The origin of Auroville ... in Mother's words
(Agenda de Mère June 23, 1965)

Have you heard of Auroville?...
For a long time, I had had a plan of the "ideal city," but that was during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, with Sri Aurobindo living at its center. Afterwards ... I was no longer interested.
Then, we took up the idea of Auroville again (I was the one who called it "Auroville"), but from the other end: instead of the formation having to find the place, it was the place (near the Lake) that caused the formation to be born; and up to now I took a very secondary interest in it because I hadn't received anything direct. Then that little H. took it into her head to have a house there, near the Lake, and have a house for me next to hers to offer me. And she wrote to me all her dreams; one or two sentences suddenly awakened an old, old memory of something that had tried to manifest – a creation – when I was very small (I don't remember what age), and that had again tried to manifest at the very beginning of the century when I was with Théon. Then I had forgotten all about it. And it came back with that letter: suddenly I had my plan of Auroville. Now I have my general plan; I am waiting for R. to make the detailed plans because since the beginning I have said, "R. will be the architect," and I have written to R.
When he came here last year he went to see Chandigarh, the city built by Le Corbusier up there in Punjab, and he wasn't very happy (it seems to me rather mediocre – I don't know, I haven't seen it; I only saw photographs that were dreadful). And when he spoke to me, I saw that he was feeling, "Oh, if I had a city to build! ..." So I wrote to him, "If you want, I have a city to build." He is so very glad, he is coming. And when he comes, I'll show him my plan, then he will build the city.

My plan is very simple.
It will be up there, off the Madras road, on top of the hill. (Mother takes a piece of paper and starts drawing) Here we have (naturally in Nature it's not like this: we'll have to adapt – it's like this up there, in the ideal), here, a central point. This central point is a park I had seen when I was a little girl (perhaps the most beautiful thing in the world with regard to physical, material Nature), a park with water and trees like all parks, and flowers, but not too many (flowers in the form of creepers), palm trees and ferns (all species of palm trees), water (if possible, running water) and, if possible, a small waterfall. From a practical point of view, it would be very good: at the edge, outside the park, we could build reservoirs that would provide water to the residents.
So in that park I had seen the "Pavilion of Love" (but I don't like to use that word because men have turned it into something ludicrous); I am referring to the principle of divine Love. But it has been changed: it will be the "Pavilion of the Mother"; but not this (Mother points to herself): the Mother, the true Mother, the principle of the Mother. (I say "Mother" because Sri Aurobindo used the word, otherwise I would have put something else – I would have put "creative principle" or "realizing principle" or ... something of that sort.) And it will be a small building, not a big one, with just a meditation room downstairs, with columns and probably a circular shape (I say "probably" because I am leaving it for R. to decide). Upstairs, the top floor will be a room, and the roof will be a covered terrace. Do you know the old Indian Mogul miniatures with palaces in which there are terraces and small roofs supported by columns? Do you know those old miniatures? I've had hundreds of them in my hands.... But this pavilion is very, very lovely: a small pavilion like this, with a roof over a terrace, and low walls against which there will be divans where people can sit and meditate in the open air in the evening or at night. And downstairs, at the very bottom, on the ground floor, simply a meditation room – a place with nothing in it. There would probably be, at the far end, something that would be a living light (perhaps the symbol made of living light), a constant light. Otherwise, a very calm, very silent place.

Adjoining it would be a small dwelling (well, a dwelling that would still have three floors), but not of large dimensions, and it would be the house of H., who would act as keeper – she would be the keeper of the pavilion (she wrote me a very nice letter, but she didn't understand all this, of course).

This is the center.

All around, there is a circular road that separates the park from the rest of the city. There would probably be an entrance gate (there has to be one) into the park. An entrance gate with a keeper of the gate. The keeper of the gate is a new girl who has come from Africa and has written me a letter saying she wanted to be the "keeper of Auroville" to let in only the "servants of the Truth". ... (laughing) It's a very nice plan (!) So I will probably put her as keeper of the park, with a little house on the road, at the entrance.

But the interesting thing is that around this central point, there are four large sections, like four large petals (Mother draws), but the corners of the petals are rounded and there are small intermediate zones: four large sections and four zones.... Of course, this is only in the air: on the ground it will be an approximation. We have four large sections: the cultural section in the north, that is, in the direction of Madras; in the east, the industrial section; in the south, the international section;
and in the west, that is, towards the Lake, the residential section.
I will explain myself: the residential section, where there will be the houses of people who will have already subscribed, and all the others who come in their numbers to have a plot in Auroville. That will be towards the Lake.

