

Are you Aurovillian ?

[Slideshow](#)

Aldo Sperber

At a time when organic vegetable boxes are grabbed like lifejackets during a sailing disaster, when bobos dream of moving out to the provinces to live in log cabins and grow vegetables the traditional way, and when 'work more to earn more' leaves, for many, a taste of rotten fish in the mouth, I wanted to go and meet pioneers for a better world and discover the city of their dreams. It all began on the 28th February 1968, when representatives from 124 countries got together to start building Auroville on a large piece of waste land, a dozen kilometres from Pondicherry (now known as Puducherry) in Southern India. They were inspired by texts written by Mirra Alfassa, who is better known by the name "The Mother". This French woman, who was Indian philosopher and yogi, Sri Aurobindo's partner, wanted to create "a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities ». 43 years later, 2 million trees have been planted, houses with surprising architecture have replaced the huts, Auroville has its own electricity supply and internet, and supplies the whole town with drinking water. Its inhabitants recycle almost all their waste, have created schools, nurseries, medical services, concert and conference halls, sports fields, organic farms, laboratories etc. There is still no police force or army. Who are these Aurovillians? What do they look like? What has become of their dream? This curiosity pushed me to go and meet them. After many kilometres spent wandering this spiritual land, dotted with encounters that each were more surprising than the last one, here is a series of staged portraits of the original Aurovillians, their children and new arrivals ready to begin a new life.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337144

Auroson was the first baby to be born in Auroville. He grew up in the first durable house that was built. He met his ex-wife, Mukta at primary school in Auroville and they were together for 16 years. He is a script writer and sculptor. He has also lived in the States and in Europe. He is well-known in Auroville.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337106

Txuma has been an Aurovillian since 1995. He left Spain to start a new life. He has always been a guitarist. It took him three years to build his house.

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Tlaloc is originally from Hawaii. He came to Auroville in 1974 to study for his masters degree in reforestation. After that he travelled extensively, including 13 trips to India. He has been an Aurovillian since 2004 and teaches tai chi chuan having also done yoga at the same time for 20 years.

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Renu's parents were in Sri Aurobindo's ashram in Pondicherry when he was born in 1965, and they left 3 years later to be among the first to build Auroville. Of both Swedish and Indo-Bengali origin, Renu has two children whose father lives in the States. For the past five years she has shared her life with Oiseau, who became Aurovillian in 1985. Oiseau is an actor, but also works with Renu in their orchard.

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Nadaka, originally from Quebec, came to Auroville at a very young age in 1974. He is a musician and is very involved in community life.

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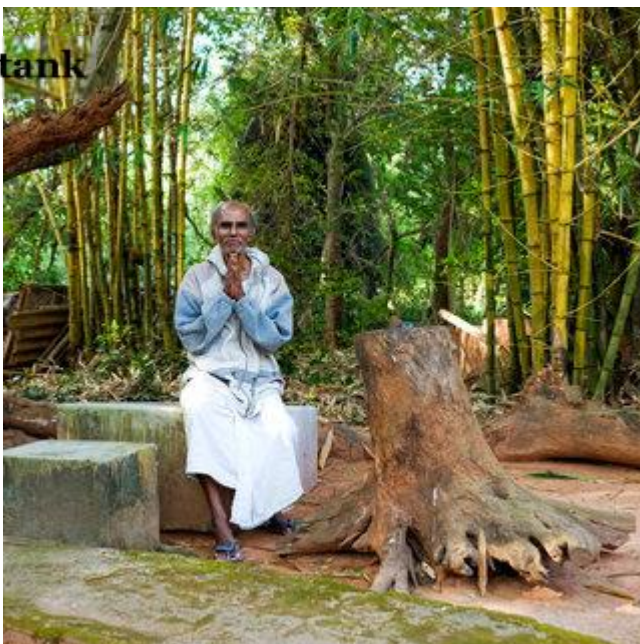


Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337103

Martin, Stina and their son Silas have come from Germany to spend several months in Auroville. They are happy here and really like the way of life, but don't plan on settling here for the moment. Martin is a film director. Stina is expecting a second child.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337102

Samarundavan lived in Madurai and taught Biology there. He is now retired and has been an Aurovillian since 2003.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337101

Riju came from Odessa 17 years ago. He started by building this house alone and with few means. Two years later, the roof still isn't finished and electricity and plumbing have yet to be done. He thinks it will take another year or two to finish. Riju is a painter and poet. He lives a fairly lonely existence and in fairly obvious poverty. He does however remain hopeful that he'll be able to live happily in this house that he will have built with his own hands.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337100

Auroson and Mukta. Auroson was the first baby to be born in Auroville. He grew up in the first durable house that was built. He met his ex-wife, Mukta at primary school in Auroville and they were together for 16 years. He is a script writer and sculptor. He has also lived in the States and in Europe. He is well-known in Auroville.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337099

Mukta was born in Auroville, as was her daughter (carrying the computer). The young girl leaning on the tree is a friend. Mukta works in fashion accessories, 'made in India'.

