner self a great corporate soul with all the possibilities and dangers of the soul-life.”

“When Auroville is described as an experiment in collective sadhana, in finding the communal soul, it should grow into the awareness of these vague and obscure processes behind the surface, and bring these feelings which always existed in communities to the front. It has always been there; but never explicitly as a way to follow. It has remained subliminal, to the detriment of the communities and the individuals in it. A real community is one which lives from this inmost centre and is fully aware of it.

Sri Aurobindo describes how “there is always a vague sense of this subjective existence at work even on the surface of the communal mentality”, but how it concerns itself mostly with details and unessentials. He calls it an “objective sense of subjectivity”, and adds: As man has been accustomed to look on himself as a body and a life, the physical animal with a certain moral or immoral temperament, and the things of the mind have been regarded as a fine flower and attainment of the physical life rather than themselves anything essential or the sign of something essential, so and much more has the community regarded that small part of its subjective self of which it becomes aware. It clings indeed always to its idiosyncrasies, habits, prejudices, but in a

blind objective fashion, insisting on their most external aspect and not at all going behind them to that for which they stand, that which they try blindly to express.”

2.3.4. From A First Subjective Awareness to The Full Subjective Phase.

Only when individuals and groups come to a full subjective awareness of the deepest reality of their own being, can we speak of entering into the Subjective Age. “The Subjective stage of human development is that critical juncture in which the group comes to see and feel what is behind the outside and below the surface and therefore to live from within. It is a step towards self-knowledge and towards living in and from the Self”. Sri Aurobindo is convinced that now the time is coming for nations and communities to become fully aware of their deeper reality. Auroville would be a conscious experiment on these deeper levels for the sake of all- other communities and nations which cannot break through so easily. “It opens the way”, The Human Cycle tells us, “to great danger, and errors, but it is the essential condition for that which has now become the demand of the Time-Spirit on the human race, that it shall find subjectively, not only in the individual but in the nation and in the unity of the human race itself, its deeper being, its inner law, its real- self”.

The implications of the full subjectivity for both individuals and groups becomes even more clear from the way Sri Aurobindo compares the “objective view” and the “subjective view”. (What this means for Auroville, particularly in planning, will be made more explicit in that chapter.) Both objectivism and subjectivism start from the same data, the individual and the collectivity, but from there they go different ways. The governing idea of objectivism is that life is to be managed, harmonised, perfected by an adjustment, a manipulation, by “machines”. A law outside oneself, an ordering, perfection, a management by mechanical process – this is the conception of practice. Subjectivism proceeds from within and regards everything from the point of view of a containing and developing self-consciousness. Here the law is within ourselves; the principle of its progress is an increasing self-recognition, self-realisation and a resultant self-shaping. The whole impulse of subjectivism is to get at the self, to live in the self, to see by the self, to live out the truth of the self internally and externally but always from an internal initiation and centre.

But this is by far, not the end of the road, and is not the ultimate level on which Auroville will be built. The subjective phase, though much deeper and more developed than the first two phases, “may stop far short of spirituality, for the subjective turn is only a first condition, not the thing itself, not the end of the matter”.

2.3.5. From The Full Subjective Phase Towards The Triple Transformation

From the subjective phase towards the heights on which Auroville is envisioned three more transitions seem to be necessary. It seems we must here again make the parallel between the individual sadhana and the collective one. Ultimately, Auroville is meant to be a collective supramental realisation, being a complete transformation of even the group-soul- itself. Again, this will happen in transitions or stages.

From the full subjective stage – when the first deep awareness of the group-soul grew – a progression will have to be made towards the psychic transformation, in which the different planes and parts of the collective being will become organised around the group-soul. The psychic being will come fully to the front and determine the whole life of the collective being. It may be suggested that the identity in nature between the individual soul and the group-soul becomes more and more explicit in these higher states of development. In the highest stage we might not even be able any more to speak of any difference. Then there may be only one sadhana. This psychic transformation comes from deep within the collective being.

In the second transition which moves towards the spiritual transformation, the direction is changed: instead of from within the change descends from above. It means: “to open upward to the Divine Peace, Force, Light, Ananda above, to rise up into it and bring it down into the nature and the body”, even “occupying the very cells of the body”.

And as far as the last goes, the supramental transformation, we might make it very short and quote Sri Aurobindo’s answer to a disciple who asked for a description of the supramental change. “It is

not advisable to discuss too much what it will do and how it will do it, because these are things the supermind itself will fix, acting out of the Divine Truth in it, and the mind must not try to fix for it grooves in which it will run. Naturally, the release from subconscious ignorance and from disease, duration of life at will, and a change in the functionings of the body must be among the ultimate elements of a supramental change; but the details of these things must be left for the supramental Energy to work out according to the Truth of its own nature.”

Continuing the small in-between summary:

9. The group-sadhana will be a completion of the individual one.
10. Auroville will grow in phases, and so the group-consciousness will go through certain transitions, which are:
 - I. a preliminary phase in which the individual sadhana prevails and the group-soul remains subliminal;
 - II. a first awareness of the group-soul, which is an objective awareness;
 - III. a first subjective awareness, which can be called an outer or objective sense of subjectivity;
 - IV. a full subjective awareness; the group-soul comes to itself as the turning towards subjectivity has been made fully;
 - V. as in the individual sadhana, three higher transformations : the psychic, spiritual and supramental.

