

New rail link planned near Auroville

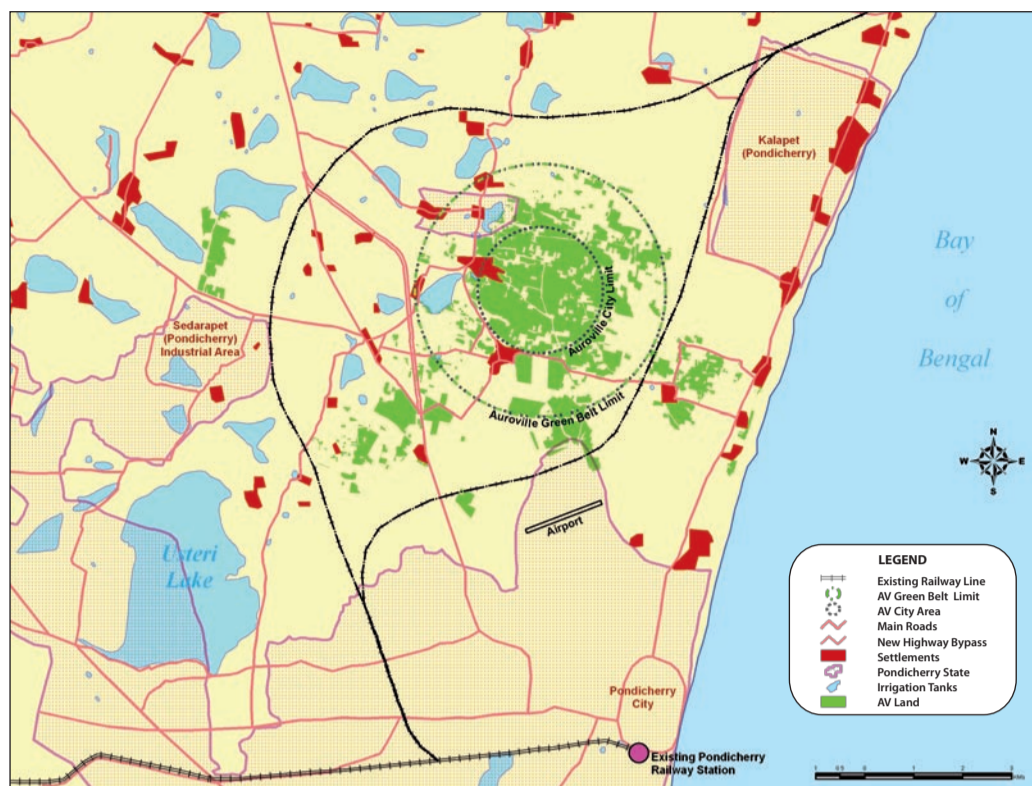
L'avenir, Auroville's town planning group, and Prashant have met twice recently with representatives of the Indian railways. The topic is a planned new rail link between Chennai and Cuddalore which could pass in the vicinity of Auroville. The northern part of the new line seems to have been decided upon. It will begin at Chennai Egmore and up to Chengelpet it will be the main Chennai-Trichy line. A new line will be constructed from Chengelpet to Mahabalipuram after which it will take the coastal route to Koonimedu, near Marakkanam. However, there are two possible routes for the stretch between Koonimedu and JIPMER and on to Pondicherry.

One proposed route would initially take it south. It would pass behind the Pondicherry University campus, skirt the eastern edge of Auroville's greenbelt before curving west towards JIPMER. The other route would see it pass through Kalapet before arcing to the west of Auroville through Sedarapet and on to JIPMER (see map).

The eastern of these two routes would clearly disadvantage Auroville much more. As the line will be elevated three and a half metres, it would cut easy access to the East Coast Road and the sea as well as bringing noise and disruption to the very edge of the greenbelt.

Prashant reports that before his last meeting with the railway authorities, they were actually favouring this route. However, he presented a number of arguments which may cause them to reconsider. Firstly, as the railways make their profits on goods traffic rather than passengers, the westward route makes more sense as a station would be situated at Sedarapet industrial estate and the Mettupalayam industrial estate would also be within easy reach. Secondly, the railways would like to serve the maximum number of people and, according to population data, this route would serve far more people than the easterly route. Thirdly, land acquisition would be easier for the western route as there are fewer landowners and larger plots of land in that area. The land prices are also cheaper here than those closer to the coast.