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Danya is originally from Russia and came here with his parents in 2004. He lives with his mother and goes to school in Auroville. Later on he'd like to do further studies in Europe or the States and maybe work there. He thinks he'd like to come back to Auroville in his 30s.

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Guru is not Aurovillian. Yet he does work and live there as a night porter in the town's electricity service. He came from Nepal with his wife in 2005. Above him, a calendar with a portrait of The Mother, the founder of Auroville.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337095

Daniel came over from Switzerland in 2008. He was a truck driver who now devotes his time to repairing everything for the community. He is ingenious and resourceful, Auroville's McGyver. In a very short time he gained everyone's appreciation.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337094

Youyou isn't Aurovillian but from Toulouse. He has spent 4 months a year at Auroville for the past 15 years. His humour and spectacular energy have made him one of the well-loved characters in Auroville.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337161

Sasiskanth grew up in Pondicherry, but left for his country of origin, Australia when he was 19. He teaches art and photography as well as video. He became Aurovillian in 2008, partly for the love of his partner, Grace (Aurovillian by birth) and by conviction. Grace came to Auroville when she was only 3 months old as The Mother felt that it was too soon for Auroville to have a birth. Her parents are originally from Holland. Grace is a dancer and a fervent vegetarian.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337159

Karthick was born in a village near Auroville. He has officially been Aurovillian for 3 years. He has opened a taxi company.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337148

Aubert is French. He used to live in the Goutte d'Or area of Paris. He met his girlfriend by chance on his first visit to Auroville. For love and conviction he became Aurovillian in 2003. He is an actor and director and is very involved in local life and liked by everyone.

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Nick isn't Aurovillian. He comes from Glastonbury in the UK to see if he could become one, but his age (73) and phobia of noise dissuaded him from living in India. He is going to stay in Auroville for a few months in the hopes of meeting other musicians and doing some concerts. He is a classical and jazz cellist, composer and sound arranger. He worked, among others, on The Rolling Stones' Angie.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337146

Xavier was born in the Ivory Coast. He lived in Pondicherry where his father was the French lycée's head. He officially became Aurovillian in 1994. Having worked in the food industry and export, he now runs the Jolie Rêve guest house. His son is 15 and is at the French lycée in Pondicherry having done most of his schooling in Auroville.

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Sathya has been Aurovillian for two years and is originally from Tamil Nadu. He is the head gardener of the Botanical Garden. It is also a place of research that uses the latest techniques to protect the environment and favour eco-friendly agriculture.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337137

Usha was born in Auroville. She teaches in the New Creation primary school where she was a pupil when she was a child. She teaches and performs classical Indian dance.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337134

Pravita came to Auroville in 1984 after reading Sri Aurobindo's books. Son of a Catalan man, he is a painter, musician and writer. He travels from time to time, but his life is in Auroville in a beautiful house by the beach.

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Dianna is from Bristol in the UK. Seven years ago she came to Auroville three time in a row before finally settling down here with her husband. She ran an acupuncture clinic. She is now a journalist in Auroville. She does yoga and gardening and goes back to the UK every summer.

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Claudio is originally from Italy. He became Aurovillian five years and has decided to leave (temporarily???) Auroville to live as a monk in a hermitage in mountains 100kms from Madras. Before Auroville he worked in exporting electronic equipment between China and Italy.

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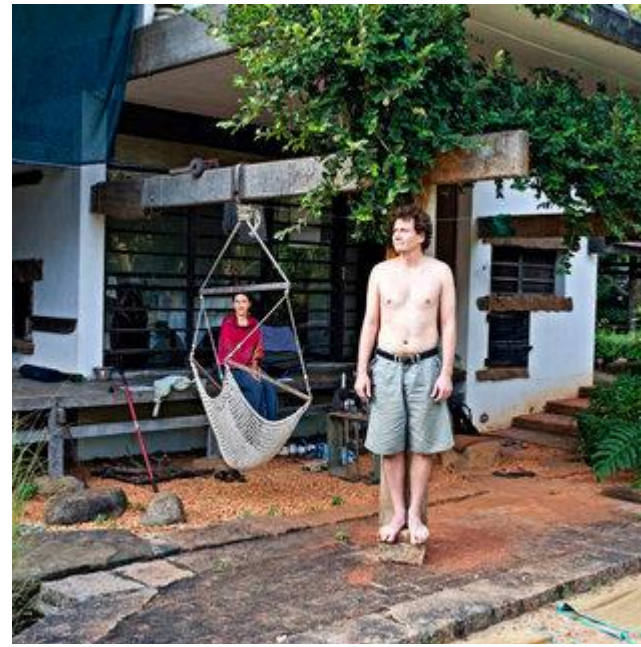
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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337129

Murthu and Dean met in Goa three and a half years ago. 21 days later they had each had the other's name tattooed in their arms and had decided to live in Auroville where Murthu and his family come from. Dean left England to live with Murthu and become Aurovillian. At the moment he is in the trial period that lasts a year. He works in Murthu's restaurant in the evenings and in the stables in Auroville during the day, where he teaches the Hempfling method. Murthu is a very good cook who fuses traditional Indian cooking with European gastronomy.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337126

