

Auroville's International University

Historical Background

For the Ashram] there has never been, at any time, a mental plan, fixed programme or an organisation decided beforehand. The whole thing has taken birth, grown and developed as a living being by a movement of consciousness (Chit-tapas) constantly maintained, increased and fortified.

(Sri Aurobindo, 1939)

This document has two aims:

- To prove beyond any doubt that the Mother wanted to establish in Auroville an International University which would house pavilions of the various cultures of the world; that she wanted it to be of very different kind than any other University and that she did not want its management to be handed over to any U.N. agency, any Government or any other institution.
- To show how the Ashram School was born and became the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre before becoming the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE), how Auroville was born and what the Mother said and did so that Auroville has its own International University. The way these things happen is very interesting.

By Gilles G.

8th April 2011 version

Universal Exhibitions in Paris whose Cultural Pavilions the Mother must have visited

The first of the huge international exhibitions, the “Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations” was held in London in 1851; but it is Paris, the Mother’s home-town, which has hosted more (Universal or International) exhibitions than any other city in the world – starting in 1855. As it was in Britain that the industrial revolution had started and as France could not compete as yet in this field alone; its first huge exhibition, in 1855 in Paris, was called: “Exposition Universelle des produits de l’agriculture, de l’industrie et des beaux arts”. The following ones, in 1867 and 1878 were simply called “Exposition Universelle.” Universal in this context meant that it pertained to all human activities – including art and culture.

1889, May 5th – October 31st: 4th Universal Exhibition held in Paris. This one was to commemorate the centenary of the French Revolution; it covered 95 hectares (240 acres), 35 countries participated and it received 32 million visitors. It is for this exhibition that the Eiffel Tower was built.

The Mother (then 11) must have visited it and some of the Pavilions of the various countries of the world. Her mother, Mathilde née Ismalun and grandmother Mirra née Pinto¹ must have been very keen to show to Mattéo and Mirra the replica of a street of Cairo with its 25 houses, its minaret (a copy of that of Kalid-Bey Mosque), its 225 indigenous people, its donkeys, bazaars, coffees, etc.



1900, April 15th – November 12th: 5th Universal Exhibition held in Paris to sum up the past 19th century; it covered 120 hectares (300 acres); 58 countries participated and it received 51 million visitors. The second Olympic Games of the modern era took place in Paris during this Exhibition and so did a ‘Congrès Mondial de l’Histoire de Religions’ and a Conférence du Congrès Théosophique. It is most probably at the latter that the Mother listened to a talk by Gnanendranath Chakravarti² who then gave her the key to the Gita.



The Mother (then 22) must have visited this exhibition and probably some of the Pavilions of the countries of the world. (Those represented above were built along the river Seine.)

Many more Universal/International Exhibitions hosting pavilions of the countries of the world will be held in large cities in various parts of the world (the most recent one was in Shanghai).

These facts are mentioned here because, in 1965, the Mother will speak of Auroville as a “Universal Township” hosting Pavilions of the various cultures of the world in its International Zone. The Pavilions the Mother will speak of for Auroville are clearly of a different nature than those hosted in these exhibitions and in a very different context – that of a University.

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¹ Mathilde (and her son Mattéo) were born in Alexandria, but her mother, Mirra Pinto was born and raised in Cairo.

² Chakravarti and Anie Besant had represented the Theosophical Society at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 at Chicago. Swami Vivekananda was the undisputed star of this event.

1942, December 20th & 24th: World War II is raging; planes from a Japanese aircraft carrier bomb Calcutta and its vicinity hitting docks, shipping and airfields in the area. It leads to an exodus of residents. Some disciples decide to leave to Pondicherry in the hope of being safe next to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Before that children were not allowed at the Ashram.

1943, December 2nd: The Mother feels the need to educate the children who have come as a result of the Japanese bombing and formally opens a school for about 20 children³. She is one of the teachers. The numbers will increase progressively during the next seven years.

1945, August 15th: Sri Aurobindo's 73th birthday.

Following the explosion of two atomic bombs, Japan's Emperor announces his country's official capitulation on Japanese Radio. WW II is de facto over though the formal capitulation will only be signed officially on September 2nd.

1947, August 15th: Sri Aurobindo's 75th birthday.

India is free from British occupation⁴ – but Pondicherry remains French and Goa Portuguese.