Another reason why the railway authorities were originally favouring the eastern route is because it is shorter and therefore cheaper to construct: it costs approximately 15 crores to construct one kilometre of rail. However, the western route is only 1.2 kilometres



Two possible tracks for the proposed Pondicherry - Chennai rail link around and through Auroville

longer, and the increased cost would be partially offset by the lower price of the land on this alignment.

How did the railway authorities respond to these arguments? Prashant believes they are more receptive now to the western route, particularly because of its proximity to industrial estates. He also reports that they want to work with Auroville to find the best route. In fact, they had already surveyed land in some of Auroville's forests and found them beautiful, so they didn't want to cut them for the new line.

So what happens next? The railway authorities have invited Auroville to submit a note explaining our concerns and why we favour the western route. This will help them in writing the Detailed Project Report (DPR) which will be sent to the Railway Board in Delhi. The Board will then make a decision which has to be endorsed by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, headed by the Prime Minister. Whichever

option is approved will then be referred to the Planning Commission, which will allocate the funds.

All this will take at least 18 months. Only then will the process of land procurement begin, and nobody knows how long that could take. Once this is completed, there will be a call for tenders and only then will construction begin. It is expected that this 180 kilometres line will take three to four years to construct.

Originally, there was talk of there being a high-speed line, but that discussion is still at the Railway Board level. One reason this is not happening as yet is the astronomical cost of such a line (almost 200 crores a kilometre). However, the line being planned will transport passengers from Pondicherry to central Chennai in about two and a half hours: it will be faster, safer, comfortable, earth-friendly and much cheaper than going by taxi.

Alan

SPIRITUALITY WORKSHOP

Exploring states of consciousness in the Telos workshop

Telos, based on Sri Aurobindo and Mother's teachings, is an approach to making Integral Yoga accessible and experiential in everyday life. After two years of extensive studies, on 6th of March Manoj and Arul offered a one-day workshop in Verité's Integral Learning Centre to introduce their method.

“We will keep silence as much as possible throughout the workshop,” began Manoj. 18 Aurovilians had grouped in a semi-circle around Manoj and Arul while the *Om Namoh Bhagavate* mantra played like an imperceptible heart-beat in the background.

Manoj then explained how the Silent Zone, a silent, relaxed yet a highly-alert state of mind, is an essential condition required to explore the finer movements of consciousness. We entered this state with a very simple exercise where we extended the listening to the furthest point while being fully aware of our body sitting on the chair. The process expanded into inclusion of seeing with surround vision and within minutes we felt a deep silence and peace settling in.

Moving deeply into silence we then started our journey of exploring various states of consciousness beginning with the physical consciousness. We gently moved out of our chairs by exaggerating the heaviness of our body and feeling the inertia and gravity of matter and heaviness of Tamas. “As if we are dragging ourselves out of bed in the early morning,” said Manoj guiding the process. As we did these movements and continued the exploration he instructed. “Now start to inhale and stretch, then notice the difference.” We moved from a dull inert state of physical consciousness to an awakened stability of physical consciousness by stretching the body fully and breathing through the whole body.

“Habits become imprinted in our physical consciousness and the only lan-

guage the body understands is the language of repetition, and it is for this reason advertisements are mindlessly repeated. To change a habit or to establish a new habit it is necessary to address physical consciousness and this requires repeating an act a large number of times till the new pattern is imprinted in the physical consciousness,” explained Manoj.

We explored each of the six instrumental layers of consciousness through direct experience with various physical exercises. We enacted states of fear, repulsion, desire, anger, hatred, power, sorrow, pain, love and joy depending on the state of consciousness we were exploring and were surprised by the rapidity of the bodily and emotional changes and how they are connected to various centres in the body and their corresponding consciousness.

Exploration of each state through body movements was followed by a questionnaire where we could assess each state. It was often very revealing and directly illuminated our weaknesses in a particular area. “Once you know which state is inadequately developed you know what to work on,” pointed out Manoj.

The Lower Vital occupies itself with sensual pleasure, desire and fear. A table of various foods and objects were spread out and we were invited to be aware of our reactions to them from the basis of a silent mind. The rising of greed, disgust and criticism were very easy to see.