Mirao was born in 1978 in Auroville and grew up in the house built by his parents who has arrived seven years earlier. He still lives there with his mother, Helga and his wife, Ing-Marie. They met in Auroville three years ago. Ing-Marie is originally from Portland in the US and is a writer. Mirao is a painter and sculptor.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337160

Auroprem was born to Aurovillian parents in Auroville. It was The Mother herself who christened him. He runs the nursery in Auroville. He is mad about photography.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337128

Dick is from Germany and has been Aurovillian since 1989. He coaches the local football team in Auroville. He is married and has a daughter.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337125

Peter is in his trial period in order to become Aurovillian. He is a painter and since he was 55 thinks he is the reincarnation of Paul Gauguin (who died when he was 55). He wants to donate his frescos to Auroville.

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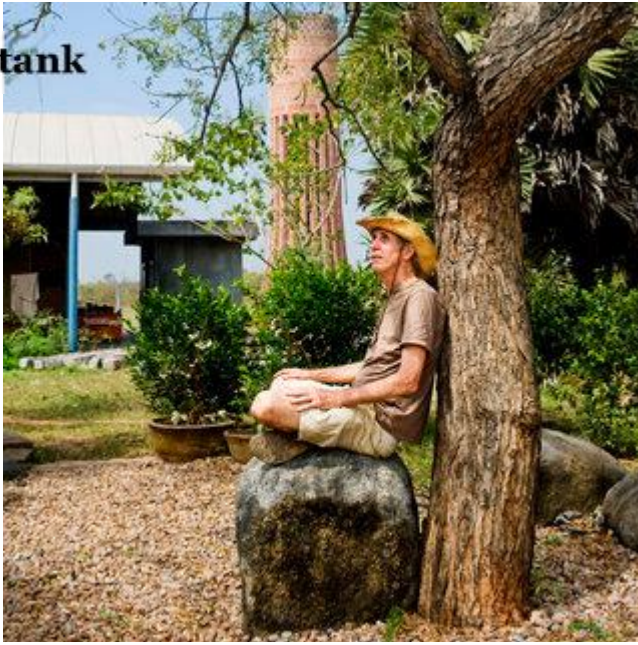


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Krishna is originally from Portsmouth in the UK. At the end of his studies in 1993, he left for Auroville and donned various hats : those of musician, creator, singer, composer, guitarist in the group Emergence, and farmer. He specialises in permaculture and set up his own farm called 'Solitude Farm' to develop innovative techniques. Thanks to his kindness and energy, he has become very popular in the community.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337122

B. left California in 1974 and came straight to Auroville. He didn't like the States of the time (Vietnam war, Nixon etc.) and he left his double job of religion and cinema teacher in Santa Monica to invest in building Auroville. In 1988, after his mother died, he went back to California and spent 10 years there before coming back to India. B. works in recycling. He is an adept of "zero waster" and has developed sophisticated techniques so that all waste in Auroville can be reused for building, agriculture etc.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337119

Benedik came to Auroville to visit a friend. In Frankfurt, he is a gardener and social worker. He is thinking about one day maybe becoming Aurovillian, but not in the near future.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337118

Oum-Hani lives in Cathar country but has made frequent trips to Auroville for a long time. She qualified as a professional singer in Boulogne-Billancourt in France, and studies vibrator and sound resonance and its phenomena on human beings in their entirety. She also studies Byzantine song, Sufi song and Arabo-andalusian song. She likes the energy that comes out of Auroville, as well as the encounters she makes there. She isn't thinking of living here permanently however.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337147

Peter was one of the first Aurovillians. He left Germany to join the small group of pioneers who knew the era when there wasn't even a tree to shield yourself from the sun under, and where the houses were just simple huts. Now he works in homeopathy and has many other interests like yoga, tea ceremonies etc. He is involved with unbridled enthusiasm in community life.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337120

Martin is German and it is first visit to Auroville. He is planning on coming back and maybe becoming Aurovillian one day. But for the moment he isn't thinking seriously about it : "The world is a large place" he says with a desire to discover it. During his stay he has been very involved in community life. He helps with cooking in the youth centre.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337136

Shankar has been Aurovillian for a long time and runs the Shankar school in New Creation. It is a school for poor Tamil children from the area, but that aren't Aurovillian. Most of the teachers are voluntary.

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Aldo Sperber / Picturetank SPA0337164

Bruno has been Aurovillian for 11 years but made many visits between 1977 and 2000, before deciding to leave everything behind him in France. He life is full. Sometimes he travels, is a yogi, business man and sitar player who has done international tours. He met Marie-Pierre who is a philosophy teacher. They are married and live in Auroville but she doesn't want to become Auovillian. Bruno gives his free time to make paper and notebooks and teaches the sitar. They come back to France once a year for a few weeks.

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Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are the founders of Auroville. Their portrait is in most houses, public places and shops in Auroville and in all places linked to Pondicherry's ashram.

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