

Animation Design, Special Project

The Auroville Experiment


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Project Guide
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As a special project report I have created a hand written copy. It has been written on recycled paper embellished with self pressed flowers and leaves (fallen flowers and leaves collected at Auroville).

However as this isn't an acceptable format to be stored as a record for the library I have got all the text typed as per the pages from the original and also included a few colour photos of the original report.





Special Project

As the name goes this project has a very special place in my life, as it has made me realize the value of my being on this planet. I have attempted to write and I hope these next few pages that you will read gives you an insight about all that I felt during this project and secretly defines who I am. This book isn't a book but a diary of a grown child who realizes it's high time that she grew. It's sparsely touched with scribbles, as I didn't want to put in images and spoil your experience if you ever plan to go visit Auroville.

This book is my effort to cling wrap something natural as natural the human feelings. Yu never know when or if they can go stale, they don't come with expiry dates or return warranty you see and I want mine to stay, stay fresh as long as I live.



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understanding Auroville through the
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a gist of what ifell about the city life



Brand New



It was a new...m m m ...actually a new everything a new day a new morning, a new place, a new experience, a new project. Little did I know then, but now I can definitely say it was a 'NEW BEGINNING!.

This experience taught me many things, but the first thing I learnt was that it matters where you came from. I say this because within the world that we all stay is another world that surrounds me and my friends which is rich with its heritage and culture, and though I am proud of my culture, with years all the do's and don'ts have got labeled as the culture, the 'Indian culture'. And I can assure you living with this culture; it has taken years to build the trust in our parents to let 'three girls' like us to just fly like this to a far far land. We were ready in fact overwhelmed to embrace and greet. The aliens of this new land, after all the nuances were going to be aliens, right! A new language, new people, new customs, new culture, all seemed as huge destructive demons, to our patents but we had convinced them that they were nothing but harmless friendly aliens. And I guess, our words did seem assuring as no sooner had the bus jerked on its breaks and we were getting down at Pondicherry. After a long two days train journey, encounter with a 'Rajnikant fan' our rickshaw driver, [who tried nothing but made us giggle] and a [lucky] bus drive of 4 hours. We had finally reached our destination, well almost, as we were waiting for our cab to take us to 'Auroville'.



Are we yet there yet!?



I had heard a lot about this place and I was waiting to see it.... And as always when you wait knowing that you will soon be surprised, you may end up getting shocked! And shocked I was, as it was just 10.30 at night when we arrived at Auroville and it looked like it was way passed bedtime of this town. It was pitch dark, all that we could see was through the headlights of the car. And with whatever I could see it looked like it was, we three girls in the middle of the jungle with no one else but a stranger [cab driver] to assist us; to find our way to our abode in the town. It was no fault of ours to get so jittered it was just that we had felt safe being surrounded by roaring-life taking rash cars, busy with my own life crowd, blinding street lights, dust clouds and ear deafening hustle bustle of city life of the planet we three girls belonged to.

Though it seemed a piece of cake, it was a very different experience indeed. We started out quite fine, speaking about things that would lighten the atmosphere. Strongly there was no one on the road. I had expected a few pedestrians on the way. The three of us trotted along the lonely dark, never ending route as it appeared to be at that particular moment otherwise it was just one or two km. distance. And in that silence you would hear our heartbeat as our hearts thumped faster with every breath.

I am a strong believer that though we were scared, we did reach safely, and entered the dimly lit lobby of 'Mitra Youth Hostel'. There was no one in the reception or around. We were trying to figure out what to do when came in one of the residents of the hostel to our rescue. He was a foreigner. One of my friends doesn't feel comfortable around foreigners because of the fact that she had read a lot about them on blogs, as being addicts of various kinds. Hmm! Surprisingly, I never thought something like this could bother this particular friend. However this one turned out to be a very sweet person and we did get our dorm in 15 minutes after that.

The dorm was comfortable and clean. But surprises didn't seem to stop; we were informed that the bathrooms are shared by girls and guys. Discomfort again seemed to creep on to us, as we were bothered more I guess as to what our parents think about this tough time finding the night person, as we didn't know anyone here. People here are a little different; you need appointment to meet anyone, the mobile networks were low and we couldn't get through even Raghu, etc, etc. The list was long and with our problems just piling up. Prof. Mohanty rose to the occasion, as a knight in shining armour who came to the rescue of three damsels in distress trapped in the chamber of puzzling life.

