

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT FROM AUROVILLE'S ASSETS

In the past 40 years, many interpretations have found expression in practice and theory by defining functions of Auroville.

I take this opportunity of drawing attention to the document that was submitted to the MOTHER along with the original GALAXY CONCEPT by Roger, which came to be known as Master Plan 1968.

Here I reproduce the text of Chapter 2 – Functions of the Town & Population.

2 - FUNCTIONS OF THE TOWN AND ITS POPULATION

a - Functions:

Cultural:

There are no other words to render an account of the totality – and of the wealth – of Spiritual and educational activities, quest and encounter. The principle function of the town is to promote a new culture by creating a novel urban civilization.

Relations with the world: Auroville is a place where nations and civilizations will meet; problems of universal interest will be studied here. The town will contribute to the formation of a body of international people.

Education and teaching : In this field is the essential task of the town, it has to promote the enrichment of the body and the mind.

Research : Auroville will gather a group of research-workers to study experimentally and spiritually the question of human unity.

Economics :

The economical activity is the material support of the life and radiation of Auroville. It will contribute to the expression of cultural activities (cinema, industry and technical teaching). Without being considered a regional pole of growth, the town has to contribute to the local development by offering industrial employment to the local population and by giving them a technical education.

b - Population :

At its final stage of stability, Auroville will have 50,000 citizens. This population should permit a harmonious functioning of the town. This number has been fixed from the outset.

Age – groups:

The town will be peopled by immigration. Examples of new towns show us that in such town the population has a relatively small proportion of people below the age of 20 and above 60. This tendency is stronger in Auroville because of its peculiar characteristics. The immigration on the average will be the result of a decision, hypothetically, taken by the adult youth.

The distribution of the population according to large age-groups could be as follows: one third of the inhabitants below 20 years, one tenth above 60 and more than half between 20 to 60 years of age.

| | | | |
|------------------------|----------------|---|--------|
| Proposed distribution: | 0 to 19 years | - | 17,000 |
| | 20 to 59 years | - | 28,000 |
| | 60 and above | - | 5,000 |

Working population :

The population in the working age is represented by the block of 20 to 59 years i.e. 28,000 persons.

The working population having an employment (in the normal economic sense) corresponds to the population of the working age to which is to be added those above 60 pursuing some activity (2,000) and from which has to be subtracted those above 20, who are students and probationers (2,000) that is : 28,000 persons.

Distribution of the working population according to the kind of activity :

This distribution should enable the town to fill all activities it has in view:

| Principle of distribution: | Percentage | Total number |
|-----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| PRODUCTION OF GOODS: | 30% | 8,400 |
| Farming : | 5 | 1,400 |
| industry : | 15 | 4,200 |
| Cottage industry : | 10 | 2,800 |
| SERVICES: | 45% | 12,600 |
| Economic block: | 20 | 5,600 |
| Collective services: | 19 | 5,500 |
| Administration: | 6 | 1,500 |
| CULTURAL ACTIVITIES | 25% | 7,000 |
| educationists: | 15 | 4,200 |
| research-workers: | 10 | 2,800 |
| | 100% | 28,000 |

The indicators are very interesting when you look at the Function aspects and then the Economy with 24,000 residents being in the Education & Research activities (17,000 in age group 0-19 yrs plus 7000 persons in Education & Research), thus 48% of the projected population should be engaged in acquiring knowledge & carrying out Researches (Cultural Activities).

The remaining projection of population indicates 8400 persons engaged in revenue generating activities and 12,600 persons in supportive service sectors.

Recalling Mother's very strong indicator of Money Free Economy, it is clear that 16.8% of the projected population was expected to provide the revenue to develop sustainable internal economy.

Present situation is nowhere near the above referred projections and in fact, we are the best practitioners of the non-sustainable variety in most respects at present.

The purpose of this paper is not to criticize or to find faults with the present situation but to draw attention to some possibilities towards changes in direction that may help in eventually taking us towards sustainability and as well the main function of knowledge and research with spiritual value base to lead towards functional human unity.

In context of the now prevailing economic scenario, we need to consider two aspects:

- A. Housing & Utility Buildings with Infrastructure : Capital Costs.