1947, September 27th: Maurice Schuman (envoy of the French Government) and François Baron (Governor of the French Territories in India) are granted an interview by Sri Aurobindo 'to explore the possibility of opening an Institute at Pondicherry for the study of Indian and European culture. In the course of his talk, Sri Aurobindo told the French visitors that, next to India, he loved France most, and the proposed Institute might afford facilities to students from all over the world to study the Indian civilisation with its many elements in creative interactions.

On the political front, it was Sri Aurobindo's suggestion to the French and Indian Government that, while Pondicherry and the other French areas should certainly merge with India immediately, they should also be conceded the right to retain their cultural (as distinct from political) contacts with France, for this would be in the wider interest of both India and France. While the French Government was sympathetic to the proposal, it didn't find favour at New Delhi and this resulted in a mild confrontation and an unsavoury stalemate.⁵

1948, December 30th – 1950 November: Sri Aurobindo publishes in the *Bulletin* a series of eight articles which are now compiled in "*The Supramental manifestation upon Earth*": An Introduction (December 1948), "*The Perfection of the Body*" (March 1949), "*The Divine Body*" (August 1949), "*The Supramental and Divine Life*" (November 1949), "*The Supramental and Humanity*" (January 1950), "*The Supramental and evolution*" (April 1950), "*The Mind of Light*" (August 1950), "*The Supramental and the Mind of Light*" (November 1950).

1949-1954: In order to pressurise the French Government to let go of its Indian Territories, India does an economic blockade of Pondicherry. Naturally it is also harming the Ashram and the development of its activities.

1950, November 1st: Pope Pius XII uses his papal authority to make of Mary's Assumption a church dogma to be celebrated on August 15th which happens to be Sri Aurobindo's birthday. The Mother explained:

"Sri Aurobindo was aware of the 'coincidence'. The dogma of the Assumption symbolises Matter entering the Divine Consciousness – Sri Aurobindo's own work. Mary stands for the earth's being."

³ Aster Patel is one of them. Richard Pearson (Ashram) joined it in 1946.

⁴ It is not by chance that India's independence day coincides with the end of WW II for this date was chosen and announced to the surprise of all on June 4th 1947 by the then Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, at the end of a press conference called to announce India's partition. Lord Mountbatten had been made 'Supreme Allied Commander for the South East Asia Command' on August 15th 1943 and, exactly two years later, on August 15th 1945 he had enjoyed victory on his front. He alone decided that India will be free exactly two years after V-Day.

August 15th is also Sri Aurobindo's birthday and he did not consider that this was by chance for he had worked tirelessly both for the victory of the allies in WW II and for India's freedom.

⁵ *On the Mother*, by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, p. 571

1950, November: The Mother publishes a first article in the Bulletin: “*The Science of Living*”

1950, December 5th: Sri Aurobindo leaves his body; he will be buried on 9th in the courtyard of the Ashram.

1951, February, 2nd: Following a referendum organised in the then French territory of Chandernagore (where Sri Aurobindo had stayed shortly before sailing to Pondicherry), it merges with India. (It is very close to Calcutta.)

1951, February: The Mother publishes a second article in the Bulletin: “*Education*”

1951, April: The Mother publishes a third article in the Bulletin: “*Physical Education*”

1951, April 24-25th: The Mother had called for a Sri Aurobindo Memorial Convention on these two days - thus celebrating also the 31st Anniversary of her return to Pondicherry. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar will later write that it was a representative and distinguished gathering of intellectuals and educationists of India who felt concerned about the future.”

In her inaugural message, the Mother launched the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre:

Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the University Centre which for years he considered as one of the best means of preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will transform the elite of today into a new race manifesting upon earth the new light and force and life.

In his name I open today this convention meeting with the purpose of realising one of his most cherished ideals.

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar commented later: “The question had been posed earlier when the idea of the Convention was mooted whether, after all, a memorial to Sri Aurobindo should not take the form of a Yoga Institute “carried on under the guidance of great Indian Yogis” instead of a modern University. But clearly Sri Aurobindo himself had discussed the university idea with the Mother, and had also once told Surendra Mohan Ghose⁶ that it was intended to develop the school and the Ashram into a university that was as large as life, and comprehended the past present and future.”

One of the participants, Kalidas Nag tells the audience: “Thus, Sri Aurobindo is the University pointing to a radically new conception of the term. It should not be a mere copy of the universities of India or abroad. Sri Aurobindo University should aspire to provide the training ground for youths who would build up a new personality in a new universe.”