The international section ... We have already approached a number of ambassadors and countries so each country would have its pavilion there: a pavilion for every country (that was my old idea); some have already accepted, anyhow it’s under way. Each pavilion has its own garden with, as far as possible, a selection of the plants and produce of the country represented. If they have enough money and space, they can also have a sort of small museum or permanent exhibition of the achievements of the country. And the pavilion should be built according to the architecture of the country represented: it should be like a document of information. Then depending on the amount of money they want to put in, they can also have quarters for students, conference rooms, etc., the country’s cuisine, a restaurant of the country – they can have all sorts of developments.

Then the industrial section ... Already many people, including the Madras government (the Madras government is lending money) want to set up industries, which will be on a special basis. This industrial section is in the east, and it’s very large: there is plenty of space; and it must slope down to the sea. North of Pondicherry, there is indeed a rather large expanse which is totally uninhabited and uncultivated; it’s by the sea, going northward along the coast. So this industrial section would slope down to the sea, and, if possible, there would be a sort of wharf (not exactly a harbor, but a place where boats can berth), and all those industries with the necessary internal means of transport would have a direct possibility of export. And here, there would be a big hotel, the plan of which R. has already done (we wanted to build the hotel here, in the place of the "Shipping Company," but the owner, after saying yes, said no – that’s very good, it will be better there), a big hotel to receive visitors from outside. Quite a few industries have already signed up for this section; I don’t know if there will be enough space, but we’ll manage.

Then in the north (that’s where there is the most space, naturally), in the direction of Madras: the cultural zone. There, an auditorium (the auditorium I have dreamed of doing for a long time: plans had already been made), an auditorium with a concert hall and grand organ, the best you find now (it seems they make wonderful things). I want a grand organ. There will also be a theater stage with wings (a revolving stage and so on, the very best you can find). So, here, a magnificent auditorium. There will
be a library, there will be a museum, exhibition rooms (not in the auditorium: in addition to it), there will be a cinema studio, a cinema school; there will be a *gliding club*: already we almost have the government's authorization and promise – anyway it's already at a very advanced stage. Then, towards Madras, where there is plenty of space, a stadium. And a stadium that we want to be the most modern and the most perfect possible, with the idea (an idea I've had for a long time) that twelve years (the Olympic games take place every four years), twelve years after 1968 (in 1968, the Olympiad will be held in Mexico), twelve years after, we would have the Olympic games in India, here. So we need space.

In between these sections, there are intermediary zones, four intermediary zones: one for public services (the post, etc.), a zone for transportation (railway station and, if possible, an airfield), a zone for food supplies (that one would be towards the Lake and would include dairies, poultry farms, orchards, cultivation, etc. – it would spread to incorporate the *Lake estate* [iii] : what they wanted to do separately will be done as a part of Auroville); then a fourth zone (I've said public services, transportation, food supplies), and the fourth zone: shops. We don't need many shops, but a few are necessary to get what we don't produce. These zones are like quarters, you see.

And you will be there, in the center?
H. hopes so! *(Mother laughs)* I didn't say either yes or no to her, I told her, "The Lord will decide." It depends on my "health." Moving from here – no: I am here because of the Samadhi, I remain here, that's quite certain; but I can go there on a visit (it's not so far away, it takes five minutes by car). Only, H. wants to be in peace, silence, far from the world, and it's quite possible in her park with a road around it and someone to stop people from entering – one can be really in peace – but if I am there, that's an end to it! There will be collective meditations and so on. So if I have signs (physical signs, first), then the inner command to go out, I will go there in a car and spend an hour in the afternoon – I can do it from time to time.... We still have time, because it will take years before everything is ready.
You mean the disciples will remain here.
Ah, the Ashram remains here – the Ashram stays here, I stay here, that's quite clear: Auroville is ...
A satellite.

Yes, it's the contact with the outside world. The center in my drawing is a symbolic center.
But that's H.'s hope: she wants a house where she would be all alone, and next to it
a house where I would be all alone – the second part is a dream because for me to be "all alone" ... you just have to see what goes on! It's a fact, isn't it, so it doesn't go well with the "all alone." Solitude must be found within, it's the only way. But on the level of life, I will certainly not go and live there, because the Samadhi is here; but I can go there on a visit. For instance, I can go for an opening or certain ceremonies – we'll have to see, it won't be for years. It's going to take years to be realized. So, Auroville is meant more for the outside.

Oh, yes! It's a town, so it is the whole contact with the outside. And an attempt to achieve on earth a slightly more ideal life.