(Town Development)

B. Human Resources Maintenance & Asset Maintenance : Recurring Costs.

A CAPITAL COSTS

Let us assume that we are to develop the Town to its full potential in the next 25 years, the projected costs without taking inflation into account is estimated at Rs.14,976 Crores i.e. Rs.24 lakh/person.

It is also considered reasonable that there will be floating population of approx 30% at any given time and facilities like guest houses, hotels and restaurants, etc. will have to cater for this population as well, we shall have to cater for 30% extra in terms of facilities and infrastructure.

The values that emerge from such considerations are substantive as projected in the following table:

| Phase | Period | Population increase | Cost @ Rs.24 lakh/person | Final population on completion of 1 st Phase | Floating Population @ 30% |
|-------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 1st | 2008-2012 | 3,000 | Rs. 936 Cr | 5,000 | 1,500 |
| 2nd | 2013-2018 | 5,000 | Rs.1,560 Cr | 10,000 | 3,000 |
| 3rd | 2019-2024 | 10,000 | Rs.3,120 Cr | 20,000 | 6,000 |
| 4th | 2025-2030 | 15,000 | Rs.4,680 Cr | 35,000 | 10,000 |
| 5th | 2031-2035 | 15,000 | Rs.4,680 Cr | 50,000 | 15,000 |

Considering the 1st Phase, estimate is Rs.936 Crores and if we consider that infrastructure will need to be completed in the 1st two years of development, we should take 100% of average for the first two years' costs and the balance can be spread over the remaining 3 years, which provides us with the following figures based on average annual cost of Rs.187.2 Crores.

| | | |
|----------------------|---|---------------|
| 1 st Year | - | 374.40 Crores |
| 2 nd Year | - | 374.40 Crores |
| 3 rd Year | - | 62.40 Crores |
| 4 th Year | - | 62.40 Crores |
| 5 th Year | - | 62.40 Crores |

2nd Phase costs have not been superimposed to keep the model simple at present.

Now let us look at the second aspect of Recurring Costs.

B. RECURRING COSTS

It is important to assume time scheduling for realization of the Town and expected growth of volunteer residents to the full realization of Auroville to arrive at the cost projections both in Capital terms and Recurring (operational) costs.

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Present Population | : | Approx. 2000 including 0 – 19 age group. |
| 1 st Phase Development From 2008-20042 | : | Approx. 5,000 |
| Increment | : | Approx. 3,000 |

Assuming comfort level for providing all facilities viz. food, clothing & basic needs including medical & transport facilities, etc. present per head monthly allowance of Rs.5,000 is considered inadequate and generally it is agreed that Rs.7,500 equivalent per person could provide a reasonable comfort level acceptable by most of the volunteers based on the 'KIND' economy.

To this we must add maintenance of buildings, residence & service facilities at the rate not less than Rs.2,500 per person per month i.e. Rs.10,000 pm/c.

To maintain the present population at the comfort level with "Totally KIND' economy, we have to generate resources to the tune of Rs.2 Crores/month or Rs.24 Crores/Annum.

What we do have at present is approx. Rs.5 crores/annum say 20% of what is needed.

If we carry this situation further to the level of 5,000 residents, the annual budget would be Rs.60 Crores and if sustainability has to be built into this economy, we need to provide for inflation for one and unforeseen circumstances for another and it will be safe to say that 25% should be built-in as reserve.

Thus with present population, we need Rs. 30 Crores/Annum and for any additional new resident, we shall require Rs.1,50,000 per annum to be added on.

It must be understood that donors will be supportive for the development costs but certainly not for the recurring costs and therefore serious planning needs to be done to develop revenue generation from our own assets and resources and this also indicate that if we go back to the distribution of population indicator as per the 1968 master plan, one person in revenue generation activity has to contribute for the maintenance of 6 persons or say Rs.75,000 per month or Rs.9 lakh/annum.

When we look at the various figures quoted both in A & B (not even precise as an Economists will comment), these indicate an enormous responsibility on the present population to start thinking seriously how to accept the responsibility to move towards

sustainability and resource management to realize the Mother's Vision in defined time-frame.

If these projections can serve the purpose of making us aware of the work ahead of us for serious course corrections, perhaps socio-economic planning will guide the future realization in appropriate direction.

A supplement to this 'loud thinking' is enclosed with some projects that can kick-start towards the goal of collective economy. (Refer to the Resource Development from Auroville's Asset).

Pashi Kapur : 22.05.08