Nolini Kanta Gupta says that the ideal before the sponsors of the University would be “nothing less than the founding of a new mankind upon earth – with a new life and a new consciousness.”

1951 July 24th: The Mother addresses the students of the Ashram School by answering the question: Why are we here in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram⁷?

There is an ascending evolution which goes from the stone to the plant, from the plant to the animal, from the animal to man. Because man is, for the moment, the last rung at the summit of this ascending evolution, he considers himself as the final stage in this ascension and believes there can be nothing on earth superior to him. In that he is mistaken. In his physical nature he is yet almost wholly animal, a thinking and speaking animal, but still an animal in his material habits and instincts. Undoubtedly, nature cannot be satisfied with such an imperfect result; she endeavours to bring out a being who will be to man what man is to the animal, a being who will remain a man in its external form, and yet whose consciousness will rise far above the mental and its slavery to ignorance.

Sri Aurobindo came upon earth to teach this truth to men. He told them that man is only a transitional being living in a mental consciousness, but with the possibility of acquiring a new consciousness, the Truth-consciousness, and capable of living a life perfectly harmonious, good

⁶ Surendra Mohan Ghose was a veteran Congress politician who was the only person not living in the Ashram whom Sri Aurobindo received regularly after his withdrawal in 1926.

⁷ The Mother’s reply certainly equally applies to the question: *Why are we in Auroville?*

and beautiful, happy and fully conscious. During the whole of his life upon earth, Sri Aurobindo gave all his time to establish in himself this consciousness he called supramental, and to help those gathered around him to realise it.

You have the immense privilege of having come quite young to the Ashram, that is to say, still plastic and capable of being moulded according to this new ideal and thus become the representatives of the new race. Here, in the Ashram, you are in the most favourable conditions with regards to the environment, the influence, the teaching and the example, to awaken in you this supramental consciousness and to grow according to its law.

Now, all depends on your will and your sincerity. If you have the will no more to belong to ordinary humanity, no more to be merely evolved animals; if your will is to become men of the new race realising Sri Aurobindo's supramental ideal, living a new and higher life upon a new earth, you will find here all the necessary help to achieve your purpose; you will profit fully by your stay in the Ashram and eventually become living examples for the world.

1951, August: The Mother publishes in the Bulletin an article on “Vital Education”.

1951, November: The Mother publishes in the Bulletin an article on “Mental Education”

1952, February: The Mother publishes in the Bulletin an article: “Psychic and Spiritual Education”.

1952: C. Rajagopalachari becomes Chief Minister of what was still known as ‘Madras State’; ‘he felt that a solution should be found [so that Pondicherry merges with India], and asks Surendra Mohan Ghose to request the Mother to bring about the desired thaw and promote a final peaceful settlement... The Mother concentrated for a while, and then told Surendra Mohan that she would do what was necessary.’⁸

1952, April: The Mother publishes in the Bulletin an article on:

AN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY CENTRE

By The Mother

The conditions in which men live on earth are the result of their state of consciousness. To seek to change these conditions without changing the consciousness is a vain chimera. Those who have been able to perceive what could and ought to be done to improve the situation in the various domains of human life - economic, political, social, financial, educational and sanitary - are individuals who have, to a greater or lesser extent, developed their consciousness in an exceptional way and put themselves in contact with higher planes of consciousness. But their ideas have remained more or less theoretical or, if an attempt has been made to realise them practically, it has always failed lamentably after a certain period of time; for no human organisation can change radically unless human consciousness itself changes. Prophets of a new humanity have followed one another; religions, spiritual or social, have been created; their beginnings have sometimes been promising, but as humanity has not been fundamentally transformed, the old errors arising from human nature itself have gradually reappeared and after some time we find ourselves almost back at the point we had started from with so much hope and enthusiasm. Also, in this effort to improve human conditions, there have always been two tendencies, which seem to be contrary but which ought to complement each other so that progress may be achieved. The first advocates a collective reorganisation, something which could lead to the effective unity of mankind. The other declares that all progress is made first by the individual and insists that the individual should be given the conditions in which he can progress freely. Both are equally true and necessary, and our effort should be directed along both these lines at once. For collective progress and individual progress are interdependent. Before the individual can take a leap forward, at least a little of the preceding progress must

⁸ *On the Mother*, by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, p. 571

have been realised in the collectivity. A way must therefore be found so that these two types of progress may proceed side by side.

