

# Vaasal

வாசல்

*Meaning entrance, doorway, gateway, threshold, the space outside symbolically signifies the wealth of what is inside – every house has its own **vaasal** and every **vaasal** exists because there is something inside; the inside and outside are but two sides of the whole and cannot exist separately.*

*This newsletter called **Vaasal** is a humble offering to the outside and inside of each one of us, of Auroville, of humanity ....*

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**Contributors for this issue: Varadarajan, Syamala, Meenakshi, Harini**

At the threshold of our lives, of our homes, lies a vast – a vast immeasurable, rich, strong and resilient to the quirks of time and events. If our lives and homes and spheres are represented by a unique space called Auroville, this space is protected and cradled in the crib represented by the land on which Auroville was born. A dream of the Divine, conceived and delivered into this small particular corner of the earth –reason, logic, mind, analysis, will all but provide only a part of the whole picture – it is here because it was meant to be here!

And the spirit of Auroville is in each one of us, some who live here physically and those whose hearts and souls are here. Auroville is a dream becoming into action and it is a piece of work!!! Whoever thought this would be easy? Reality and life here are both beautiful and yet harsh, gentle and yet tough, full of hard work and yet steeped in ignorance, so clean and pure and yet so filled up by garbage, full of grace and yet drowned by our human arrogance – a world of living everyday paradoxes that we experience and which leaves us to wonder – what is this? Is this place really Auroville? Can this happen here? How come? Why? – the answers, as much as we struggle to accept, are: **YES** – this is Auroville and it has to happen here to reflect that we are still part of the world's humanity – we are no different from anyone, and our only encouragement is that we are here to want to consciously change.

People came here with an incredible faith; people came for answers, people were seekers, ‘... **and She tried to teach us not to think anymore ...**’ – spontaneity was one of the things to hang on to all these years, when one does things spontaneously, there is no thinking and you are only in the present; conditions were tough, but the spirit, adventure and idealism was high – there was no blue print handed down – no plans (as we narrowly understand the word) on how to do what – learning was day by day, trial and error and even then we didn't learn much, repeating mistakes, faux pas, glitches, etc and yet with all this faith, we learnt such an incredible lot!

And one of those sources of knowledge was from our own **threshold** – our doorsteps (at least what looked like our ‘doorsteps’, in those rugged times!) – from our neighbours – who were already there living, where knowledge was **apparently** hidden, forgotten, wiped out in the gamut of their existential worries for water, food, fodder, shelter. To most of us, these villages may not have been the high point in the Dravidian civilization, but their endurance and helpfulness even in the midst of such hardship testified to a deeply instilled spirituality and still full of memories of incredible patterns of survival that was poetic and yet, you were with always with simple and humble people. And at times this even drove you nuts, because you wanted to find answers to appease your mind! Only slowly did you realize that the gems and treasures of this place were to be searched for, wanted to be discovered ... could be discovered by those looking for them. They were simply not going to be handed over to you! This was part of the package.



The meeting point, at our thresholds, was work. The labour force to build the city, comprising men and women from the villages together with men and women from all over the world, became the pattern – and without specifically aiming for this, Auroville became a central point for most of the villages. In daily contact through work and several educational programmes for children, it slowly evolved this way. Each time out of a need, arose an initiative that was carried out, some with success and some not so, in spite of the best of intentions; some people may have profited in more ways than some others; women for the first time ventured from fodder-firewood collectors and agriculture labourers to household workers and working in handicrafts; several age-old socio-economic paradigms got shifted - again not with any specific planned intention.

Development and growth are always accompanied by their pangs. Auroville grew with its phases and twists and turns and villages also grew with their phases and twists and turns – for every change that took place inside the house there was one taking place in our thresholds – we called some of those outside shifts as bad, while our changes were viewed as worse! At times there were impasses, when the higher motivations of building a township, did not translate into the language of subsistence realities.