2.4. It has never been done.

2.4.1. After studying the five phases or transitions of the group-soul – actually we could say there are truly seven phases when the three higher transformations are each counted separately – we look back on the first chapter and review an important idea. This is that Auroville may be built in two stages, the subjective and the spiritual, with the subjective possibly expressed as Auromodel and the spiritual expressed as the Centre Circle.

What the relationship between the seven phases or transitions and the two stages is, how they correspond with each other, can be asked in this way: where in the seven phase process does the group move into the second stage? We can say the subjective stage goes into the spiritual stage in the fifth transition, the psychic transformation. The Mother has said of the individual sadhana that “true spiritual life begins when one is in communion with the Divine in the psychic (...) in constant communion with the psychic (...) and when the will has become a conscious collaboration with the Divine Will (...). Before that, one may be an aspirant to the Spiritual Life, but one does not have the true Spiritual Life”. Applying that to the sadhana of the group-soul, we see that the psychic, spiritual and supramental transformations are in the spiritual stage.

2.4.2. This means a great deal of inner work is to be done before growing into the Centre Circle. And Sri Aurobindo speaks especially of danger and difficulty during the complete turn to the subjective – or what we have termed “the full subjective phase”, the fourth transition in the spiritual sociology of Auroville. In his discussion of mankind’s progress, Sri Aurobindo describes the Subjective Age as so dangerous because of the fatal tendency to change the error of individualistic egoism into the more momentous and obstinate error of a great communal egoism: what he describes as so difficult as the progression from the Subjective Age to the Spiritual Age.... because it has never been done; man has until now, failed to face this “decisive crisis of transformation”. “He has effected something”, Sri Aurobindo grants, “he has passed a certain stage of his journey. He has laid some yoke of the intellectual, ethical, aesthetic rule on his vital and physical parts and made it impossible for himself to be content with or really to be the mere human animal. But more he has not been able to do successfully (...). He has never arrived at any great turning point, any decisive crisis of transformation”.

2.4.3. Then he also describes the conditions necessary for this great step forward in a passage where he speaks more clearly and explicitly about a possible Auroville than in probably any of his writings.

“If the spiritual change of which we have been speaking is to be effected, it must unite two conditions which have to be simultaneously satisfied but are most difficult to bring together. There must be the individual and the individuals who are able to see, to develop, to re-create themselves in the image of the Spirit and to communicate both their idea and its power to the mass. And there must be at the same time a mass, a society, a communal mind or at the least the constituents of a group-body, the possibility of a group-soul which is capable of receiving and effectively assimilating, ready to follow and effectively arrive, not compelled by its own inherent deficiencies, its defect of preparation to stop on the way or fall back before the decisive change is made. Such a simultaneity has never yet happened, although the appearance of it has sometimes been created by the ardour of a moment. That the combination must happen some day is a certainty, but none can tell how many attempts will have to be made and how many sediments of spiritual experience will have to be accumulated in the subconscious mentality of the communal human being before the soil is ready.”

2.4.4. It has never been done and it looks as if we have still a long way to go. Happily, Sri Aurobindo doesn't stop with the mere possibility of an accumulation. He goes on to say, “But that is not altogether inevitable, for the principle of such changes in Nature seems to be a long obscure preparation followed by a swift gathering up and precipitation of elements into the new birth, a rapid conversion, a transformation that in its luminous moment figures like a miracle”. Then, we might be right in it.

3. BEYOND PLANNING AND SPONTANEITY

3.1. From no-planning to planning and from planning to no-planning

After the description of “What is Auroville?” and the discussion of the nature and use of spiritual sociology, not much seems to remain of planning. All is planned already, we only have to bring it down, we said, and: we can only plan, no not even plan, but only execute the details of the plans to come down. But we thought we had to look for a type of planning that is meant to draw down or go up to higher levels of consciousness. In this context we may ask now: is planning in Auroville possible or not, and if yes, what is there to be planned? We must first know how to understand the concept of Planning.

3.1.1. There is an evolution, even in the concept of planning.

Man has not always been planning his life and surroundings. Only in the rational age, quite recently, the concept of planning found its way among nations and institutions, and now almost everything has to be planned. And now the concept may go into a new, a third phase, in the subjective and spiritual age. As Sri Aurobindo describes the process of cultures through the key of “the rational” and gives three successive stages, so in the same way we may use “planning” as the medium of reference and talk about “pre-planning phases of history”, “the age of planning” and as a third phase in which we are now going to move, “the post planning era”. Let’s have a closer look at the first two, in order to know what the third one will NOT be, and what it might become.

3.1.2. For most of the past ages man could not handle the future. He seemed to be a tool of kings, of nature, of the gods, of fate: he was played around with. He did not have sufficient knowledge and power, except on a limited scale and for very specific purposes. He probably felt manipulated by the forces he was ignorant of, and in many cases even worshipped them. Planning walks into history arm in arm with reason and the first steps of science. In the “age of reason” planning becomes the overall powerful instrument. Man now can manipulate many of the forces which determine the future. From observation and a growing knowledge of the facts and the laws of the universe he can calculate the future processes. The more laws and facts he knows, the more accurate his predictions. This way of planning is an objective way of dealing with life and the universe. Facts and Laws can be translated into quantitative data. The more reason, science and organisations evolve, the more precise his knowledge of the future. We look at some descriptions of planning:

“Planning is a rational and conscious coordination of men and means in relation to the aims one has chosen; and one tries to calculate as many effects as possible over a period of time as long as possible and to control them from key-positions.”