It is in answer to this urgent need that Sri Aurobindo conceived the scheme of this international university, in order to prepare the human elite who will be able to work for the progressive unification of mankind and be ready at the same time to embody the new force which is descending to transform the earth. A few broad ideas will serve as a basis for the organisation of this university centre and will govern its programme of studies. Most of them have already been presented in the various writings of Sri Aurobindo and in the series of articles on education in this Bulletin¹.

The most important idea is that the unity of the human race can be achieved neither by uniformity nor by domination and subjection. Only a synthetic organisation of all nations, each one occupying its true place according to its own genius and the part it has to play in the whole, can bring about a comprehensive and progressive unification which has any chance of enduring. And if this synthesis is to be a living one, the grouping should be effectuated around a central idea that is as wide and as high as possible, in which all tendencies, even the most contradictory, may find their respective places. This higher idea is to give men the conditions of life they need in order to be able to prepare themselves to manifest the new force that will create the race of tomorrow.

All impulsions of rivalry, all struggle for precedence and domination must disappear and give way to a will for harmonious organisation, for clear-sighted and effective collaboration.

To make this possible, the children should be accustomed from a very early age not merely to the idea itself, but to its practice. That is why the international university centre will be international; not because students from all countries will be admitted here, nor even because they will be taught in their own language, but above all because the cultures of the various parts of the world will be represented here so as to be accessible to all, not merely intellectually in ideas, theories, principles and language, but also vitally in habits and customs, and in all its forms – painting, sculpture, music, architecture, decoration – and physically through natural scenery, dress, games, sports, industries and food. A kind of permanent world-exhibition should be organised in which all countries will be represented in a concrete and living way. The ideal would be for every nation with a well-defined culture to have a pavilion representing that culture, built in a style that is most expressive of the customs of the country; it will exhibit the nation's most representative products, natural as well as manufactured, and also the best expressions of its intellectual and artistic genius and its spiritual tendencies. Each nation would thus have a very practical and concrete interest in this cultural synthesis and could collaborate in the work by taking responsibility for the pavilion that represents it. Living accommodation, large or small according to the need, could be attached, where students of the same nationality could stay and thus enjoy the true culture of their native country and at the same time receive at the university centre the education which will introduce them to all the other cultures that exist on earth. In this way, international education will not be merely theoretical, in the classroom, but practical in all the details of life.

Only a general idea of the organisation is given here; its detailed application will be presented little by little in this Bulletin as it is carried out.

The first aim will therefore be to help individuals to become aware of the fundamental genius of the nation to which they belong and at the same time to bring them into contact with the ways of life of other nations, so that they learn to know and respect equally the true spirit of all the countries of the world. For, in order to be real and workable, any world organisation must be

¹ The first of these articles published in the *Bulletin* was In all, Sri Aurobindo published seven articles in the *Bulletin*. The last one is dated November 1950. The first of the Mother's articles in the *Bulletin* is also dated November 1950; its title is "The Science of Living"; it was followed by "Education" (February 1951), "Physical Education" (April 1951), "Vital Education" (August 1951), "Mental Education" (November 1951), "Psychic and Spiritual Education" (February 1952), "An International University Centre" (April, August & November 1952), etc.

based on this mutual respect and understanding between nation and nation as well as between individual and individual. Only in order and collective organisation, in collaboration based on mutual goodwill, is there any possibility of lifting man out of the painful chaos in which he finds himself now. It is with this aim and in this spirit that all human problems will be studied at the University centre; and the solution to them will be given in the light of the supramental knowledge which Sri Aurobindo has revealed in his writings.

1952, August: The Mother publishes in the Bulletin the second part of her article on:

AN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY CENTRE

Part II

By The Mother

Concerning the principles which will govern the education given at the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre, it has been mentioned that each nation must occupy its own place and play its part in the world concert.

This should not be taken to mean that each nation can choose its place arbitrarily, according to its own ambitions and cravings. A country's mission is not something which can be decided mentally with all the egoistic and ignorant preferences of the external consciousness, for in that case the field of conflict between nations might be shifted, but the conflict would continue, probably with even greater force.

Just as each individual has a psychic being which is his true self and which governs his destiny more or less overtly, so too each nation has a psychic being which is its true being and moulds its destiny from behind the veil; it is the soul of the country, the national genius, the spirit of the people, the centre of national aspiration, the fountainhead of all that is beautiful, noble, great and generous in the life of the country. True patriots feel its presence as a tangible reality. In India it has been made into an almost divine entity, and all who truly love their country call it "Mother India" (Bharat Mata) and offer her a daily prayer for the welfare of their country. It is she who symbolises and embodies the true ideal of the country, its mission in the world.