And yet, in spite of all the unimaginable crisscross of everything - purpose, comprehension, language, culture, or whatever, such a lot has happened in such a short time!!! We are just 44 years here on this small place on earth and we have survived – in spite of the fragility of everything – and yet survived with such a growing life-force and progression - with such an overflowing treasure basket of history that is our raw data for a life time of research, in this stark world of contrasts that is present everywhere – not just around us, but also within us ; even when some may have become more resigned to circumstances, and some others may feel that much from the original ideals have got distorted; just as the idealism of the older generations may not find its way to the younger ones, whether inside our homes or at our doorsteps; and yet still there is force that keeps us going, allowing us to slip, fall, getup, dust our bruises, wipe our tears, smile and keep going forward in spite of what we are, who we are...

And at our very doorstep, after 44 years there is no existential worries for food, fodder, shelter; the needs automatically become higher order. A job security for as many as more than 3000 households, has allowed for improvement of lifestyles according to people's priorities. There has been an improvement in living conditions in the villages; just as there were changes in the lifestyle of Auroville - very basic and simple living gave way to better and more comfort; walkers and bicyclists were taken over by motorized traffic both inside and outside our doorsteps! an enormous hunger for formal education not available within this area earlier has made people go out for this - to get them out of their cycle of generations of deprivation. Whether it is cash circulation or new consumption patterns, it is noticeable everywhere – inside as much as outside.

The upward spiral of development will keep taking place and downward swings will also be witnessed – this is life and in these spiraling movements, there will always be attempts to arrest the steep peaks and falls - some would be natural spokes beyond our control and some would be through conscious intervention mechanisms that, one of Auroville's raison d'être namely, '**the opportunity to grow fully**', can fulfill.

And luckily we didn't have the opportunity to make another religion of how to do what concerning human relations and therefore get stuck there – the realm of socio-economic- political paradigms were to be used, according each one's past knowledge for all their worth, but sustained solutions for humanity could not come from there alone – the other realms had to be touched. And this could be only by experience and understanding; by compassion and faith in the midst of our fears and frustrations, by going a bit deeper at very stage and always being the eternal seeker, searching...

## Search's quest

How many questions, about what is happening  
About what has happened, about was made to happen  
Whatever has to be said  
I am not able to say  
What I want to say is very little, but what I end up  
saying is even smaller!

We can even bore through a tiny mustard seed  
These events could affect me?  
Who has taken this decision?  
Whose play is this all?  
Search, and Search is what I become  
Search outside  
Search inside  
Search within and without  
Search everywhere, in each and everything  
What does Search look like?  
Does it have eyes?  
And do the eyes have light?  
Search is a tapasya  
It does not end completely  
Search can be motionless  
Search is a silence  
Search for whom?  
It's not for me

Not for anyone in particular  
Search is for us, its gets clear  
For life  
For sensing  
Is it search for relationships?  
For something that is unknown?  
Is it for going towards clarity?  
Is it true that Search is for all living beings?...

(to be concluded)

*"Thedalin Thedal"* by R. Meenakshi, resident of Auroville since 1976

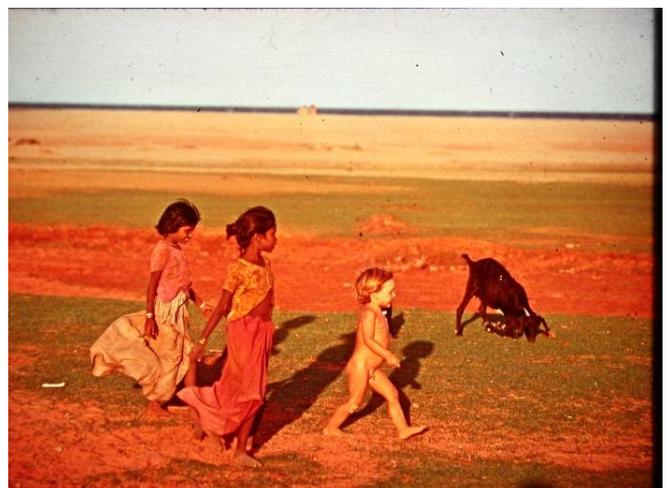


Photo by Dominique Darr, Source: Auroville Website Archives

## Alankuppam's teacher

When the great poet **Subramania Bharathi** lived for those 10 years in Pondicherry, during this time, was a teacher posted in the Govt schools of Mutharapalayam, Koonichampet, Villianur, Alankuppam, Thirunallar, Thirubhuvanai, all belonging to the Pondicherry state.