Prof. Mohanty asked us to just take things a little easy. To chill. That we should not bother about data collection. We should take this project more like a vacation. Explore the place, take a good look around, explore the amazing cuisine and visit the places that hold our interest. Take a trip to Pondicherry, enjoy the beaches over there. Pick out the places of our

interest and go and speak to young people out there as they are more open to such an approach if we don't get appointments. He assured us that he will keep calling on daily bases, to keep a check on us and to see if things were progressing smoothly.

Phew! Relieved we were we suddenly felt the burden off our shoulders. We felt light as a bird. Smiles appeared on our faces which in no time turned into laughter, squealing over silly jokes to the Café.

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I am a strong believer that I can do everything a boy can, and I guess I have always been like that since childhood at least there are a few traces of events that say so but that night with any bike that passed with a hooting guy I just prayed to God that we reach safely. At times I really felt silly to take a decision like this. But what can I do I had not thought about eve teasers at all, (my concerns were different and maybe even silly) which now made me realize why Kavita was so apprehensive about the dinner plan. Though luckily for us the teasing didn't turn out to be a major threat, it was something we would handle.

That walk made me realize how unsafe we feel even though we come from a modern society, where people that are we girls don't bother much about eve teasing at all. That evening there were moments when we wished that there was some guy amongst us whom we could trust [I don't know how much that would have helped]. But it would have definitely made us feel secure because that night I really felt insecure. This incident reminded me of my parent who keep telling me to be in big groups and never to wander alone, back in the city life we live in, but we never understood its relevance feeling safe and sound in the crowds of

Mumbai that the crowd itself is made by a sea of strangers. At the end of 20 minutes, the longest twenty minutes that I have encountered in my life till now, we got to our far fetched distinction and had a great meal though our appetite seemed negligible that night. That waning showed me that we girls may try our best to be strong but even today we need someone to feel secure no matter how fragile the security, we fee in safe hands when there is someone standing besides us funny isn't it, all this matters and affects us because of the way we are designed. Girls will always have to remain as a girl even if she can wear her Daddy's shoes.





As new as possible



The next morning we were all set with maps in our pockets and bikes by our side. We were keen to see all the places that interested us. We were deprived of internet and so we completely depended on the little that we remembered that we had read before coming to Auroville and on the Map. We were going to get sometime on a laptop at lunch time so we thought we could decide then what our next plan would be.

Relying on our memories we set out to our first stop, Kala Bhumi. However the artists were not there so we took a look around seeing all the workshops there. There was one studio dedicated completely to sculpture, a couple to painting and one to candle mauling. There was also a huge studio for theater and dance and performing arts and an underground studio for music or sound. There was music playing there so we expected to meet a few artists these who play around with sound for living but we were obstructed by a furious and ferocious giant dog. We couldn't help the situation so we went ahead. We tried to check a few more workshops around Kala Bhumi but our attempts failed, as all the artists didn't seem to work that day and we encountered locked doors one after the other. Disappointed we pedaled further, and at least got to take a good look of the residential zone though it was not the part of our plan or intentions. This trip of the residential zone was made possible

In the evening we sat around in our dorms, and of all the understanding that we had gathered through net and books we started analyzing the reason to create Auroville. It was followed by a steaming discussion about our individual interpretations as well as understandings about Auroville we jotted down areas or posters that were of our interest, on which we would like a little elaboration on we also included questions that we would like to be answered as that would make things clearer to us.

The things that held our interest, that we wanted to know from the Aurovillians is how the transition has been for them: from what they lived outside Auroville to living in Auroville. What was their present work pattern?

[We were merely fascinated with the fact that we saw people marching back home at 3:30, 4:00 in the evening. It is a species of novelty rather royalty to live like this I mean work like this back on my planet, which explains why we asked the immediate next question which was]

Apart from work, how do they spend time [my planet considers time as the most precious thing, its value (monitory value) is on a increase since they found out that it is precious, and my people don't think twice before giving it away, they are trading it for money since eternity now and they have gone bonkers as they have, sold all the time that they have]. That explains why we thought that this question was valid as we had no due as to what is 'spare time' used for, we are only good at making dream plans with spare time. The next topic of interest was-because we were on our way to a place called 'Vikas Creativity', so it was marked in the map, which

incidentally turned out to be two separate communities. We felt the need of internet and became aware of its importance in our life today. How have we got our self to depend so much on technology that we feel lost without it? We always feared that technology would control us one day, but yet gave it all the power to control and in turn rule our happiness today! How ironic!