“Planning is a system of attitudes of strife and mastery.”

“The most significant contribution of this sociological approach to social planning (and to meet the challenge of maladjustments) is in the anticipation of the problems and in devising appropriate techniques of bringing about a harmonious adjustment between the various parts of the social machine.”

(Planning is) “a (sic) formulated or organised method according to which something is to be done; a scheme of action, project, design; the way in which it is proposed to carry out some proceeding.”

“A new trend in planning is the increased use of electronic computers (...). Eventually, perhaps, a single vast computer may be able to plan and balance production of all goods.”

3.1.3. Non what is wrong with that? Why couldn’t this be applied for the construction of Auroville? Why should we even with respect to planning move into a new phase? Shouldn’t we draw from the experiences of the whole world and from al-I the experiments in town planning which are sprouting up in many countries?

First, it should be said that planning as described above is an objective way of dealing with men, information and events, and that Auroville is meant to move into a subjective stage, in which things

and groups are no longer determined by outside laws and by knowledge derived from facts, but from within. We have in our own soul, and in the group-soul, new ways to be discovered. In planning there is always the aspect of manipulation, which cannot be applied in the subjective age of mankind.

Second, in a suprarational age, there must be found suprarational means of knowing the future. Humanity – and maybe Auroville first – will no longer be manipulated by the forces and gods and fate, and no longer try to manipulate them; but come in contact with them, take part in them, respond to them in a dialogue and discern consciously between the real fate and the false one, the real higher powers and the false ones. This requires that the group itself rises to a higher knowledge which includes the knowledge of the powers that shape the future. It will be a subjective, inner knowledge that is vista-less and has itself no future, it only descends into the time framework when the right conditions are prepared for it to descend.

And the third reason is this: planning plans for a future from known facts and known laws; that is, it plans for an extension of the known. This means it can only handle those forces that are determined to act in the way they did in the past and do in the present. We can say that the more of these forces we know, the more accurately we can read the future, but only in so far as the future will behave in the same rhythms of determination as the past and the present. Planning is planning for a determined future and that is exactly where the concept of planning is not to be adapted to Auroville, where the future is NOT determined, not a continuation of past and present, but wants to be a new creation. Planning continues the old creation, and can therefore not be used in the same way.

3.1.4. Planning in the subjective age, then, proceeds by knowledge of the higher forces which descend in Time to create a body for themselves. It means openness to the end, non-interference with the descent, and, concretely, it means to discover ways in groups to come to this knowledge. It is no longer the knowledge of the forces of the past and the present which shape the circumstances according to known patterns, but knowledge of entirely new things. Also it is knowledge gained in a new way – by identity with the thing known – which dissolves the old, once immovable polarity: subject and object.

3.2. On no-planning.

3.2.1. Up to now, most planning has been of the second type, coming from mental, objective, empirical and scientific ways of knowing. In Auroville we are facing the challenge of going beyond this type, and even of going beyond the two extremes of either planning or letting things happen in a completely spontaneous way. In a new consciousness we should reach behind such polarities. We may, however, not be able to start this third type immediately. Then it would not be correct to say that for the time being we will make use of the old and well-known ways. Sri Aurobindo strongly states in these cases to set the goal clearly, keep the eye fixed on it and start trying. And the Mother states in this respect: “The problem finally reduces itself almost to this: to replace the mental government of intelligence by the government of a spiritualised consciousness. This is a very interesting experience, how the same actions, the same work, the same observations, the same relationship with environment (near and far) take place in the mind through intelligence and in the consciousness through experience. Above all it is that: all that the Mind has brought as rigid and absolute and almost as invincible... will disappear. And simply that: by passing the supreme power over to the Supreme Consciousness.

3.2.2. Is planning still planning, then? It is no longer reflection on the future on the basis of past or present data and what facts we have, not writing down what we will do and how we will do it, i.e. what programs are to be developed over the next year or three or five or ten years and what and how the increase of growth or houses or money or statistics and data is to be achieved. As the Mother quotes from Sri Aurobindo: “All this insistence upon action is absurd if one has not the light by which to act. The present state of the world after a developing of the intelligence and a stupendous output of energy for which there is no historical parallel is a signal proof of the emptiness, of the illusion under which they labour. Yoga takes a stand that it is only by a change of

consciousness that the true basis of life can be discovered from within outward is the rule. Within we find the soul, the divine reality, and only then can life become a true expression of what we can be.”

There what is it? It is to enter into identification, to know the future by – in a way – becoming it, to know from within. And that not only on the individual level, but AS A GROUP, Aurovilians united in one group-soul.

On the individual level many people may have some experiences of what this means in their daily life, when one rationally planned to do such-and-such today and the whole scheme has been upset by a completely unforeseen train of events. But it happens that one feels so receptive that day to the inner force, the flow of truth, that one meets all the people and does all the things necessary, in a way that could never have happened in such an effective pattern if one had mentally planned it.