The thinking elite in India even identifies her with one of the aspects of the universal Mother, as the following extract from the Hymn to Durga illustrates:

[Passage (Hymn to Durga) omitted]

One would like to see in all countries the same veneration for the national soul, the same aspiration to become fit instruments for the manifestation of its highest ideal, the same ardour for progress, and self-perfection enabling each people to identify itself with its national soul and thus find its true nature and role, which makes each one a living and immortal entity regardless of all the accidents of history.

1952, December 13th: Jawaharlal Nehru (India's Prime Minister) writes a memorandum to the secretary general and the foreign secretary, M.E.A. (Ministry of External Affairs), 'On Exemptions to Aurobindo Ashram':

1. "I have considered this matter carefully and am of opinion that the concession asked for by the authorities of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram in Pondicherry should not be granted. We should advise accordingly the Ministries concerned here..."
2. In view of our difficult relations with the French Establishments in India, any such concession is undesirable, more especially because this means Indian currency going into Pondicherry. [Pondicherry was still ruled by the French.]
3. The attitude of the Ashram has hardly ever been favourable to India and sometimes it has been definitely hostile⁹. Sri Aurobindo was undoubtedly a great man and we should welcome

⁹ This was a grievous misconception by the prime minister. By now the reader has some idea not only of the love Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had for India, but also of the feelings of love and even worship they fostered in their disciples and students. Moreover, it would be thanks to the Mother's personal intervention that Pondicherry would

any proper memorial to him, more especially a new educational centre. But Sri Aurobindo is no more and it is not quite clear how the Ashram is going to run in future. Such accounts as we had are not favourable and we have even heard that there are internal conflicts there. Most of the property stands personally in the name of Madame Alphonse¹⁰, otherwise known as the 'Mother.' So does the jewellery. It would be extraordinary for us to give this concession to a private individual¹¹.

4. So far as the University Centre is concerned, a number of prominent men in India have commended it, but I have failed to find out under whose auspices it will run and who will be responsible for it. To take some steps to support a University of this type, about which we know nothing, except that it is a memorial to Sri Aurobindo, is obviously not desirable.¹² Etc.”

1952, December 22nd: Jawaharlal Nehru writes another memorandum, 'State of Affairs at the Aurobindo Ashram,' to the general secretary, M.E.A.

“I had a visit from Shri Dilip Kumar Roy of Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry.

1. He was much concerned at the state of the Ashram, which according to him consists of eight hundred persons now. He complained about the "Mother". He said that while the Ashramites were almost all in favour of merger of Pondicherry with India, the Mother was very French in her outlook.
2. He also complained of the way the Mother controlled everything autocratically and dealt with all the moneys of the Ashram as if they were her private property. She gave no account of these public funds. She takes nobody in her confidence. There is no trust or committee to deal with the moneys or other matters of the Ashram.
3. Then he referred to the University. He said there is no University, but it has been declared that this has been started and money is being collected. Why is this money collected? He expressed his gratification at the fact that we refused to allow a concession to the Mother to sell her jewellery without payment of customs dues.
4. Shri Dilip Kumar Roy wanted us to bring some pressure on the Mother or on the French Government in regard to the Ashram and in regard to the so-called University.¹³ Etc.”

These two memoranda throw a harsh light on the calumnies and the antagonism the Mother, and with her the Ashram and the Work, were subjected to – in this case by a disciple of twenty-four years standing to whom Sri Aurobindo had written: *'I have cherished you like a friend and a son.'* Dilip K. Roy would leave the Ashram, around the time of his meeting with Nehru, to found his own ashram in Pune together with Indira Devi, the woman who had become the centre of his life and whom Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had saved from a certain death.¹⁴ The Mother kept his apartment in the Ashram available for him till 1970¹⁵.

1953, May 28th: The Mother writes to Surendra Nath Jauhar.

I am perfectly sure, I am quite confident, there is not the slightest doubt in my mind, that this University, which is being established here, will be the greatest seat of knowledge upon earth.

It may take fifty years, it may take a hundred years, and you may doubt about my being there; I may be there or not, but these children of mine will be there to carry out my work. And those

merge with the Motherland without difficulties, at a time when the respective positions of France and India had hardened to the breaking point. (See *Mother India*, January 1990, pp. 9, 10.)

¹⁰ He means Alfassa.