So we handed our present to destiny for the mean while and enjoyed the trip of the residential zone instead of cribbing or complying and blaming for our mistake. Every now and then we would park are bicycles and go around the community and took a good look at the architecture and planning of the houses, show each other things that we thought were unique about the community discuss, read the interesting sign boards with message to the visitor's from the community, etc. Thanks to our mistake we saw a 'woodpecker' making his nest in the bark of a tree by carving a hole in it. Something we three had seen just in books. You should have seen the joy on our face we looked like a bunch of six year olds getting excited as if our science text book has come alive. Though fruitful in its own way, this trip completely drained out Kavita and Preet as we hadn't had enough breakfast, however food intake doesn't affect me easily so I was fine.

After lunch we surfed the net and the book on Auroville and jotted a number of phone and contact details of the places that we would like to wisit and speak to people out there we had picked up all the places that deal with design.

Once we were done with choosing the places to be visited we got how to calling up and taking appointment but our attempt turned out sour.

Only a couple of places responded, while the others never picked up the phone and if they did they wouldn't hear us. . There was some problem with the phone lines that afternoon. So we ended having only two conformed appointments with Swaram and last School.

We were quite disappointed and upset with are our self's as things were not going as we had thought they would. Prof. Raja Mohanty had made things so easy for us and yet things were not going according to the plan I was very disturbed. How can't I work well? Why was everything working? Really felt like a looser that evening. A whole day had just slipped by without much of the things done communication seemed to be a big problem. At Auroville the places close down at maximum 4 o'clock and the sun sets early too at 5:30, and with the clock striking 3:30 we were not left with the option to go personally for an appointment. We decided to go to Kala Bhavan. We saw all the different activities that were held there. Our main aim was to meet Dharmesh the coordinator there. But he was busy as he had just put up an exhibition that very day so we ended up just taking a look at the work displayed. Dharmesh was our last hope, to get appointments, with various designers on that very day. We didn't know what difficulties tomorrow had in stored for us, so we were of the opinion that the faster we fix appointments; the better it will be for us! We don't have to bother our self with the appointment taking duty once it was done today.

Why Auroville, why not anywhere else in the world was choose to do what they do

How is their present work contributing to the Auroville experiment?

What would be their next step or level of contribution?

Do all of them working together come from the same community?

What formed the base-their personal interest or their professional interest to join a community?

What is the reason to name a community last but not the least?

Why is there a need to form a community within a community? Why are there so many communities? What is the intension behind it?

Figuring out these questions and teaming them up with our interests took a lot of time. It was almost past one o'clock, an hour after midnight and so we decided to sleep. Tomorrow was a big day, we had appointments with Matra Mandir at 9:45 am and I could hardly wait for it. Though today had been a long day which started with a cold morning shower with all the series of events that we faced during the day that made us feel like losers and ended with us eating fruits for dinner due to the previous night's experience. Matra Mandir I had been seeing Matra Mandir from day one. And no matter what time of the day it would just take my breath away. And all that I could do was stare at it and dumb foundedly gape at it.

I had been seeing Matra Mandir from day one. And no matter what time of the day it would just take my breath away. And all that I could do was stare at it and dumb foundedly gape at it. I guess this is what it feels when people fall for someone and then call it love at first sight. I am a little weak at this as I haven't fallen in love ever, at least till date, and so I just am making an assumption of what I felt every time I looked at this mesmerizing, mysterious structure.

I call it mesmerizing because, in the day if you chanced to look at it, with every ray that would hit its gold tiled walls it created a galore of shimmering dazzle. While the view changed spectacularly by the evening, as the sun would set the flood lights were turned on. The flood lights that surrounded Matra Mandir from all sides were perfectly placed to create an aura of dynamism. And as the night grew younger showing off an amazing splash of dazzling stars, the flood lights would be turned off. But the moon did not give up but instead enveloped the Mandir, in its soft milky rays and made it glitter from head to foot. So there it stood in the center of Auroville looking spectacularly beautiful, celebrating the power of human creation.

From the day I had seen it, there was only one thing I really wished to do and that was to take a look at it from within. This was because of the way it was constructed a beautiful blistered with gold disk spherical building standing amidst petals made of bricks.

Two days back we had taken the appointment to see the Matra Mandir from within. It had cast a spell on me, as it had already enchanted me with

its grandeur on the outside. It had intrigued me, and in a way made me desperate to know how it would be on the inside.

