PAVILION OF TIBETAN CULTURE

Patron: His Holiness the Dalai Lama
I feel that Tibetan culture with its unique heritage – born of the effort of many human beings of good spirit, of its contacts with Chinese, Indian, Nepalese and Persian culture, and due to its natural environment – has developed some kind of energy which is useful, and very helpful, towards cultivating peace of mind and a joyful life. I feel that there is a potential for Tibet to help humanity, and particularly our Eastern neighbour, where millions of young Chinese have lost their spiritual values.

In this way I feel very strongly that Tibetan culture will have a future role to play in humanity. So therefore, wherever there are spiritual centres like Auroville, if Tibet can participate it can be a way or a channel to communicate Tibetan culture to other people.

The Dalai Lama
There should be somewhere upon earth a place that no nation could claim as its sole property, a place where all human beings of good will, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the supreme Truth; a place of peace, concord, harmony, where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his suffering and misery, to surmount his weakness and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the concern for progress would get precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the seeking for pleasures and material enjoyments. In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their soul. Education would be given, not with a view to passing examinations and getting certificates and posts, but for enriching the existing faculties and bringing forth new ones. In this place titles and positions would be supplanted by opportunities to serve and organise. The needs of the body would be provided for equally in the case of each and everyone. In the general organisation intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority would find expression not in the enhancement of the pleasures and powers of life but in the increase of duties and responsibilities. Artistic beauty in all forms, painting, sculpture, music, literature, would be available equally to all, the opportunity to share in the joys they bring being limited solely by each one's capacities and not by social or financial position. For in this ideal place money would be no more the sovereign lord. Individual merit would 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 one expresses oneself, developing one's capacities and possibilities, while doing at the same time service to the whole group, which, on its side, would provide for each one's subsistence and for the field of his work. In brief, it would be a place where relations among human beings, usually based almost exclusively upon competition and strife, would be replaced by relations of emulation for doing better, for collaboration, relations of real brotherhood.

The Mother, 1954
SUMMARY

In June 1997, we started the construction of the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture, in the International Zone in Auroville, the city under construction in South India. Auroville was founded in 1968 by The Mother, the spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo; she envisaged a community of 50,000 people in a "site for material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity."

Auroville is dedicated to the cause of international understanding (an ideal very close to the concept of Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama). Toward this aim Auroville has received the unanimous endorsement of the General Assembly of UNESCO in 1966, 1968, 1970 and 1983.

Today, the world is increasingly faced with the challenges of a multi-cultural society, its attendant problems and potentials. With the world growing smaller, a global perspective becomes possible. Yet, for most of the world's communities, regional rivalries are the norm, and prejudice and discrimination cause violence, strife and war.

There is a need for a place like Auroville, dedicated to brotherhood, human unity and international understanding.

The urban concept of Auroville consists of four zones; the International Zone is seen as the "Zone of Communication" where cultures of several countries, grouped by region, will be represented. The purpose is to acknowledge the greatness of each country, its contribution to the whole, and the essential oneness of all countries. The Pavilion of Tibetan Culture will represent the unique spirit and achievements of Tibet and its specific contribution to world spirituality and culture. The coordination of the project is the responsibility of the Tibetan Pavilion Committee along with the Department of Home of the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala.

It is significant in view of Auroville's dedication to its spiritual goals, that the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture will be the second Pavilion in the International Zone after the Bharat Nivas (Indian Pavilion). In 1993, His Holiness the Dalai Lama accepted to be the Patron of the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture. It was the consecration of years of fruitful exchanges between Auroville and the Tibetan refugees in India. In December of the same year, he visited Auroville to lay the Foundation Stone of the Pavilion. A brick brought from Tibet was used for the purpose.

In October 1997, he contributed Rs 100,000 as seed money for the Pavilion.
OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERNATIONAL ZONE

1] To create in Auroville, a focus for the representation and expression of different cultures of the world in order to enrich the residents and the local population, as well as visitors from India and all over the world.

1] To provide a focus in Auroville for research and experimentation in human unity, cultural exchanges and international collaboration.

1] To pay homage to the specific genius of the cultures of the world and to identify the qualities each embodies which could help the world on its way towards human unity, and to demonstrate how all cultures are essentially one.