Even in individual life the multitudes of subtle and gross forces and variables, persons, activities in the play of the field or action we are trying to rationally project into the future are beyond what we can logically know, and understand the tendency of. But to connect with their inner nature, with the energy source of the play of all these phenomena is to be in touch with their rhythm. to “knowingly manage the day’s life activities in harmony, through the flow of all this and - like having a memory of the future – placing ourselves at the right place at the right time.

What many people seem to have flash experiences of on the individual level will have to be applied now to the collective. All the foregoing must be inevitably true there, too – even more so – as the physical activities, personal forces and subtle events are much more manifold, complex, rich and unpredictable to the rational eye. At the same time, the inner sight can be much greater as it comes through a large and rich group-soul, having many entries to the Truth-Consciousness where the individual has only one.

So, our no-planning, or knowing-planning (by identification) is to be done AS A GROUP, as a collective soul. That is difficult and unusual, but, “Auroville’s realisation does not advance in the habitual manner and it is more visible for the interior consciousness than for the exterior vision”. And the interesting thing is that only by going inward and discovering the soul and the group-soul, the outer things will become clear, crystal-clear, and perfect plans of infallible application and potency will emerge spontaneously when they are needed. To be an Aurovilian one just needs to have the will to collaborate in all that favours future realisations. “The material conditions will be worked out gradually, ACCORDING TO REALISATION”, the Mother assures.

3.2.3. Difficulties in this endeavour will exist, but they can be overcome only by remembering the basics about yoga in-action. One is that the inner and the outer are one, and that, when things go wrong, the best thing to do is to start correcting at the inner end, where one can be a master of the field. The outer will fall in line then.

And another thing is that particular way of its own in which Truth works:

“It is a merciless beacon, even if it is invisible. And it is very simple, it catches you in every corner and at every turning, and as it is a Truth of Matter, it demolishes your plans, hampers your gesture, puts you suddenly before a lack of material, a lack of workmen, a lack of money, arouses that revolt, draws up men against each other, sows impossibilities and chaos – until, suddenly, the seeker understands that he was steering the wrong way, constructing the old false building with new bricks and secreting his own small egoism, his petty ambition, his little ideal, his meagre idea of the true and the good. Then he opens his eyes, opens his hands, he reconnects himself to the great Law, lets the rhythm flow and makes himself clear, clear, transparent, plastic to Truth, to anything whatever which wants to be – anything whatever but it must be THAT, the exact gesture, the right thought, the true work, the pure truth which expresses itself as it likes; when it likes, in the way it likes. One second, he gives himself up. One second, he calls this new world – so new that he understands nothing about it except that he wants to serve, to incarnate it, make it grow in this rebel earth, and what does it matter what

he thinks about it, what he feels, what he judges, oh! what does it all matter, provided that it be the true thing, the only thing willed and inevitable. And everything topples over into the light, in one second. Everything becomes possible instantaneously: the material arrives, the workmen, the money, the wall crumbles, and that small egoistic construction he was building up changes into a dynamic possibility which he had not even suspected. There are never ‘material problems’, there are only inner problems”.

What should we worry, then, about raising money, about questions such as whether organisations are going to help us or not, about whether our ways are acceptable to others or not? All that will come, once we touch the right note. And the problems posed to Auroville such as the interrelations of the various technical disciplines, the necessary actions to absorb new people, the ways to divide the population over the various sectors of the City: that all will become clear – from architecture, to sport, to industry, to agriculture. All this will be decided and settled perfectly by the emerging group-soul, which, in as far as it emerges, cannot but act according to the Truth.

3.2.4. Now the “problem” is a very different one. The question now is: how are we going to realise this inner knowledge AS A GROUP, as a collection of smaller sub-groups, as a cluster of groups, or however? How do we start or intensify our collective sadhana, how do we come to the collective consciousness, how do we make the transition from the first phase – “from many egos to many selves” – to the second one – “a first awareness of the group-soul”, how do we manage to bring the collective psychic to the front? Only the group-soul will build Auroville, and create, from step to step, its own body. And the planners and the planning group, and the administration? They will get a new function; the function of consulting the group-soul in the realisation of its body, from step to step.

When we would become group-soul-centered, planning would become the same as the first concrete actions in the practical program. This we discuss in chapter 4.

3.2.5,. Engineers, industrialists, technicians and others of us may feel everything said here is well enough, but what to do in the meantime with their skills while the group-soul is emerging? Certainly, it might be said, we should go ahead and correct the deficiencies of present plans by using what skills we have on the mental level until the group-soul begins to direct the development and plans. We cannot just wait and rust.

This directly raises the question, it seems, of faith. That is; since Sri Aurobindo and the Mother - especially the Mother very recently – have said the true beginning is to be made from the inner and expressed in the outer, since the Supramental Truth-Consciousness is already in the earth atmosphere, since the Mother has started Auroville and told us, in effect, that now is the time to build the City (since 1968), and to realise the Truth (since 1971), then quite possibly it is only by the leap of faith into the future that we will know, and see the old mental ways are no longer necessary, or needed, or even of any help. But to do that would mean forming groups in which we apparently turn our backs to the common-sense way of working and using skills; and doing the individual and the group-sadhana, not only for itself, but AS A MEANS of finding the new way to work, to use skills, to plan – because the deepest part of us knows She has called us because it is time and we are ready, and the rest of our being follows in faith. For otherwise, by clinging to the old until finally punched in the nose by the New, we can hold back the Light and ourselves for some time.