If you sit to evaluate, I was content with what it was impressed with how it stood there and hence I did not keep any expectations. And for some funny reason, for the first time, I did not even imagine as to what it will be from the inside. I wanted the structure to do all the talking, to surprise me with what it is. I wanted it to introduce itself to me, tell me exactly what it is. Or maybe my imagination was falling short, in front of a vision so magnificent, unique and strong. Maybe!

Coming back to the appointments, to tell you the truth I was a little zapped to see such a different system that was followed here. I was the one who had called up to take an appointment for me and my friends and I was surprised to hear from the lady on the other end of the line investing to take individual appointments. What I mean to say is that she spoke individually to all three of us. She asked us our names then asked if we had seen the video made on Auroville and on Matra Mandir at the visitor's Center, then she said are we really interested to see the Matra Mandir, then she gave us a number each and a day and date to visit.

And my mind started working, why is this system followed out here, what an impressive way to show respect towards the thing of your affection that you automatically build respect for it in all the hearts of the visitors too, I wanted to know what I was in for now; as soon as possible. I couldn't hold this secrecy any more. Please no more mysteries just reveal to me. I want to take a look as soon as possible Impatient, you can call me

and this won't even offend me this time as only a person going there for the first time can tell you the burst of enthusiasm and inquisitive Matra Mandir makes you with its charm.

Keeping all of this aside, I went with a fresh mind that morning. I did not want anything to bother with what I was going to experience. I wanted to be a clean slate and let whatever I come across leave its signature imprint upon me. This is who I am and how I tackle things, reality because whenever I do that it only messes up the whole experience.

There were a few Aurovillians volunteering to guide all of us into the Matra Mandir. These were one of our first interactions with a few of the 'true' Aurovillians, as I would like to put it. At the gate we were asked to say the number allotted to us on the phone, then we were asked to deposit our bags, cell phones, money everything at a storage counter which we did surprisingly without any kind of hesitation that is because of the people that were out there. Their gestures told you that your belongings were in the right hands and there was no need to worry at all. They all had a very angelic Charisma, which had formed a very important part of their persona.

I swear to God but I had not seen so many polite, humble and with such warm friendly smile's people together for a very long time. Their body language were acting like a mirror to their intentions; they were there to welcome you and guide you and that is exactly what you felt welcomed into a new place and safe that this will be a good experience. It had been a long time since I had got something I was expecting to get. Because I live on a planet where people train their kids the art of backstabbing from when they are in kindergarten, so that they can survive on my planet.

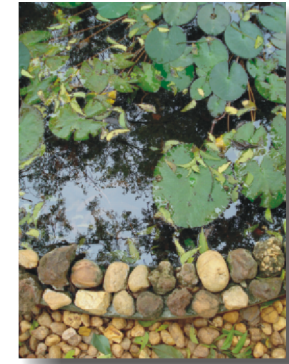
They say it is quite a challenge to live on my planet as people there don't eat but swallow humans making a personality vanish in no time from the face of my planet. Also my planet has people, in fact is filled with people who do things just for the sake of doing it. It does not bother them that their doings help other people or other people's life or their own life depends on it. And that is how they are turning their interests in life into a mundane activity. This is mostly termed as 'job' where you learn something as it is your strong interest or skill or talent and when you start living it by taking it up as a job, the novelty wears out as you start doing it for 'others' that bothers you now. So I live on a planet where people do things just for the sake of doing and with fraud, selfishness, greed, responsibility, anger lot other aspects, self obsession rule the attitudes of people you can imagine my delight to see such genuine people, right.

We were all taken around the garden track of the Matra Mandir and told all the things that were important and some events of relevance that took place at Matra Mandir in history. We were asked to keep silent throughout the trip, even gesturing wasn't allowed. Once all the instructions and history was made clear we were asked to clear our doubts. I vaguely remember an old man who had come there, was asking about a miraculous vision of Mother at the inauguration ceremony being shot by a camera, though she being bed ridden at her residence. It was the 'classic - rumor case' which gets spread with any saint or personality having followers. However, it took a little time to break this fantasy of his and to be assured as a fantasy as he was not ready to budge and kept on insisting that he has seen a video of this. But at the end he gave in.

There were a few more questions by others and once all of them were answered we started moving towards.



Matra Mandir.