The following quote of His Holiness the Dalai Lama gives a clear idea of the objectives of the Pavilions:

We are deeply impressed by the spiritual aim behind the building of an international city called Auroville. The importance of the effort to achieve human unity and international co-operation by the creation of such a city cannot be over-emphasised; nor can we neglect the benefit to be acquired from it. We are therefore very keen to be the first country to build a Pavilion. We understand that this pavilion will be dedicated to the essence of Tibetan culture in an effort to show that out of the diversity of world cultures, these pavilions can help to create a new harmony towards world human unity.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama laying the foundation stone of the Pavilion in December 1993
PLAN OF ACTION

The construction of the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture started in June 1997. We are hoping to complete a first wing by March 1998. On a total budget of $200,000, some funds have already been raised, this includes a contribution from His Holiness the Dalai Lama as seed money (see attached letter).

The Pavilion will have a total plinth area of about 1000 m2 and contain an exhibition hall, a library, a mediatheque, a multi-purpose room, an office/reception, a caretaker's room, a few guest rooms and a small restaurant.

The Pavilion will be a centre of Tibetan studies and at the same time a centre of exchange between Auroville and young Tibetans living in India. The experiences of both communities could be shared on a very practical level and each could benefit from the other's experiences.

For the world, Tibet represents a very profound source of knowledge which is on the brink of being lost.

Auroville wants to participate in the preservation of the living and unique patrimony of Tibet. For this, seminars, conferences, workshops will be organised in the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture and eminent lamas, doctors, researchers etc. will be invited to attend them.

A very important part of the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture will be the Guest House which would allow an exchange between young Tibetans and Aurovilians. It would also bring a permanent Tibetan presence in Auroville.

Vocational training is already being given to young Tibetans in the fields of appropriate building technology, alternative energy, afforestation, education, printing technology, hygiene and dental care, etc.

The trainees usually remain in Auroville for periods of a few of weeks or months, participate in the collective process of Auroville, and at the same time learn a skill which will be beneficial to other Tibetans in India.

A young participant of the 1st Awareness Workshop on a Sustainable Future of Tibet
HUMAN RESOURCES

The Project of the Tibetan Pavilion is co-sponsored by the Central Tibetan Relief Committee, a branch of the Home Department of the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala and the Auroville Foundation.

In Auroville, a coordinating body, the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture Committee has been created to oversee and monitor the fund raising and the construction of the Pavilion.

Two architects Andre Hababou and Serge Mainini from France have prepared the detailed plans.

Roger Anger, the head architect of Auroville, is supervising the work in collaboration with the two above architects.

Construction is being done by the Auroville Building Centre, a unit of the Centre of Scientific Research, Auroville.

The Department of Home of the Central Tibetan Administration has sent Tibetan masons from the Tibetan settlements in India to provide free labour for the Pavilion. It is at the same time a very good opportunity for the masons to get trained in new technologies.

CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION

The Pavilion of Tibetan Culture has itself for the past ten years contributed to the cultural life of Auroville in organising regular activities such as:

- A “Tibet Week” in 1987
- A “Tibetan Medicine Week” in 1989
- Performances by the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, Dharamsala
- A Yamantaka Sand Mandala by the monks of the Lower Tantric College
- “Sounds of Tibet” by the monks of Ganden Shartse
- Two “Workshops for a Sustainable Future of Tibet”
THE INTERNATIONAL TOWNSHIP OF AUROVILLE

Auroville was founded by The Mother in 1968, who envisaged an international township of 50,000 people as a "site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity."

On 28 February, 1968, Auroville was inaugurated on a barren plateau of red laterite in the presence of 5,000 people from all over the world; representatives of 121 countries (including Tibet) and 23 Indian States placed a handful of soil from their respective countries in a lotus-shaped urn at the centre of Auroville. The Charter of Auroville and the following message from Mother were read in 16 languages including Tibetan.

Greetings from Auroville to all men of good will.
Are invited to Auroville all those who thirst for Progress and aspire to a higher and truer life.
Today, Auroville is an expanding community of about 1300 people, from India and from 30 countries around the world. Located in a backward rural area of the South-Arcot District of Tamil Nadu, South India, it is surrounded by 20 villages with approximately 35,000 inhabitants.

As a "place of an unending education and constant progress", Auroville has grown over the past twenty-five years into a community with manifold activities, in many of which it has had noteworthy accomplishments.

Auroville has received the unanimous endorsement of the General Assembly of UNESCO in 1966, 1968, 1970 and 1983. Governmental and non-governmental organisations in India and abroad have funded various development programmes. Support has also been received from foundations in Europe and the United States, from Auroville International Centres and from private donors all over the world.

Since its conception, the Aurovilians who come from all over the world have provided the major contribution of resources and energy to the Auroville project.

