

The Anonymous Goodwill Conspiracy

Dear Friends,

I have been meaning to share with you that the idea of the Anonymous Goodwill Conspiracy (AGC) is working out, in small steps and very quietly. To refresh your memory, I started this channel for anyone who wants to make an anonymous gift of money to someone they know is in need. This was to:

1. Avoid creating a relationship of dependence between the giver and the receiver.
2. To generate goodwill by giving, however small the amount, to someone we know and appreciate to help out in need.
3. To avoid the idea that the giver is wealthy and can give again and again, as that may not be the case.
4. Just to make it easy to give without damaging friendships and other relationships between people.

Basically I offer two ways to give.

First, I opened an account called the 'Anonymous Goodwill Conspiracy' at the Financial Service. This account can be used to transfer money to someone without the person knowing who it has come from. The money is transferred to the account, and I get a note by email or on the phone from the giver. I then transfer the money on to the person who it was intended for. In this way the gift stays anonymous.

The account number for 'Anonymous Goodwill Conspiracy' is: Financial Service # 252090. And yes, those not living in Auroville can also contribute to this account.

Please make a note of this for the time when you feel naturally, spontaneously, like giving someone you know – be it a neighbour, friend, or just someone you respect, something to help with their needs.

The second way is to give cash in an envelope. You contact me by phone or mail, and let me know that you have an 'envelope' for someone. I meet you at your convenience and take the envelope from you. I then forward this envelope through the hands of one of the volunteer 'Angels' who takes it to the receiver, and hand it over. This second option is the one that people have been using in the last months, since I first introduced the idea. I am happy to say that there have been a number of envelopes that have reached people in need and generated goodwill.

People also take the idea and improvise on it! Friends create interim accounts to make a collection for someone anonymously. Then the amount is passed through the AGC onto the account of the receiver with a description of the purpose for which it is intended. The receiver only sees the AGC account and not the names of the different givers. So, it moves away from being exclusively an act of kindness by an individual to being an act of kindness by a group. I think that's pretty amazing!

Giving like this reinforces the goodwill that links all of us here in Auroville. The receiver of today may very well be the giver of tomorrow. I can state this from my own experience. I have received so much through the Grace that connects all of us, children of the Mother, I cannot count the number of times and ways it happens. Today, by the same Grace I may be in a position to give. And giving continues the chain of faith in Her and in the Spirit of Auroville.

We are all aware that wealth is not distributed evenly in Auroville. The Anonymous Goodwill Conspiracy becomes an amazing opportunity for those of us who have or who generate funds to look after those who provide invaluable services to our community.

The best part is that an act of giving out of goodwill has a thousandfold larger value that when the giving is done because guilt and coercion are applied by the authorities. Everywhere in the world systems run on coercion. The authority squeezes people for a large part of their income, in the form of laws. But this is not what we are here for in Auroville. We are an experiment on all levels, and experiments need to take leaps of faith. Can we keep this in mind, rather than trying by hook or by crook and by abandoning goodwill to copy a system that exists and stifles societies in the world around us? Let us recognize that the Past seeks to endure, and that it is our job to make sure we manifest the Future!

Ange

PROFILE

Being Jesse

“I first came to Auroville when I was three years old but left after I developed pneumonia and moved to live with my mother in New Zealand. Years later I returned to Auroville, aged nine, to find that for some children here, life can be tough. In the lithe, fit world of Auroville's Jungle Book, newcomer kids face a steep learning curve before they reach Mowgli status.

It was tough for me being back in Auroville after New Zealand. It was like living in the jungle. There was no school, no structure of any sort. The kids were wild, athletic and brown and I was fat (relatively speaking), slow and clumsy, and they were hard on me. I felt alone and disconnected and was more than happy to heed my mother's call to return to Sydney, Australia when I was fifteen.

In Sydney I studied ballet and theatre and later went to the University of Sydney, where I joined the Dramatic Society. The University eventually gave me a job organising entertainment, theatre, and, on occasion, gigantic parties. It was a life and work that I loved, but I always wanted to return to Auroville.

I returned for two weeks when I was 18 and experienced a completely different Auroville from my childhood. The tough jungle kids had turned into friendly young adults and I saw Auroville in a totally new light and loved it. Later, back in Sydney I kept thinking "Gotta get back", but somehow it took me eight more years before I did.