It was around ten o'clock in the morning the sun was right on top and it made every bit of the Mandir glitter in its light. With every step that I took the Mandir just seemed to double in its glory. As you walk towards the Mandir the small spherical ball just grows to become a magnificently gigantic spherical structure, whose every inlaid gold disk makes you feel like a tiny person on the face of earth. I felt like the Jack from the 'Jack and the beanstalk' fairy tale, entering the world of the Giant. It gives you a very psychedelic memory of childhood. Where everything had to be viewed by looking up till you got tired and the neck pained as if sprained.

But you can't help it, at least I would do nothing but look or say stare at this glorious structure, happy about its existence, happy about my existence and happy about the existence of this situation, this opportunity in my life.

We kept moving closer to the Matra Mandir. I thought that the Mandir's beauty and grandeur had reached its zenith, when we reached up close to the Mandir with only a few yards separating us. But it proved me wrong and I am glad it did so. We took a sharp turn at one of the lotuses petal rooms, that surrounded it and there we were standing in front of a humungous, magnificent stairway. I should say that the whole structure is nothing but a piece of art!

And this I say because all that surrounds you is very self-explanatory. Everything you see gives you or conveys to you the exact feelings that are

meant to be conveyed. It you were a person unaware of any structure that the human, till date has constructed you wouldn't need any person or a guide or even a dictionary to explain what should be done when you encounter a particular structure. For me when I saw the pathway which lead to the stairway. I felt as though they were calling out to me. It works like hypnotism, and all you can do is too your head back in air and keep looking at. He Matra Mandir, the way the entrance stands, climb the inviting massive stairways and be grateful to the petal rooms that give all the necessary shade which would other wise not been such an pleasure able experience as the mid morning sun tries to distract you from seeing this flabbergasting vision as you keeps walking.

We reached the doorway on top at the end of the staircase, the doorway, too was calling out to me. I entered Matra Mandir.

I realized that for the first time both my mind and my heart were at peace. They didn't seem to bother about anything at all. They didn't want to question or even for that matter think about all that was happening around me, all that had surrounded me and all that I was experiencing at that time. They just kept quite and my feet just carried me through the doorway into a marble white chamber that was lit with the mild pleasing rays of the sun.

My head could not stop turning and my eyes were at their busiest, assimilating and sending as much as possible to my brain. The next thing I remember doing was sitting on a white quilt in a room covered with white flooring and white walls as I wore a clean pair of white socks

handed out to us. The white quilts were set on a circular seating which was arranged around a huge pillar which formed the center of this room. This pillar was inlaid with a spiral staircase that led you to the chamber upstairs. As I sat on one the quilts wearing the socks I was eagerly looking forward to what I would see once I reach on top, at the end of these stairs.

What should I expect; no it was no more expecting. I didn't want to expect anymore. That area of my brain just didn't want to work today. I was looking forward to what I was going to see next. It feels like when your close friends throw you a surprise party on your birthday or when someone very close to you gives you a gift and you open the wrapper wondering what you are going to see, except for the fact that this gift of Matra Mandir experience is a gift larger than life that unknowingly you give to yourself.

The whole atmosphere was so divine and pure that you automatically took care that in no won should you spoil it for others or for yourself and the instructions of no speaking and no gesturing seemed irrelevant to be mentioned.

So all of us carried our bodies up the stairs, as smiling faces of the volunteers welcomed us inside. We entered the second section of the Mandir. The first thing I realized is that Matra Mandir is a place where you understand a whole lot of feelings that the dictionary can only attempt to explain, but can never explain like Matra Mandir. And it gives not just the plain explanation of the feeling but also makes you realize its importance and its true value; that inspires you to not use it randomly as

you have always done in your entire life. Simple feelings like awesome, beautiful out of this world, etc, etc have been used by me before but when I was experiencing the Mandir I really understood the meaning of using or expressing a feeling with a word. Each word felt heavy, loaded with what I was experiencing at that moment. I got to know the value of every word as there is no alternative to explain my feeling [that is if a lay man was deprived of something that comes naturally to him after birth that is the power of language].

There was another thing that was new for me I felt like the soul of every person was dominating their body today. Believe me for the first time I was not thinking of anything, of what I should do now, of what should I see, not see, walk or wait I did not listen or even asked my brain to instruct me of my every move. I just followed my heart. As I was not thinking I could easily focus on the act that I was doing for every and at every and at every moment. Trust me it is just completely rich, pure pleasure to experience every moment of your life. So as I came up the stairway I understood the meaning of 'awestruck'.