¹¹ The Mother wanted to sell her jewelry to disciples as the Ashram was in need of money.

¹² Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru – External Affairs, p. 530.

¹³ Ibid, p. 531.

¹⁴ 'When Indira Devi did not want to go back to her family, the family guru, who was a tantrik, made an occult attack on her body. Her life was in danger. After intense pain and vomiting blood she swooned into unconsciousness. Mother saw the tantrik's action behind it and countered it. She was saved.' (Shyam Sunder Jhunjunwala, *Down Memory Lane*, p. 4)

¹⁵ Note by George van Vrekhem, in "The Mother", p. 412.

who collaborate in this divine work today will have the joy and pride of having participated in such an exceptional achievement.

Let us note that a University aiming at becoming *the greatest seat of knowledge upon earth* should probably have at the very least 5,000 students and that this is an extremely ambitious project.

1953, December 10th: Opening of the University classes of the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre.

1954, March 13th: Beginning of the battle of Dien Bien Phû in what was still French Indochina between the French army and the Viet Minh.

1954, May 7th: Fall of Dien Bien Phû in French Indochina. France's Prime Minister, Pierre Mendès-France who feels the need to seek help from the Non-allied movement to get out honourably of the Indochinese situation, decides to ask for Nehru's help by making some concessions on the French territories in India.

1954, July 6th: The French Government decides to hand over the remaining French Territories in India to India without any referendum.

1954, July: The Mother publishes in the Bulletin '*To the Employees of Sri Aurobindo Ashram*' in which she expresses her intention to create a model village for them. Eventually it will become part of her program for Auroville.

1954, August: The Mother publishes an article "*A Dream*" in the 'Bulletin':

There should be somewhere on earth a place which no nation could claim as its own, where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme truth; a place of peace, concord and harmony where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weaknesses and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities...

But she adds:

The earth is certainly not ready to realise such an ideal, for mankind does not yet possess sufficient knowledge to understand and adopt it nor the conscious force that is indispensable in order to execute it; that is why I call it a dream.

And yet this dream is in the course of becoming a reality; that is what we are striving for in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, on a very small scale, in proportion to our limited means...

What she describes in this "*A Dream*" is an 'Ideal Society'.

(Mid 1965 she will decide to take it up as part of her new Auroville project).

1954, November 1st: 'De facto' merger with India of Pondicherry and other French enclaves. The economic blockade imposed on these territories by India since 1949 is thus lifted and, as it is now far easier for Indians to move to Pondicherry, many more people will join the Ashram. India's Prime Minister, J. Nehru will visit three times Pondicherry and meet with the Mother. He immediately understands that he had been given a very wrong impression by Dilip Kumar Roy and others about the Mother and her attitude towards India, about the Ashram and its University.

1955, January 16th: First visit of India's Prime Minister, J. Nehru to Pondicherry since its de facto merger with India. Nehru is received by the Mother and very positively impressed by what he saw.

1955, April 4th: The Mother issues this message for the inauguration of the "French Institute"¹⁶ at Pondicherry:

In any country the best education that can be given to children consists in teaching them what the true nature of their country is and its own qualities, the mission their nation has to fulfil in

¹⁶ The "French Institute" and the "Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient" were created by the French Government in Pondicherry; they operate under the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique).

the world and its true place in the terrestrial concert. To that should be added a wide understanding of the role of other nations, but without the spirit of limitation and without ever losing sight of the genius of one's own country. France meant generosity of sentiment, newness and boldness of ideas and chivalry in action. It was that France which commanded the respect and admiration of all: it is by these virtues that she dominated the world.

A utilitarian, calculating, mercantile France is France no longer. These things do not agree with her true nature and in practising them she loses the nobility of her world position

1955, September 19th: J. Nehru visits Pondicherry for the second time and meets the Mother for the second time – this time impromptu.

1956, February 29th: a first descent of the Supramental takes place. The earth is starting to become ready and it will eventually lead to the launching of Auroville.

This is also the year of Roger's first visit to the Ashram with one of Mother's granddaughters.

1956, May 28th: The Indian and French Governments sign a treaty by which Pondicherry is handed over to India.

1958, October 4th: In the course of a conversation with Satprem, the Mother says in effect that humanity is using money and other resources in an unsustainable way leading it to ruin (this at a time – 52 year ago – when hardly anybody was aware of the now looming environmental and financial global disaster) and that she wants to create an example of *true living* and what is now called sustainable development. Naturally, it will be for Auroville to provide such an example.