4. AN ENVIRONMENT FOR THE RACE OF THE SONS OF GOD

4.1. The principle of spontaneous communities.

4.1.1.. The sadhana of the group-soul will pass through different stages. We mentioned seven – including the spiritual and supramental – but that may well be different in the actual growth. We only may be sure that the real, the conscious sadhana will start when a first conscious awareness of the group-soul has come into existence. The impression now is – but this will have to be confirmed by some practical research on the subject – that the group-soul is very much subliminal. Possibly some places in Auroville are exceptions, yet even there it probably cannot be said that the individuals are CONSCIOUSLY experimenting on and with and in the group-soul. The conscious experimentation, however, is the first necessity, it seems, to be able to speak of a collective sadhana. The “planning” now would consist in finding ways and means to set the experimentation on the group-soul going. Once on its way the group-soul itself will do the rest of the “planning”.

4.1.2. Creating a body for a group is no guarantee that a group-soul will emerge from it. From some points of view Aspiration is an example of how something of a group idea is superimposed, a body is created, and yet the group-soul seems to remain under the threshold of consciousness. Some small groups with a strong communal consciousness who came to join Aspiration have reported not only difficulty in finding any group consciousness in Aspiration, but also the dissolution of their original group’s consciousness and their isolation as individuals altogether. Parts of a group-body which have not emerged from the group-soul, but were simply constructed on top of everything else, are difficult to keep going – like some of the new industries.

4.1.3. We do not talk any more about planning for the later phases, because, as has been said, the group-soul in these stages will prepare its own body for each successive stage; size of rooms and division of labour and educational system and transport included. What concerns us now is the transition from the first to the second and third phases. And then there are two things which seem indispensable: the emergence of the group-soul and the conscious experimentation on it.

Both necessities seem to be provided for if we would adopt the principle of the SPONTANEOUS COMMUNITY. Until now, it seems, the trend has been to put as many people as possible together in one spot, Aspiration, in the hope or expectation that something would happen, while some of the smaller communities have been relatively neglected. In these smaller, spontaneous communities; however, a little more of a group-consciousness seems to be experienced – although it is not consciously experimented with yet. The planning until now has also consisted of three major steps, Aspiration, Auromodel, Central Circle. The principle of spontaneous communities would give more flexibility, much more variety in the experiments, and so offer more material for the ultimate greater and more collective realisations. How does a group-soul in a collectivity come into existence? Probably via small units.

The steps to realise Auroville then might be: first, individuals live together in small communities which they have selected themselves and they grow together towards a group-soul; their sadhana is both individual and collective. When many of these particles of a group-soul have come to some level of awareness the groups will start clustering in larger units. One or more of these units could form one or more Auromodels. The creations from the group-souls which cluster more and more as the soul of Auroville comes to the front will provide a great variety of experiences for the creation of the ultimate City, the Centre Circle, which would grow harmoniously out of the group-soul. This is the principle of organic growth.

With the time matured, huge projects like Auromodel, one or many, would be a true embodiment instead of a burden. But the time for the execution must be matured, the sadhana of the group-soul must have come up to that level, otherwise it will be likely to be a replica of Aspiration on a larger scale. When we will wait for the moment of maturity of the group-soul the models will evolve smoothly, and – from inside.

4.1.4. Some observations are to be made before we go into a more detailed consideration of the implications of the principle of spontaneous communities:

First, it looks as if some planning has been done and is being done already for later phases of the development, even for the Central Circle; like Matrimandir, the Nursery, tree plantation. But looking closer we see this does not emerge from our planning, but from things the Mother explicitly told us to do. She, of course, is the one who will reveal the things that have to be done now for the ultimate realisations.

Especially recently, man would be inclined to interfere as much as he can with the environment. Experiments all over the world have shown that, without sufficient knowledge, (which means knowledge by identity, by direct contact with nature and the soil) the balance in nature is easily and disastrously upset. The environmental dangers are well known. For big scale planning with relation to the soil, the water, the physical surroundings, we would have to wait till the group-soul is ready to work on its own body. The more the soul emerges, the greater the awareness of the collective body, which includes the soil and the soil's own dharma. For in the Truth of the Integral Yoga consciousness exists in everything and we have to come into contact with that – we have to know what the land wants – in order to know what to do about the balances in nature and environment.

Third, does the group-soul in its sadhana need an administration, a transport department, a purchasing department, etc.? Could the functions be given to some of the groups? In the first phase of a small-scale group-soul experimenting it might continue to exist as it is now. After some growing the group-soul might find better ways to solve these problems. As in Marx's theory of the State, the administration might eventually simply wither away (to the confessed benefit of the administrators too, who will have grown into their work of the future). The idea of small spontaneous groups growing to larger units might respond best to Sri Aurobindo's idea of a "spiritual anarchy" as the form of government which comes closest to a spiritual freedom.

And a word about those who come new to Auroville, and have to go through some steps first in their private sadhana, and about those who don't want to work on a group-soul: if these people lived together in a non-experimental community, with the stress on the individual, that would be a very interesting experiment!

4.2. The group-soul in action.

Before we discuss some of the possible means to get the conscious experimentation on the group-soul, the collective sadhana, started, we see in a more detailed way how the principle which we would adopt for the first phase – the emergence of the group-soul via smaller and spontaneous communities – is related to some other aspects of life in Auroville.