When he was posted as school teacher in Alankuppam, in the month of October 1916 he met Bharathi, according to researcher Seeni Viswanathan. This has proof, in 2 articles that appeared in the Tamil nationalistic newspaper Swadesamitran, in the year 1916 – one of these articles talks about this teacher's experience of a huge cyclone, in this area. This '**Alankuppathu vaathiyar**' (Alankuppam's teacher)', endearingly called so by Bharathi was none other than Suburathinam or the famous revolutionary poet, who called himself **Bharathidasan** (follower of Bharathi).

**Post-script** - Alankuppam is a village which today belongs to Uzhavakarai commune of Pondicherry alongwith the neighbouring Sanjeevinagar, Puthunagar, bordering Tamil Nadu's Vanur block; it is connected to Auroville's Masterplan.

Alive are still a few of those people who knew this great teacher - known also as **Paavendar!!!**.

"*Alankuppathu Vaathiyar*" by R. Meenakshi, Semman Madalkal, 2012



Courtesy Bryan Walton collection, Source: Auroville Website Archives

## My connection with the Mother's Yoga

*Syamala, a resident since 1969, says:*

Personally, the Yoga for me has been impacted deeply by The Mother's touch, Her consciousness and Her work with flowers; for me, these were my anchoring corners in my path. However on the aspect working with numbers and symbol of the Mother, I started doing this consciously from 2002 onwards, along with Muthukumari who came to stay with me in Promesse and also to explain something to those local children who were curious and wished to know more.

Earlier than all this, I was already concentrating to working with the qualities of the Mother, especially the 4 qualities of **goodness, equality, generosity and peace** – and I have seen how much this has helped me.

I recall in those very early years, when one of the few integrated families in those times had cultivated wonderful tomatoes in a kitchen garden; one of these tomatoes was offered to the Mother via Poornaprema – the Mother was very happy to receive this offering

and asked Poorna about how many integrated families were there; not knowing for sure whether it was 4 or 5, she said 5. The Mother sent to all of these 5 families - blessing packets each – it did not matter to Her that only one of them had sent the tomato, as She wished to bless all these families, At that time this event did not appear so important for me, but many years later I realized that this was the *equality* aspect of the Mother, for whom everybody was important.

Another quality that I personally have been working on myself for years has been the quality of goodness; and also once during a workshop offered by Aurelio in Verite, when we were asked to choose a quality of the Mother as represented by the Matrimandir petals, by picking up a card at random, the card that came into my hand, was also goodness! When working very consciously on this quality, have seen the beauty and strength of it in my life here – to wish goodness even to people who have done you wrong, without getting angry or cursing them, but by sending them good vibrations, and this, on some occasions has even brought back my stolen belongings!

Excerpts from an interview

## Occult and mystical significance of numbers

*Varadarajan, a resident of Auroville since 1969, shares a couple of his experiences:*

I had been coming to the Ashram since 15<sup>th</sup> August 1964 from Chennai for several occasions and Darshans – I also came on a very special day 4.5.67 with some friends and relatives to the Ashram; according to Sri Aurobindo, just like the date 1.2.34 ushered in the year of Manifestation, and 2.3.45 brought in the year of Power, - ie when what is manifested gets its full force, this date 4.5.67 was the year of complete Realization. On this day 4.5.67, we, attended the common meditation; and that evening there was a special Darshan given by the Mother - everything was so beautiful, draped in golden coloured cloth; we received the day's message and also a badge with the symbol of the Ishwara-Ishwari shakti equally manifesting – I just cannot express in words what was felt on this day!