Surrounded by serene trickling water on four sides, white marbled flooring, carpeted glass stairway, a room that feels as if it has no walls to bound inside-all this just made me experience divinity. And as I stepped on the carpet only one thought prevailed, I felt like we all were at the stairways that lead to heaven, climbing to enter it.

I am sorry but frankly speaking I may fall short to explain whatever I felt when I was inside Matra Mandir. It cannot be explained to its true core as

this incident is very close to my heart and I do fall short of words to pinpoint every feeling that ran through me that morning.

Everything out there was pure. No merging and mixing of two things at all, even in design. If it was marble flooring then just marble was used, no embossing or elements used to accentuate one another. Everything stood independently, speaking for them self. Even the smallest thing in the room like glass lamp lit near the glass staircase made a picture of purity.

As we climbed the glass stairway we watched the water that trickled down the gold tiles [just like the one's on the exterior walls of the Mandir] add a touch of pleasing and serene sound to the whole room. On the top of the stairways was a short corridor leading to a white door.

This entire trip I was a little distracted from what I was feeling all this while. My eyes settled on the chairs that were set outside in the corridor. They didn't give the same feeling that everything out there was giving. They were just shouting 'modern furniture' according to me. But I didn't let that bother me. I was standing in front of an ajar door, the door I was waiting to enter since. I had got to know about the room that it leads to. I just let my head pop in first, as all my enthusiasm wouldn't let my eyes be patient anymore. Mesmerized! The first thing that hits you and also the first thing that hits the room is the ray of light at the center of the room, projected from the top. One single strand of light that is let in from the roof through an opening that is made, hits a crystal ball placed in the center of the room.

To add to this the room is kept at a low temperature giving very pleasant vibes radiating from the center are placed low raised cushioned seats. And as you sit there on the white cushions, the mind, on its own starts concentrating on the crystal. For the first time I could feel that each and every part of me was together. And this time they were not just together they were all concentrating on one thing at the same time. Back on my planet, mostly we are so occupied with varied activities, events, things and aspects of life that it is difficult that all your senses plus your body and soul are together, concentrating on one thing.

It was very peculiar feeling of composure and freedom. It was a rare combination that I have ever felt, together I felt extremely light. My eyes were not ready to see anything else but the beam of light and the way it hit the crystal ball. I felt peaceful, calm, composed and aware of my being on this planet, the planet Earth. There was a point which I have no idea of how long it lasted for, but I hope I can live that moment again because at that moment I felt as if I am floating, floating in mid air. I don't remember noticing what others were doing but I was floating. Though that moment lasted only for a brief section of time but it was, worth experiencing it. For some reason I was feeling very happy. It was unconditional amount of immense happiness. It was not the happiness that I have ever felt before. It was a very internal and external happiness. I have treasured this feeling as that happiness is what I will seek for hence forth as it has no comparison to any other happiness I have felt before.

And I hope that my future allows me to do deeds that will spread this kind of happiness to all and then that will allow me to share my happiness with all my fellow beings. I forced myself to take my eyes off the crystal ball. I wanted to have a good look around and soak the image like a sponge. Suddenly it struck me that the pillars that start from the ground ended abruptly in mid air. But this added to the ambience

created, and did not take away from it. The manner in which the roof was constructed also helped create the serene ambience. I took a look around at all the other visitors; all of them were enjoying this experience in their own way. My eyes led me back to the beam of light and again I started enjoying the exuberance of this light. But all good things come to an end.

As we left the room, I left not only with this rich happy feel but also felt blessed to be here I took my first step outside matra mandir the acres of open space filled with oriental gardens and the blue sky are the things that you first see. But on the inside I felt 'nono way...don't ask me to leave...I don't want to get back to this world...look what we have done to it...no look what I have done to it...am I supposed to feel like this...I am ...I contribute...Then we headed towards the banyan tree. We all were yet very quiet. As we stood there under its massive shade listening to its rustling leaves, this tree appeared to me as a symbol of life. As it could inspire someone [Mother] to start a new beginning, a beginning that never ends. On that particular piece of unyielding land. Mother chose this land to be spelled as 'Auroville' due to the sheer presence of how the tree stood there doing nothing but breathing life. In the middle of a parched barren piece of land. It hasn't inspired only one being but allowed her to spread this feeling to all of us, a priceless feeling to start something new or to start all over again. This tree has seen every thing and as things have constantly and drastically changed around it; it stood there firm and strong doing what it has done, not changing from what it has been and even though a couple of decades have passed by its importance to the place still stands intact. It is yet the center of a whole new world a whole new beginning! All I could do is go close and touch the trunk of this inspiring tree, close my eyes and wish for the same strength to be instilled in me.



