

## RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VILLAGERS AND INTEGRATION AS AUROVILIANS

The Mother considered the population residing in the surrounding villages as the first natural inhabitants of Auroville. Integration of the villagers was encouraged in all ways; but before this happened, whenever the worker accepted, the Mother recommended the Auroville Prosperity 'in kind' system instead of wages. The children of the workers were welcomed in the Auroville schools on an equal basis with Aurovilians. The Mother also sought the creation of model villages along with rural cooperatives, where villagers and Aurovilians were to work side by side; not only in order to make Auroville self-sufficient but also as an effective education in human unity.

### *Ashram Workers: Members of a Family with the Mother as their Head*

*[The text below, not often quoted, concludes with Mother's vision in 1946 for an ad hoc syndicate of the Ashram's workers that "should elect a committee which represents the various shades of opinion among the workers". Then, "having deliberated and arrived at a decision that it considers just and reasonable, (the committee) would present it to me (the Mother) for action through their president."]*

### DECLARATION TO THE WORKERS OF SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

It is my desire to explain to the workers the special relationship that exists between them and me as compared with the ordinary relationship between employer and employees. It is also my desire that having understood this special relationship the workers should always keep this understanding before them in all their deliberations and in all the joint demands which they make to me.

This special relationship is as follows:

(a) The work in the Ashram is not done for profit, as is well known. Therefore during the war when things became expensive and difficult for everyone, it became so for me too, without my income increasing in any way by the fact of the same circumstances. Industrial and commercial concerns made more profits and so could easily increase the wages, but here in the Ashram only the expenses went on increasing. In spite of this, in view of the difficulties of the workers I gave them regular increments and dearness allowances.

(b) There have been times when there was no work for some workers, but unlike business firms I have never dismissed workers but have always endeavoured to find some other work for them to do. It has always been my policy not to send away, for want of work, workers who have served faithfully. I could have easily done so and could have even closed down all the works without any serious hardship to the Ashram. But by doing so I would have only increased the general misery which is already so great, and that I did not want to do.

(c) There are a good number of workers who have worked for me for many long years and have served me with devotion and faithfulness and who besides considering me as their employer have also looked to me as their protector, of them and their families.

(d) On the whole the workers of the Ashram have so far worked more or less as members of a family with me as their head, and this special relationship has no doubt brought benefit to many of them. I would like to preserve this relationship and make it the foundation for all my dealings with the workers.

With these points in view, it is suggested that the workers of the Ashram should form a separate syndicate of their own, since they stand with regard to their employer in a different position from other workers, as has already been explained. This syndicate might be affiliated to the general body of workers, but would maintain its own line of action and conduct.

It is further suggested that this syndicate of Ashram workers should elect a committee which represents the various shades

of opinion among the workers. This committee would receive and consider the demands put forward by the workers and, having deliberated and arrived at a decision that it considers just and reasonable, would present it to me for action through their president. I will receive with goodwill and sympathy all requests of this kind and will act for the best according to the reasonableness of the demand.

In these times of struggle and conflict and misery and suffering I offer to all who wish to work under me, with me, the possibility of a reciprocal understanding and a fruitful and beneficial collaboration.

*MCWCE, XIII, pp. 176-8, 5.3.1946*

*[Envisaging an ideal set up for the employees of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the Mother wrote this second text in 1954, shortly before writing "A Dream." The concepts presented in the following text resurfaced in the notes regarding the Auroville "Labour Colony", which the Mother had planned for the workers of the Auromodel construction site and, afterwards, for the town itself. "A Dream", and this text as well, contain in nuce principles that are essential for the comprehension of the Mother's vision in its integrality.]*

TO THE EMPLOYEES  
OF THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

What I wish to do for you.

I shall tell you how I view the solution of your problems, both individual and collective, and what is the truth of the relation between us.

But for the working out of the programme I am going to place before you, two essential conditions are necessary. First, I must have the financial means to execute my plan; secondly, you must show a minimum of sincerity, honesty and goodwill in your attitude towards me and towards your work. You have

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1 Although written originally for the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the latter has been associated to Auroville since its inception. *[Comp.]*