Another date 7.7.70 that was very significant for me – I was already in Auroville and went with others in the Aspiration group and met the Mother and when I asked her the significance of this date – she looked at me, smiled and showed 4 fingers of her hand, saying '*what will be interesting is four sevens*'; she repeated this expression again; I didn't ask her anything further, because I thought it was a message for me find out for myself.

On this day 7.7.77 (the Mother had already left her physical body in 73), I went to the Matrimandir and read Savitri's Return to Earth; and significantly on that very same day Nolinida expressed in a talk the meaning of this date as follows – *...the four sevens mean manifestation and realization – manifestation being the appearance of the truth that is hidden behind somewhere and comes forward and shows*

itself, while realization being expressing this truth which has come forward in our consciousness, make it real on the physical plane and embodying it our external activities; in other words whatever you do, do the truth and whatever you speak, you speak the truth; the truth first appears in your mind in your mental consciousness and then realizes in your physical activities; number 7 gives the scheme of creation; it is the number of words that constitute creation ... Nolinida added that this was the mantra of creation that Sri Aurobindo gave him and explained to him almost 70 years ago when he first came to Pondicherry!

I have been here for more than 40 years and it is like 40 lives experiences – and I am very grateful to Auroville to give me this opportunity to be here - I was always highly impacted by the meaning of numbers, but this meaning has become deeper over the years.

Excerpts from an interview



Courtesy Bryan Walton collection, Source: Auroville Website Archives

## Who is a worker?

We associate the month of May with Worker's day; Ours is a world of workers – work gives you to right to live anywhere – some work using the body, some work more with the mind and some work on other levels for humanity. Who can live without working? For how long can the mighty live from the work of the weak?

For many 24 hours is just not enough! .....Each one has to be responsible for her/ his time; You cannot use my time to do what you want and neither can I do so vice-versa; in this manner accountability for time differs from person to person; because not only is anybody's time is not under our control, but is also closely associated with the element of space – that's why one's working time just cannot be spared for another person. Every man's time and space relationship has a very particular pattern. Just as particular and unique as finger prints, handwriting, body odour, genetic mapping, sensory perceptions, emotional upheavals, inner flames,...

In a broad sense of the word, labour refers to people who are working for wages, usually one who is employed by somebody and therefore becomes a subject of a power dynamic between the two, based on a contractual agreement. But this employer today, could have one day been an employee himself at one time, not long ago; it is also a reality that the same person today assumes an authority to control another humble worker in front of him.

And so who is the employer and who is the employee – and whom should we be? Is there anywhere an employer without the intention of using his power or an employee who does not have feelings self-pity? Yes, certainly - the ideal employee and ideal employer – for both, the basis or foundation is the **actual work** – not merely the dynamics of



Courtesy Bryan Walton collection, Source: Auroville Website Archives

capital / money; to highlight this, The Mother has in A Dream\* said that (-in this ideal place-) money will not be the governing force. Without the forces of power, if one is able to work according to his capacities, then in such an ideal place, the community would be able to take care of the person's basic needs. When mankind is able to work freely, when work becomes an aspect of the Divine, and work is a tool for the divine's expression, it evolves to become the Karma Yoga.

Then can we henceforth celebrate happily this May day, not just as Labourer's Day or Worker's day, but a day of Karma Yogis?

Excerpts from the article "Who is a worker?" by R. Meenakshi

\*..For in this ideal place money would be no more the sovereign lord. Individual merit will have a greater importance than the value due to material wealth and social position. Work would not be there as the means of gaining one's livelihood, it would be the means whereby to express oneself, develop one's capacities and possibilities, while doing at the same time service to the wholegroup, which on its side would provide for each one's subsistence and for the field of his work...

A Dream, The Mother, Aug 1954