4.2.1. Population Division (over the various sectors, industrial, agricultural, educational, etc.) We cannot talk about these problems in terms of the ultimate circular City any more, as we have decided that these things would be up to the more fully emerged group-soul to decide upon. We can only see what it would mean for the first one or two phases.

In the transition of the first to the second phase it would seem that we would have to leave the choice – of e.g. labour and employment – fully to the spontaneous communities. Some may start some small-scale industries, according to the nature of the group, some may get involved in agriculture, some in arts or education. Only in a following phase when the small group-souls begin to cluster into larger aggregates, will the group-soul itself find the right relations and harmonies of educational, industrial, agricultural, artistic and international expressions and enterprises; and it will find out too, the numbers of people needed for and interested in different projects in relation to all else that is going on in the globe of community life and progression.

Economists, agriculturists, industrialists, growing along with the communities, and developing their skills into depths which only a group life can provide, would have to be ready for consultation, then; which would be a help for the communities, and a chance of experimentation for themselves. Even in the first phase they would have to help the communities in many respects, where invited, and where they could succeed in growing into the soul of that particular community.

4.2.2. Education The people involved in and working on the present Auroville education seem quite sure of its future development. School buildings will be done away with, except for some communal functions. The children would learn best from life, and from being involved in the emergence of the City in its various aspects. The principle of the spontaneous communities could be of great help, then. Each community would be a part of the "school" and each of them could have some facilities; according to their nature, for groups of children to stay with them for some time.

4.2.3. Work-leisure Relationships This is one of the many items we have to experiment on. Ideals and models for the future Auroville can only grow from a variety of experiences. The groups are the conscious experimenters on this and then they will provide models for the future bigger groups. As in the individual sadhana, one of the main ways to develop the group-soul is through work, collective work. Much of the leisure may be taken up by the quest for the group-soul (special sessions and evaluations, etc.). There could be a variety of models in the various groups; some groups in which all the members do the same work, some groups where each one is involved in different things. When the mechanisms would be made conscious, it would provide much material for future realisations. The groups also may experiment with new ways of leisure and new ways of work. Eventually the question may be asked (as it is in education and play), what distinction really exists at all between the new work and the new leisure?

4.2.4. Agriculture In the small groups we would have the advantage of experimenting on intensive agriculture (as opposed to extensive). That usually means relatively more man-hours on a relatively smaller plot because the goal is different than the conventional (extensive) modern approach of immediate maximum yield with minimum work and expenses rather, it is an immediate maximum development of soil and crop fertility, health and quality, with increased production and profits more slowly, surely and permanently getting established.

One of the characteristics of the evolving group-soul would be the more intimate contact with nature, an identity with the dharma of the soil. For this dialogue with Mother Earth intensive agriculture seems more appropriate, and the experience is: She responds. On the basis of the experimentation (the Nursery seems an example) this could be extended to larger areas. And Mother has specifically given the direction in asking us to grow food organically, without chemical fertilisers and pesticides. This would, for the communities, also mean a recycling of all waste materials for compost manufacture which, beside lessening the disease and pollution problems, would stimulate a more conscious living in relation to all matter.

4.2.5. Family In a variety of communities a variety of experiments could be undertaken, in a conscious way: some old models with family life, some new models, some transformed old models, some unexpected models. Although it would be important to find out more systematically how the situation now is and how people feel about it, the real and new push must come from these spontaneous groups. The Liberation from old taboos of family life and patterns and new experiments toward Truth would be more possible in these smaller, conscious; spontaneously formed groups.

4.2.6. Architecture The idea of the development of Auroville in phases and of a first phase of smaller and spontaneous communities till we are matured enough for the smaller groups to cluster into larger units would give more flexibility and freedom to the architect. He would not have to build for eternity, not for the highest spiritual levels, but could experiment with more temporal structures, always according to the phase we are in – or one step ahead. This would be an advantage over the present situation, which is expensive and too predetermined as it may not be flexible enough for the future developments of the collective consciousness.

The architects would have a strong consultant function for the groups who want to start a community or to extend it. The architectural body of these small group-souls would have to be as beautiful as could be and as much adapted to their special character as achievable so it would truly be a physical expression of the group-soul. The architects would have to have a close contact with the group, probably taking some part in their soul finding sessions and activities. Experimenting

with new materials and new forms could be done more easily on small scale than on big complexes. The souls would better fit in their bodies. This way of working would provide the architecture with a great variety of experiences and experiments, to be applied to larger future Auromodels.

4.2.7. Land-Purchasing This item may have to be re-thought in the light of the small group idea. For the first two or three phases of Auroville we have sufficient land. We need more, but new developments in depth might discover new ways to acquire. The experience exists and can be confirmed that on an agricultural project which is being done in the spirit of the Integral Yoga two village farmers have spontaneously offered their land to Mother. Even this most practical item of land purchasing may be more a question of the right spirit than of money, and ultimately may even dissolve itself – the falsehood of landownership – in the growing Manifestation.

4.2.8. Money It is stressed from the beginning that the money will come according to the right attitude. Then we might say the more the groups form, the nearer we get to the group-soul, the more easily the money will come, and the more potent the ideas and programs by which to raise money.