Sydney was a hard life to leave. I had always seen Sydney (or any place for that matter) as a hypnosis that creates its own seductive reality. Whenever I made plans to leave, some fantastic opportunity or great deal would emerge to make me delay my plans for another year. Finally, I realised I had to return to Auroville no matter how attractive the offer or insurmountable the obstacle. So I quit my job, sold my car, gave up my flat, put all my stuff in storage and headed for India.

My plan was to arrive with a 100% positive approach – I would give, give, and



if that wasn't appreciated, leave and never come back. After years of running Theatresports (improvised theatre games) at Sydney University I thought I would give it a go in Auroville and it proved very popular. The people that responded with the most enthusiasm were the kids, and now we have a highly-seasoned, highly-skilled bunch of young improvisers that take the stage solo without fear.

It was around 2000 that the brilliant Paul and Wazo created the legendary super-simple, semi-improptu, *lunghi* and *mumpti*-loving Genius Brothers. At the time they were performing with Johnny and Auroson. They invited me to join and I was honoured to accept. The audience loved to laugh at the fun and jokes we made of daily Auroville situations, especially when they recognized the people involved. We ran it for three years until we gave it a break as we had started to head in different directions.

Five years later the show returned, reincarnated as Genius Incorporated. The new concept was high-tech, multimedia and more inclusive in terms of other performers. We

experimented with video recorded live or broadcast live during the show projected on a big screen/backdrop. We relished rehearsals, but feared performance. Each show represented an overwhelming effort of will as we fought to live up to our own expectations and our expectations of what the audience wanted.

The technical setup entailed the equivalent of a Mount Everest climb in terms of the amount of equipment we had to lug up and down flights of stairs. We were very lucky to have the skilled support of Auroville lighting designer Mahi, cameraman and video editor Christoph, sound engineer Herve, and videographer Claire, not to mention the excellent Shakti and the very professional team at the Visitor's Centre where all our shows were performed. We were also very grateful for the support we received from the community and beyond, including funding received from the Dutch Stichting de Zaaier.

The show's experimental nature is a product of the Auroville spirit and environment. We have been able to work experimentally on an artistic project whose output is not monetary.

It shows that ideals can be manifested, that people can express themselves in ways that are not primarily designed for income-generation. Anywhere else in the world this show would have been near-impossible.

Now I'm working on a short movie with my father, Johnny, starring the students from his school, The Learning Collective (TLC), in Fertile. The project was part of the School's Tamil Week – the script is entirely in Tamil and deals lightly with local themes that include arranged marriage, electoral incentives and *baksheesh* (bribes).

Last term I taught Theatre and Performance at Future School to a very gifted and enthusiastic group. They were a joy to work with and their final showcase performance was a thing of beauty. I took the Shakespeare and scripted dialogue component of the course and wonderful and witty Erin took the improvised theatre section. This term I teach English literature at the school.

Two years ago I was invited to join the Auroville Council, which deals with the community's inner goings-on. It taught me a huge amount. It was an education about Auroville's

administrative structure. I learned much about what goes on in our little town – the good and the not so good. I was naively surprised to discover that not all of us equally value the pursuit of truth. I enjoyed very much working with the team, but the work is largely thankless. Many people refer to the 'power' of being on a working group, but there is no power, only very difficult problems to solve. I am relieved to have finished my 'tour of duty'.

Now I'm working with the Residents' Assembly Service (RAS). We're a five person team (Elvira, Mauna, Partha, Selvam and I) and we see our role primarily as enabler and facilitator of community participation in decisions made about the growth of Auroville. Towards this end we have called two General Meetings so far that have taught us a great deal. At the first meeting it became patently obvious to us that while there are administrative tasks that we must as a community work together on, ultimately we want to meet in friendly, explorative and open ways; ways that remind us that we are a caring community.

We have begun to experiment with methods to achieve this. We began our second meeting by greeting as many people as possible individually, shaking their hand and making eye contact. We then followed with a short video (which Mauna found on the Internet) of a cat sitting on a chair, fighting with a printer. We made a joke how the printer was like a working group and the cat like the community, each struggling to understand the other's perspective. In the end the cat falls off the chair. Ostensibly we were making a point about effective communication. But really we just wanted people to laugh. And they did.

We plan more meetings that intersperse serious inquiry with fun, light moments in an attempt to better prepare ourselves to put our hearts and heads together in an attempt to take this experiment forward.

How do I see my future? More of the same. I enjoy communication and there's great scope for communication in Auroville. Many problems can be avoided simply through developing an understanding of how similar we all are. We all share hunger, sadness, joy, and this connects us. In some ways we're all just the same person living different lives. I am you and this could have been your story."

In conversation with Dianna

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