The Government of India has committed itself to the development of Auroville through providing substantial financial support over the past 25 years, and has accorded it a special legal status under the Auroville Foundation Act in 1988.
MORE ON AUROVILLE

Auroville is an exciting project for bringing about harmony among different cultures, and for understanding the environmental needs of man's spiritual growth. (Indira Gandhi)

THE CONCEPT OF THE TOWNSHIP

The town is divided into four zones: Cultural, Industrial, Residential and International. These zones represent the essential activities of man in society: culture and education, work and administration, residence, and the fourth zone, the International zone will be the embodiment of Auroville's raison d'etre: an actual human unity.

Adjacent to the city proper, there are Intermediary Zones for Public Services (post office, bank, public transport, etc.) and staff housing. The city is surrounded by a Green Belt whose purpose is:

- to develop farms, dairies, poultry, etc. to produce food for the residents of Auroville;
- to act as a living interface with the "outside";
- to serve as a field for practical research and experimentation in environmental and rural regeneration;
- to create a healthy micro-climate for the bio-region.

Auroville's larger bio-region and the villages in the surrounding area — especially three villages in the immediate proximity of the city area — are an essential part of the testing ground.

In the International Zone — the zone of communication — the countries of the world are invited to build a pavilion representing their specific culture.

THE INTERNATIONAL ZONE

In 1952, the Mother mentioned for the first time in detail her idea of building the pavilions of all major cultures of the world in one place:... the cultures of the different regions of the earth will be represented here in such a way as to
be accessible to all, not merely intellectually, in ideas, theories, principles and languages, but also vitally, in habits and customs, in art under all forms – painting, sculpture, music, architecture, decoration – and physically too through natural scenery, dress, games, sport, industries and food. A kind of world-exhibition has to be organised in which all the countries will be represented in a concrete and living manner; the ideal would be that every nation with a very definite culture would have a pavilion representing that culture, built on a model that most displays the habits of products, natural as well as manufactured, products that best express its intellectual and artistic genius and its spiritual tendencies. Each nation would thus find a practical and concrete interest in the cultural synthesis and collaborate in the work by taking over the charge of the pavilion that represents it. A lodging house also could be attached, large or small according to the need, where students of the same nationality would be accommodated...

In 1965, she wrote: Each pavilion has its own garden with, as far as possible, a representation of the plants and products of the country which it represents. If they have enough money and enough space, they can also have a small museum or permanent exhibition of the country's achievements. The buildings should be constructed according to the architecture of each country – its should be like a document of information. Then, depending on the money they wish to spend, they could also have accommodation for students, conference rooms, etc., a cuisine of the country, a restaurant of the country – they could have all kinds of developments."

She also mentioned: All countries are essentially one. Each one of them represents an aspect of the One Supreme. In the terrestrial manifestation they all have the same right for free expression of themselves. From the spiritual point of view, the importance of a country does not depend on its size or its power or its authority over other countries, but on its response to Truth and on the degree of Truth it is capable of manifesting."

As such, the cultural pavilions will play an active role in Auroville, as they focus on one of the major challenges of modern humanity: human unity in diversity.
THE INTERNATIONAL ZONE TODAY

Bharat Nivas, the Pavilion of Indian Culture, was started in 1970; it includes a large auditorium-cum-conference hall (seating capacity 700), an equally large restaurant (seating capacity 500).

A Centre for Research in Indian Culture (CIC) has been established; it also incorporates the Hall of Culture and the Centre for Indian Studies. The purpose of the Centre is to act as an interface between the culture of India and other cultures of the world.

Besides, Auroville has hosted seminars bringing together youth and adults from all over the world in the cause of international understanding. There are on-going cultural activities by the residents of Auroville and by talented visiting artists.

The Indian Council of Philosophical Research organised a National Seminar on "International Understanding" in Auroville in 1984.

"Youth and Human Unity", an international conference, was organised on 1985 as part of the International Youth Year with the help of UNESCO and the Government of India.

"Peace Trees", a programme organised by The EarthStewards Network in December 1988, brought together 45 youth from the U.S.A., USSR and India to break down the barriers between East and West, rich and poor, and to restore health to a deforested piece of the earth by planting trees in Auroville.

In 1994, an international conference "Humanity at the Crossroad: Evolution of Consciousness" was held with the financial support of UNESCO.

Auroville is the venue for a number of international endeavours in the fields of art, dance, music, architecture, research and education.
Generating the plans

The plans of the Pavilion
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