4.2.9. Industries The present tendency is for industries to be so relied on as the essence of progress that their true relationship to other aspects of collective life is distorted and, in many countries, they suffocate everything else. Not to repeat the mistakes of the past is always the adage, and this is very much so in the field of industries. In the first phase some groups may not be interested, or prefer to experiment on small cottage type industries. Bigger industries would start only in later phases when, again, this becomes an expression of the group-soul for the dharma of large scale wealth production and exchange with the natural resources.

4.2.10. Tamil Integration Real and conscious integration would start, of course, only when some groups have a Tamil, several Tamils, as members of the community. Before that time we cannot truly speak of integration. It can be said also that only in smaller, face-to-face-relationship groups, the manifold richness of each culture can fully blossom. Also there would be a closer relationship, even without membership, if Tamils would work on the more modest projects of each group, as happens now in some of the small communities of Auroville. This could be done more intensively and consciously. Membership would then be the crowning of something already developed from within.

4.2.11. Food In the description of several of her visions of Auroville Mother speaks about the experimentation on food and the great variety of possible diets in Auroville. Some groups would grow everything themselves, others could experiment on new ways, new schedules, new types of food even. Each member of any community could try the inventions of the other groups.

4.2.12. And about Matrimandir

This was and still is an opportunity to work with a group in order to find the “soul of Auroville”. The relation between the soul of Auroville and the emerging group-soul(s); the guidance and centering of consciousness that will come through the soul of Auroville – and to those who work at Matrimandir and the Nursery: all this is something of momentous importance that must be further reflected on and disclosed. An important thing that can be done in this direction is to do some work and spend some time persistently and consistently at Matrimandir and the Nursery. It is for each group to continuously be conscious of and act on the necessity of finding a relationship to the soul of Auroville under construction.

Bharat Nivas

If a small group would take up the project of running the pavilion as a group work (after completion) it would become a part of the body of the growing group-soul of Auroville. Otherwise it might remain a part of a foreign body, not integrated. It could have a function in the process of growth of the communities and groups – as it would probably not be used all the time each day as a pavilion – and could be used as a meeting place, for theatre, music, etc.

Aspiration

If the idea of spontaneous, small groups started realising itself, Aspiration would become a part of this larger process, probably wanting also to experiment on finding its group-soul; or, to start with, maybe several smaller group-souls; or it may get a new function, e.g. for people who do not want a group experiment. It is a beautifully developed place (body) that could be used for experimentation on the non-experiment. Or, for a youth camp; then the energy to be spent on the Chinna Kalapett youth camp could be spent on the small communities. It could be a hotel, or a transit camp for new people, or whatever need arises.

Auromodel

As has been said already, it can only come into existence when there are sufficient groups to join, when the time has been matured and the sadhana of the group is up to the level. Then we might need one Auromodel or a great variety of Auromodels. Now it should not be the first priority.

4.3. How to start becoming aware of the group-soul.

Ways and means will have to be developed. We give here some suggestions.

4.3.1. Information and awakening towards possible group-soul

When the group-soul is subliminal, it is partly because no conscious efforts or means are active that inflame an awareness of the necessity to find the group-soul. This awareness is the first thing to be ignited. Some of the ways this might be done are:

- after thoroughly discussing papers such as this and others in the planning group and putting these things before the Mother, a final report may be printed and distributed to all interested persons and groups;
- a paper could be brought out and presented to all Aurovilians, suggesting that we should go in for conscious experimentation on the field of the group-soul;
- possibly some meetings, study sessions, meditations, teach-ins with various groups and individuals may be held to have a dialogue on what is meant and needed and what can be done straight away. Aurovilians' involvement is a certainty and is likely to reveal some surprising developments; additional suggestions and other possibilities;
- articles might be published in the magazines we have already; "Auroville International" and "Equals One".

4.3.2. Some first experimental groups

These could start forming themselves and creating their environment right away. They could, for the sake of the larger pattern including other experiments, discover and develop some ways and means and make the result known to new starting groups.

Maybe some existing groups (planning group, administration, cultural centre) could take it up, forming a group or groups of just themselves or including others – depending on affinities and inclinations. Some of the existing communities have a good basis for the conscious experimentation already. Their physical environment could be improved according to the realisations. Much consultation in this respect can be given.

4.3.2. Some experimental methods to find the group-soul

The first suggestion was made by the Mother when asked about a collective yoga in 1963, "... for that I believe it is useful for us to have some common meditation sometimes: to work for the creation of a common atmosphere (...).

The best use these meditations can be put to, is to go and find in one's inmost depth, as far as one can go in, the place where one can feel, perceive and perhaps even create an atmosphere of unity in which a force of order and organisation will be able to put each element in its place and bring out a new co-ordinated world, outside the chaos that exists at this moment".

Also, there are some experimental meditations and exercises to specifically touch the awareness of the group-soul that have been and are now being done here. These appear to be progressing well and may well provide a basis when the work starts.

The possibility of finding and using what is spiritually absorbent in the array of group dynamic methods, such as sensitivity training, should probably be explored. Of course, there is much gross vital and physical emphasis in the use and focus of some of these techniques. Whether, for instance, a transformed kind of non-verbal communication could be related to the silent mind in groups; whether detached encounter group sessions could beneficially reveal the relationship between inner states of individuals and groups in shared states of, consciousness experiences – like dreams – are questions that need to be answered.