In the old formation I had made, there had to be a hill and a river. A hill was necessary because Sri Aurobindo's house was on top of the hill. But Sri Aurobindo was there, in the center. It was arranged according to the plan of my symbol, that is to say, a central point with Sri Aurobindo and all that concerns Sri Aurobindo's life, then four large petals (which weren't the same as in this drawing, they were something different), then twelve petals around (the city proper), then around that, there were the disciples' residential quarters (you know my symbol: instead of [partition] lines, there are strips; well, the last circular strip formed the residential place of the disciples), and everyone had his house and his garden: a little house and a garden for everyone. And there were means of communication; I wasn't sure if it was individual transportation or collective transportation (like those small open trams in the mountains, you know) that crossed the city in all directions to bring the disciples back to the center of the city. And around all that, there was a wall with entrance gates and guards at each gate, so people entered only with permission. And there was no money: within the walls, no money; at the various entrance gates, people found banks and counters where they deposited their money and received in exchange tickets with which they could have lodging, food, this and that. But no money. And inside, absolutely nothing, no one had any money – the tickets were only for visitors, who entered only with a permit. It was a fantastic organization.... No money, I didn't want money!

Oh, I've forgotten one thing in my plan: I wanted to build a workers' housing estate. But it should be part of the industrial section (perhaps an extension on the edge of the industrial section).

Outside the walls, in my first formation there was on one side the industrial estate, and on the other the fields, farms, etc., that were to supply the city. But that really meant a country – not a large one, but a country. Now it's much more limited; it's not my symbol anymore, there are only four zones, and no walls. And there will be
money. The other formation, you know, was really an ideal attempt.... But I reckoned it would take many years before we began: at the time, I expected to begin only after twenty-four years. But now, it’s much more modest, it’s a transitional experiment, and it’s much more realizable – the other plan was ... I nearly had the land: it was at the time of Sir Akbar (you remember?) of Hyderabad. They sent me photographs of Hyderabad State, and there, among those photos, I found my ideal place: an isolated hill (a rather large hill), below which a big river flowed. I told him, "I would like to have this place," and he arranged the whole thing (it was all arranged, they had sent me the plans, and the papers and everything declaring it to be donated to the Ashram). But they set a condition (the area was a virgin forest and uncultivated lands): they would give the place on condition, naturally, that we would cultivate it, but the products had to be used on the spot; for instance the crops, the timber had to be used on the spot, not transported away, we weren’t allowed to take anything out of Hyderabad State. There was even N. who was a sailor and who said he would obtain a sailing boat from England to sail up the river, collect all the products and bring them back to us here – everything was very well seen to! Then they set that condition. I asked if it was possible to remove it, then Sir Akbar died and it was over, the whole thing fell through. Afterwards I was glad it hadn’t worked out because, with Sri Aurobindo gone, I could no longer leave Pondicherry – I could leave Pondicherry only with him (provided he agreed to go and live in his ideal city). At the time I told Antonin Raymond, who built "Golconde," about the project, and he was enthusiastic, he told me, "As soon as you start building, call me and I will come." I showed him my plan (it was on the model of my symbol, enlarged), and he was quite enthusiastic, he found it magnificent.

It fell through. But the other project, which is just a small intermediate attempt, we can try.

I am under no illusion that it will retain its purity, but ... we will try something.

Much will depend on those you will entrust with the financial organization of the project.

The financial organization, for the moment, is looked after by N., because he is the one who receives the money through that "Sri Aurobindo Society" and who has bought the lands – there is already a good amount of land bought. That's going well. Naturally the difficulty is to find enough money, but for example, for the pavilions, it's each country that will meet the expenses for its pavilion; for the industries, it's each industry that puts its money into the business; for the residents, each will give the money necessary for his land. And the government (Madras has already promised it to us) gives between 60% and 80% (partly a grant, which means it's given, and partly
a loan, free of interest and repayable over ten years, twenty years, forty years – a long-term repayment). N. knows his way about,[iv] he has already got results. But depending on whether money comes in fast or only little by little, it will go faster or slower.

As regards the construction, it will depend on R.'s plasticity.... I am not concerned about the details at all, there is only that pavilion that I would like to be very pretty – I see it. Because I saw it, I had a vision of it, so I'll try to make him understand what I saw. The park, too, I saw – those are old visions I had repeatedly. But that's not difficult.

The biggest difficulty is water, because there is no nearby river up there; but they are already trying to harness rivers. There is even a project to divert water from the Himalayas and bring it across the whole of India (L. had made a plan and discussed it in Delhi; of course, they objected that it would be a little costly!). But anyway, without going into such grandiose things, something has to be done to bring water; that will be the biggest difficulty, that's what will take the longest time. As for the rest – light, power – it will be made on the spot in the industrial section – but you can't manufacture water! The Americans have given serious thought to a way of using sea water, because the earth no longer has enough drinking water for people (the water they call "fresh"[v] ... it's ironical); the amount of water is insufficient for people's use, so they have already started chemical experiments on a big scale to transform sea water and make it usable – obviously that would be the solution to the problem.