All work and all play



On our way to the first gate, we approached one of the volunteers who had guided us through the Mandir, Mr. Ashish Patel. We had a nice long chat with him discussing and asking him all our doubts, questions and observations. From there started our interaction with the city dwellers. Once we had spoken to Mr. Patel things became clear to us which also defined to us whom should we approach from there on.

We decided we would meet as many people as possible belonging to different strata of society which together make a complete township. So we eventually by personally meeting took appointments and spoke to various people working in the Industrial zone [Swaram, Saracon], Agricultural zone [Buddha Gardens], Educational sector [Last school] and also people involved in institutions/groups like village development, social upliftment, youth employment, creative arts, youth center, alternative energy/ resources, etc.

Hence we spent rest of the week meeting people and understanding Auroville better.

For me Auroville is not just any other city, town or a place but a work of art. Built completely by artists. I say this because no matter if you are trained in this field of art or not but this place gives you all the space and a blank canvas to paint a life that you desire to live. You express your feelings in everything that you do. It allows one to take a dip and soak one

self in the pool of creativity and self expression.

You are breathing freedom with every breath that you take. Auroville offers immense freedom to all that no other city can ever offer. This freedom should be put in right use. To be aware of the right path it is very important to be in touch with one's inner consciousness.

All the people we interacted with were extremely humble, soft spoken, down to earth, happy with a smile that glowed and lit their face. No matter where they had lived before, all of them seemed to have an urge to help humanity in a way, even before coming to Auroville. They satisfied their urge by volunteering for activities that help the medication in armies, raise funds for poor, educate poor, help farmers and the less fortunate of developing and poor countries, so on and so forth. Serving humans must have been the driving force to make the decision to live life here, that must have got them to Auroville.

This town consists of sophisticated well read citizens. Most of them have read Aurobindo's writings extensively. It is amazing to see how someone writing can be so inspiring that you agree to leave the brightly sequined, glittering, fragile mortal world to live a life of simplicity and in turn transfer into an immortal soul. All of them had to surprisingly say the same thing, they believe what drives them to be what they are and what they do [to do something good that serves as many as possible] is by being in tune with their spiritual consciousness.

Coming to how Aurovillians work, to me it appears that they all work on two levels: the spiritual level and the mental level. Working on a job to them means to give back their gained knowledge that is what I mean

when I say working on a mental level. The spiritual level teaches to give back the knowledge in the right way. I learnt about these two levels when we were conversing with them, when they directly or indirectly mentioned the two levels. Spiritual level is something that was a very new concept to me. There are a million ways by which are tempting but are morally wrong to contribute to the mental level as these cause distractions, or damage of one sort or another. And normally city dwellers take these up instinctively but a man working on a spiritual level can never do so.

For them knowledge is never stagnant and it should never be given to saturate. It should always be in a constant flow as more you give the more you will get in.

They had children living back in their own hometowns in their country but they can never visit their children and see their grandchildren due to monetary problems. All they can do is send email and watch their children grow in photographs sent through the internet and hope that one day their children's stubborn hearts would melt and they would fly back to India at least for a holiday.

A few foreigners feel insecure as they can't raise their voice against any system, administration or a person going wrong as they are not looked at as the citizens of India and hence the government has the authority to send them back to the country that they belong to, if they happen to offend the citizens of India.

There are also other issues skirting like town planning. It isn't evolving with the need of today, sticking strictly to Mother's vision.

Hence all the industrial are stand around the water sources and the there are also other issues skirting like the town planning. It isn't evolving with the need of today, sticking strictly to Mothers vision . Hence all the industrial are stand around the water sources and the agricultural zone strugglers to develop with sparse water available easily.

There are a few things I wisied I could erase. One of them was the discrimination created amongst the aurovillens and visitors at the Auroville beach. At the entrance you are supposed to buy a ticket to go check the beach. I understand collecting toll from visitors and it isn't a big amount, but the passage that leads to the beach is so narrow and so dirty with filth lying around that literally you have to walk across filth at times as jumping over it is not possible. There is a narrow nylon wire that separated the two beaches. I do understand you do need your own space when you own a piece of land but all of this wasn't giving a good feeling to me. Why divide the parts of world when sharing is more fun? And that is how it is world is a package for every one to enjoy. It is insane to create boundaries as they form the tool to discrimination. I felt very uncomfortable standing or even being there. But I also realized how a poor or sub. caste must be feeling when he is labeled as an untouchable. My approach has never been harsh towards them but that experience has made me think a lot on this issue and the ways we can help them and eliminate these superficial man made boundaries.