Money is meant to circulate. What should remain constant is the progressive movement of an increase in the earth's production – an ever-expanding progressive movement to increase the earth's production and improve existence on earth. It is the material improvement of terrestrial life and the growth of the earth's production that must go on expanding, enlarging, and not this silly paper or this inert metal that is amassed and lifeless.

Money is not meant to generate money; money should generate an increase in production, an improvement in the conditions of life and a progress in human consciousness. This is its true use. What I call an improvement in consciousness, a progress in consciousness, is everything that education in all its forms can provide – not as it's generally understood, but as we understand it here: education in art, education in ... from the education of the body, from the most material progress, to the spiritual education and progress through yoga; the whole spectrum, everything that leads humanity towards its future realisation. Money should serve to augment that and to augment the material base for the earth's progress, the best use of what the earth can give – its intelligent utilisation, not the utilisation that wastes and loses energies. The use that allows energies to be replenished.

In the universe there is an inexhaustible source of energy that asks only to be replenished; if you know how to go about it, it is replenished. Instead of draining life and the energies of our earth and making of it something parched and inert, we must know the practical exercise for replenishing the energy constantly. And these are not just words; I know how it's to be done, and science is in the process of thoroughly finding out – it has found out most admirably. But instead of using it to satisfy human passions, instead of using what science has found so that men may destroy each other more effectively than they are presently doing, it must be used to enrich the earth: to enrich the earth, to make the earth richer and richer, more active, generous, productive and to make all life grow towards its maximum efficiency. This is the true use of money. And if it's not used like that, it's a vice – a 'short circuit' and a vice.

But how many people know how to use it in this way? Very few, which is why they have to be taught. What I call 'teach' is to show, to give the example. We want to be the example of true living in the world. It's a challenge I am placing before the whole financial world: I am telling them that they are in the process of withering and ruining the earth with their idiotic system; and with even less than they are now spending for useless things – merely for inflating something

that has no inherent life, that should be only an instrument at the service of life, that has no reality in itself, that is only a means and not an end (they make an end of something that is only a means) – well then, instead of making of it an end, they should make it the means. With what they have at their disposal they could ... oh, transform the earth so quickly! Transform it, put it into contact, truly into contact, with the supramental forces that would make life bountiful and, indeed, constantly renewed – instead of becoming withered, stagnant, shrivelled up: a future moon. A dead moon.

We are told that in a few millions or billions of years, the earth will become some kind of moon. The movement should be the opposite: the earth should become more and more a resplendent sun, but a sun of life. Not a sun that burns, but a sun that illumines – a radiant glory.

1959: The ‘de jure’ Merger of Pondicherry is nearing¹⁷. In order to conform to India’s laws¹⁸ the Mother has to rename the “*Sri Aurobindo International University Centre*”: “*Sri Aurobindo International Education Centre – SAICE*”. We will see that, years later, she will nevertheless use the word ‘University’ in the context of Auroville – though she was aware that another name may have to be adopted when time comes to establish it officially.

1961, September 6th: The Mother issues a message which explains the spirit in which university work is to be taken:

We are not here to do (only a little better) what the others do. We are here to do what the others cannot do because they do not have the idea that it can be done. We are here to open the way of the Future to children who belong to the Future. Anything else is not worth the trouble and not worthy of Sri Aurobindo’s help.

1962, July 12th: The French Parliament passes a Bill allowing the transfer of the Territories to India.

1962, August 16th: De jure merger of Puducherry and other French enclaves with India.

1963, June 13th: J. Nehru visits Pondicherry for the third time. He is accompanied by Lal Baladur Shastri (who will succeed him as Prime Minister), his daughter Indira Gandhi and a very popular Tamil politician: Kamaraj.

1964, January 18th: The Mother tells Satprem that Khrushchev has showed a real interest in her article, “*A Dream*”:

... I saw Sudhir Ghose this morning, the person who went to America, who knew Kennedy and even spoke to him about the possibility of openly joining with Russia so as to exert pressure on the world and prevent armed disputes (he said, "to settle all border and territorial disputes in a peaceful way," beginning, of course, with China and India). Kennedy had been enthusiastic. The Russian ambassador had been summoned at once, and he had telephoned Khrushchev: enthusiastic over the idea (but this Khrushchev seems to be rather a good man). They were supposed to sort it out during a meeting at the U.N. At this point, Kennedy makes off....¹⁹

But the idea has been taken up again through Khrushchev and he continues to be quite enthusiastic.²⁰ It seems (I don't know if it's quite true, because it's Z [a Russian disciple] who says so) ... but Z sent him my article “A Dream,” on the possibility of creating a small “international centre” (I don't like the word “international”²¹,” but never mind), and Khrushchev answered, “This idea is excellent, the entire world should make it a reality.” Well, I don't know whether it's correct, but anyway the gentleman seems to be well-disposed. And this Sudhir is

¹⁷ It will take place on 16th August 1962.