Other methods, and possibly the best ones, will develop out of the groups' experiences in relation to the Grace and Force.

4.4. Inter-group links.

For the richness and collaboration of the experiments to benefit and be available to all Auroville, and the New World for which Auroville is a laboratory, some inter-group links would be needed right from the very beginning. It is too early to see what these links would look like. How much they would resemble the functions we are familiar with – information, research, consultation, etc. – is yet to be revealed.

Yet, some suggestions can be made which can be expected to grow and change or be replaced in the experience of the emerging group-soul. Certainly some way of keeping track of what happens in the group-experiments – as Sri Aurobindo, the Mother and many yogis in the Ashram have done – is needed, so each spontaneous community can benefit from and extend the laboratory. This means a possible research activity in addition to sharing information. Another linking activity we have mentioned earlier is consulting assistance in different fields.

It may be that these three functions or activities will be taken up by one group; or that consulting, information and research will be worked on in three groups; or information-research may be combined; or there may be a fourth and fifth function; it may even be true that these activities may be taken up by present groups like the planning group or float in a spiritual anarchy between the small spontaneous groups. And Mother's words may be applied to this subject as they apply to the whole report: "It is the experience of life itself that should slowly work out rules that are as subtle and as wide as possible, so that they might be always progressive. Nothing should be fixed."

Notes and References

Introduction “race of the sons of God”. The Mother, 1912.

1. WHAT IS AUROVILLE?

1.1. The cosmic aspect

Definition 1 – “... an endeavour to translate...”.

Given by Madhav Pandit in a talk at the Society House on 23.11.1971.

Mother’s vision – “The whole organisation...” 31.5.1969.

“La conception...” The Mother, 1969. Translation ours.

“Naturellement dans...” The Mother, 1969. Translation ours.

Definition 2 – “... a cosmic sacrifice...”. Also from the Society House talk by Madhav Pandit on 23.11.1971.

Definition 3 – “... ‘dream’ of the Lord...”. The Mother, 20.5.1966, in White Roses, part III.

1.2. The evolutive aspect

Definition 4 – “... an ideal society...”. The Mother, 1912.

Of course, she did not use the name Auroville then. (She had not even met Sri Aurobindo yet.)

Definition 5 – “... new creation...”. The Mother, 19.8.1969.

Definition 6 – “... model town...”. Our application to Auroville of the Mother’s words of 1930-1931.

Definition 7 – “... evolutionary city.”

Definition 8 – “... cradle of superman.” The Mother, 20.9.1969

Definition 9 – “... spiritual quest.”

Definition 10 – “... a place (...) of the future only.” The Mother, January 1967.

Definition 11 – “... is meant not...” The Mother, 1968.

Definition 12 – “... ‘university’.”

1.3. The universal aspect

Definition 13– “... free international city.” The Mother, 1968.

Definition 14 – “... east and west.”

Definition 15 – “... universal town...”. The Mother, 8.9.1965

1.4. The existential aspect

Definition 16 – “... the effort towards peace...” The Mother, 20.9.1966.

Definition 17 – “... transformation through sincerity...” The Mother, February 1968.

Definition 18 – “... the shelter built...” The Mother, 16.3.1967.

Definition 19 – “... will be the place...” From the Auroville Charter. The Mother.

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1.5. The experimental aspect

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Definition 23 – “... an experiment...” The Mother, 30.12.1967.

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1.6. The supracultural aspect

Definition 25 – “...the advent and progress...” Sri Aurobindo, The Human Cycle. We quote from the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library Edition, Volume 15; Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, 1970.

2. SOCIOLOGY IN THE SPIRITUAL AGE

2.1. Sociology and Integral Yoga

2.1.2. “The nation...” The Human Cycle , p. 29.

2.1.3. “The parallel...” Ibid.

2.1.5. “Mind is...” The Mother, 28.8.1965.

“The first thing...” The Mother, 10.4.1968.

“These builders...”. Satprem, La Genèse du Surhomme. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. 1971. Quoted from the brochure on Auroville, 1971.

2.2. The group-soul and some considerations

2.2.4. “There is...” The Mother, “Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education”, Volume XV, Number 1. February 1963, p, 53.

2.3. Phases of the group-soul’s development

2.3.1. “in his study...” The Human Cycle, p. 24.

2.3.2. “because it has...” .. Op. cit., p. 29-30.

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2.3.3. “Much more...” Ibid.

“there is always...” and

“As man...” Op. cit., p. 31

2.3.4. “The subjective...” Op. cit., p. 37.

“It opens the way...” Op. cit., p. 33.

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2.4.1. “true spiritual...” The Mother, “Mother India”, 5.12.1971, p. 672.

2.4.2. “decisive crisis...” The Human Cycle, p. 221.

“He has effected...” Op. cit., p. 222,

2.4.3. “If the spiritual,,,” Op. cit., p. 232, Emphasis ours.

2.4.4. “But that is not...” Op. cit., p. 252.

3. BEYOND PLANNING AND SPONTANEITY

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3.1.2. “Planning is a rational...” and

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4. AN ENVIRONMENT FOR THE RACE OF THE SONS OF GOD

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4.4. Inter-group links

“It is the experience...” The Mother, 30.12.1967.