Another thing i am keen on erasing is the attitude of the children at Youth Center. I remember vividly the astonishment on the faces of the children as we entered. As a place Youth Center can be easily labeled as

‘cool’ [as the teenagers term it today] with massive sculpture made of interesting materials and also with junk, a tree house to play in, a wall mosaiced with paintings from the talented budding artist, the place made eda statement of its own. But the youth there [consisting age group 6-19] were not ready to speak to us at all, as they have had bad experience with the media cooking up or just blowing things way out of proportions, making htes children unapproachable.

So it is not all a rosy picture as it may sound. Everything has its own drawbacks. What is more important to me is that there was a human who had the vision and not only did it get executed, it is working and being constructed and paving its way to completion even today. Flaws are minimal as compared to the working of a vision and if over looked there isnt always a city built with no rules, regulations, laws or policeand courts and money system being eliminated.

Auroville felt like it was the true ‘EARTH’ and I was nothing but an alien coming to study how life should be lived. Atrue alien, who has no clue what so ever as to what Earth is to an Earthling!



To Prof. Raja Mohanty,

All this has been very different for me. We all have been on trips but handling one on your own without anyone to guide you has a charm in all its rawness. Thank you for everything.

It was like...magic for me from the very start. Things just kept falling into place. I remember how there were fifteen students keen on taking up this project and so did we, when only four students would be permitted to go. We thought of only one thing, that is, 'we want it so let's keep trying for it'. We just kept being positive, telling ourself that this project was cut for us infact it turned out that it was tailor-made to fit like a glove. Because in the end all backed out, which meant that only three of us - Preet, Kavita and I were left. To be the chosen one made me feel like Cinderella - whose glass slippers had just found the right feet. Such things happened only in fairy tales for me. For a very long time I had been the black sheep of god, a guinea pig of sorts, and suddenly over night I turned into God's

blessed child. I can't tell you how overwhelming this whole experience has been for me.

I owe a lot to the master mind behind designing this project, Prof. Raja Mohanty. Because you have gifted us something that no one has ever given. You have given us an experience of a life time. It has taught us a lot and helped us grow in many ways. The number of things that we learnt in these ten days may not be known to many in their lifetime.

When things were going astray you rebuilt the strength in us and handled the situation very well. You also taught us [especially me] to take things lightly and not panic and things just fall into place, almost like magic. There are a lot of things that have touched me deeply which has changed the way I think. You have put the most suitable mud and the right amount of water to mould our personality, to make us better individual. Not to forget the timing is also brilliant as we will soon be pushed into a whole new life of which we will be responsible of.

I am proud of all that I went through, the ups and downs that we experienced in doing of this project which made this project very special to me. It holds a very special place in my heart. This is one trip I won't forget forever. Forever! And I mean every word that I say as these seem so right and perfect today.

-Enjoy learning the way you teach

Your student Ketaki Haldipurkar

This study of communities cannot be considered complete unless we take a closer look or better said as voice our opinion as what we feel about the city dwellers that abode the monstrous flaming, raging and fuming big cities of my world. My world abounds of different communities if categorized or based on the bases of money, social, spiritual, age, materials, behaviors and habits, interests, hobbies, etc. These communities have their individualistic character which cannot be studied in a short period of time. However, one thing that we all share in common is, we too try to find our self in the confusing noisy rut of city life. And we have been successful enough to do so in the slightest amount of time and the smallest of places. Close the door of your home and suddenly you are in a place away from the rest of the pretense that you may have to put on and can suddenly be yourself and do things that you like to really do. Not just a home, be it anywhere like while traveling then it could be in a bus, train, rickshaw, backseat of a car, in a break of a collage, office or on any holiday like a Sunday, summer vacation or even after office or collage hours, we are capable of switching to solitude and to do things that hold our interest. All that we need is a little bit of leisure time. Thanks to technology too as it helps us to be in touch with a lot of things at least virtually and helps get a flavor of what we like to do. We may not be able to give enough time or be doing things the right way and we may be thinking on a more personal level than on a social level but we try our best to manage to touch the surface of what we want because even we have a human inside our robotic alien body and even we dream when we close our eyes and lie beneath the starry night sky.