But it already exists.
It exists, but not in a sufficient proportion.
Yes, in Israel.
They do it in Israel? They use sea water? Obviously, that would be the solution – the sea is there.
It has to be studied.
Then the water would have to be sent uphill.
A yacht club wouldn't be bad, too! [laughter]
Ah, certainly: with the industrial section.
Near your harbor, here.
It won't be a "harbor," but anyway. Yes, the hotel for visitors with a yacht club next to it, that's an idea. I'll add it (Mother makes a note).
It would surely be a great success (!)
Oh, you know, there's a flood of letters, mon petit! From everywhere, every country,
people write to me, "At last the project I have been waiting for!" and so on. It's a flood.
There is also a *gliding club*. We have already been promised an instructor and a glider – that's promised. It will be in the cultural section, on top of the hill. Naturally the yacht club will be by the sea, not on the lake; but I thought (because there is a lot of talk of deepening the lake, it has almost silted up), I thought of a seaplane station there.
There could also be sailing on the lake.
Not if there are seaplanes. It's not quite large enough for sailing. But it would be very nice for a seaplane station. But it will depend: if we have an airfield, it won't be necessary; if we don't have an airfield ... But in the *Lake estate* project, there was already an airfield. S., who has become a *Squadron Leader*, also sent me a plan for an airfield, but for small planes, while we want an airfield that can provide a Madras service regularly: an airfield for passengers. There has already been a lot of talk about this, there have been talks between Air India and another company, but then they didn't agree – all sorts of silly little difficulties. But all that will fall off naturally with Auroville’s growth – people will be only too glad to have an airfield.

No, there are two difficulties. The small sums of money, we have them (as I said, what the government can lend, what people give to have a *plot* – *all* that is coming), but the problem is the massive sums: because it takes billions to build a city! ... The Americans are ruining themselves.... There is a queer phenomenon: money seems to have been swallowed up somewhere, to have vanished from circulation – in America the dollar's value is dropping, they are moaning. Here, people are ruined.... There’s an industrialist who had a magnificent industry (it seems it was marvelous), and with that *income tax* the government has succeeded in ruining him – he closed down. Then he partially reopened and filled in new papers for his new company and new industries; now, he had a dog, he had given a name to his dog, and he signed the papers with the dog's name! And he put the dog's photograph.... *(Laughing)* So, naturally, he got letters asking him if he thought people were idiots. He answered, "No, only a dog would accept your conditions." Not bad, eh?
Yes, they think people are idiots.
They are ruining the country.
There was only one place where things were still easy: it was Africa – now it's finished; now the Africans *(laughing)* are worse than anyone! You know how many friends we had there, how many things we used to receive from there – it's completely finished. And they are ruined. So they come here and meet with all these difficulties.
Human beings really make everything complicated!
Yes, but of course!
You’d think they enjoyed it.
I wrote a few lines, you remember, about the government. Where did I put that? *(Mother looks for her note)* I've added something (it will be for later, it will be the beginning of my "political series"):
You leave free hands to the bandits and take insulting measures against the honest people.
It will be like that so long as the country is not governed by the wisest people.

The wisest people are those who can freely and correctly read the hearts and the minds of men.
It was in the form of a conversation. I tell those who govern:
"You leave free hands to the bandits and take insulting measures against the honest people."
So the reply:
"But how can we tell the bandits from the honest people until we see them at work?"
I said:
"Yes, it will always be like that, you will always commit the same sort of blunder ... until the country is governed by the wisest people."
"Ah, but how can one know if they are the wisest people?"
"The wisest people are those who can freely and correctly read the hearts and the minds of men."
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A few weeks later, on September 7, Mother was led to put the project of Auroville in perspective:
Auroville wants to be a universal town ...
A universal town – not international: universal.
... where men and women of all countries will be able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creed, all politics and all nationalities, straining to realize human unity.

[i] It was only three years later, in February, 1968, that Auroville would be founded.
[ii] Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's symbol.
[iii] Which has already been cultivated.
[iv] He knows his way about very well indeed: he is the one who will become the "proprietor" of Auroville after Mother's departure, taking advantage of the money
collected for Auroville. He will have the Aurovilians who will not consent to this fraud sent to jail and expelled from India, while Auroville will be reduced to a state of siege and funds meant for Auroville will be used to corrupt.

[v] 1. "Fresh water" is eau douce in French, douce meaning "gentle" or "sweet."

Submitted by Fabienne