The Central Vital is the seat of power, passion, expansion, achievements and challenges. When we had ticked: ‘When challenged I prefer to



Manoj

draw into myself’ or ‘It is difficult for me to work in a team,’ this was a deficiency that may need some attention. After lunch we also saw how the inertia of the Physical Consciousness was settling in and how one can bring in the dynamism of Central Vital to wipe out the inertia.

The Higher Vital is the seat of love, relationships and emotional sensitivity. Simple group exercises gave us freedom to express and receive warmth and some of the group became very emotional when something was touched or released in them.

The Externalising Mind dominates sense-bound knowledge, communication and practicality. “Modern man suffers from an excess of this,” Manoj pointed out.

Thinking and Dynamic Mind gives us vision, will and philosophical knowledge. An imbalance shows up when we act before we understand a problem and

waste a lot of effort. Or when our mind is clouded and we are lost in analysis and never get into action.”

We further explored methods of how to transform problems related to each state of consciousness by following simple psychological processes guided by Arul. Every process involved consecration in attunement with the inner guide and time for assimilation and note taking.

The seventh state is referred as the Spiritual one where illumination, intuition, and knowledge by identity can flourish and through guided process we explored what it means to open upward from above the head and enter into a receptive silence.

“The seven states of consciousness are like Krishna's flute where all seven stops need to be clear and open,” said Manoj. “If one is blocked the music of the soul cannot flow freely.”

Our last exercise, the invocation of the psychic being, the inner guide in us, had some of us almost in tears. During the process we walked slowly around the room holding small lighted candles in our hands and offered them to the soul, the psychic being, of the person who happened to be in front of us. It was a very moving experience.

Manoj told us that ‘Telos’ was a Greek word meaning ‘the study of purpose’ and the course was based on Mother and Sri Aurobindo's teachings, especially in *Letters on Yoga*. It was a course he and his friend, Arul Dev had developed to make Integral Yoga easily accessible and practical for our everyday life. They had given the first course in Chennai and this was their first offering in Auroville.

Dianna

In brief

Happy birthdays!

The Working Committee sent gifts to Governing Board chairman Dr. Karan Singh and to member Ajoy Bagchi, who both were celebrating their 80th birthdays on March 10, in token of appreciation and gratitude for their work done for Auroville.

Born at the right time

A 25-minute documentation showing glimpses of Auroville, made by Doris and Francis, can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmpvHuxNBiw>

Auronet

A ‘Pulse’ question has been put on Auronet regarding the quality of the discussion on the forum, after the Auroville Council suggested that the discussion sector be shifted from the home page. Results will be published.

Unacceptable behaviour

The Auroville Council has stated that whoever purchases land in his/her own name in the Auroville Master Plan area or tries to sell his or her house in Auroville goes against the basic principles of Auroville. The Council also stated that going to Indian and foreign authorities to air personal grudges or denounce other Aurovilians is unacceptable behaviour and places the person who does so out of bounds.

Land sales

The Funds and Assets Management Committee has proposed that 50% of the proceeds of the sale of outlying and unused lands outside the Master Plan area will be used for the purchase of land within the City or Greenbelt area, 30% for the creation of new housing and housing infrastructure and 20% for the creation of infrastructure which promotes and support Auroville's commercial and service activities.

Accessible Auroville

A two-day workshop on how Auroville can be made accessible to all, including differently-abled people, was conducted at the beginning of March by the Samarthyam organisation from New Delhi. The workshop addressed issues such as the principles of Universal Design and strategies for implementing accessibility codes and guidelines for Auroville.

Auroville Archives appeal

The Auroville archives is video-recording Aurovilians who describe what they have lived through and contributed to Auroville. So far, about 200 Aurovilians have participated and the Archives appeal for more people to join in. The records will be made available to future research scholars to study the growth of Auroville as a Living Laboratory of Human Unity.

Land purchase

The land purchase appeal made in the birthday week (February 21-28) resulted in a total donation of Rs 5,80,000.

Early Auroville

Thirty-six photos made by Walter in the period 1970-1975 showing the early Aspiration community and Kulapalayam have been posted at <http://aspiration.auroville.com/walter.html>