¹⁸ Like in most other countries in the world, at that time, universities in India – as well as in France – could only be managed by the Government. Knowing that they were anyway on the way out, the French authorities may not have bothered about what was then only the embryo of a University in a then remote part of the world.

¹⁹ Kennedy was assassinated on November 22nd 1963.

²⁰ Khrushchev will be dismissed nine months later on November 15th.

²¹ This explains why she will call Auroville a Universal Township.

very intimate with the U.S. ambassador in Delhi.... In brief, Sudhir has sent me the new proposal – the first one, I had approved it, I had even put my blessings on it, and he had gone to see Nehru: Nehru immediately called both ambassadors for a conference.²² At the time, I worked a good deal and things were moving.... Now, it seems that the new president [Johnson] is, for the time being, continuing what the other did: he won't upset the apple cart.... We'll see. If it succeeds, it will give some concrete expression to the effort of transformation without violence.

1964, August 15th: The Sri Aurobindo Society (SAS) led by Navajata passes a resolution to ‘develop a township near Pondicherry for those who want to prepare for a new life’²³. The interests Khrushchev took in the Mother’s “*A Dream*” is likely to have played a role in Navajata’s decision to launch this project. Mother will later say that, at that time, she *was not interested*. Yet, she will name the project “Auroville” and will write to Roger Anger in Paris to tell him that she has a city to build and ask him whether he is interested. He will answer positively.

1964, October 8th: A first plot of land is bought for Auroville – in Poothurai (as at that time Auroville was to develop next to Usteri Lake).

1965, March 29th: Kailas Jhaveri, who used to work for the U.N. in New York and has settled in the Ashram a year earlier, meets in Bombay the Deputy Director-general of UNESCO, Dr. M. Adiseshiah, whom she knew from before, and talks to him about Auroville and its aim, Human Unity. She asks him if UNESCO could help Auroville. His answer is that UNESCO should be approached through the Government of India. Kailas then tells him that “we would not like the Indian Government or UNESCO to interfere in our project.” He then suggests that UNESCO should be approached through the affiliation of the Sri Aurobindo Society as a N.G.O. with UNESCO. The Mother had approved of this meeting beforehand and, when informed about its outcome, she commented “*Very good!*”

When informed about this, Navajata says that UNESCO doesn’t accept affiliations with religious organisations; to which Kailas replies that the SAS is not a religious organisation but a spiritual one and, having offered to explain the difference between the two, she prepares, at Nava’s request, a paper on “Religion and Spirituality” in the light of Sri Aurobindo²⁴.

1965, June 23rd: The Mother has become *very interested* in Auroville; she describes it to Satprem and two days later to Huta²⁵.

To Satprem she says:

...each country would have its pavilion there: a pavilion for every country (that was my old idea)²⁶; 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,

²² Nehru will die four months later on May

²³ The ‘prepare for a new life’ obviously refers to ‘*A Dream*’ in which the Mother wrote: ‘*The earth is certainly not ready to realise such an ideal*’.

²⁴ This did not prevent Navajata from affirming – fifteen years later, in 1980-82 – to India’s Supreme Court that the SAS is a religious organisation and that hence, as per India’s constitution the Government has no right to interfere in the management of its Auroville project...

²⁵ She must have described it also to Navajata and some others, but these are the only two records of her description in 1965.

²⁶ In 1951, in an article entitled “*An International University Centre*” (which is now known as SAICE or the ‘Ashram School’), she wrote that, in this University, there would be Pavilions of the various cultures of the world. As in 1965 they hadn’t been built, she decided that they would come up, not in the Ashram, but in Auroville’s International Zone. Obviously as part of Auroville’s University of Human Unity.

conference rooms, etc., the country's cuisine, a restaurant of the country – they can have all sorts of developments.

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...

To Huta she says:

Pavilion of all countries which present their customs and cultures.

1965, September 8th: The Mother issues her first message on Auroville:

Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities.

The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.

1966, March 19th: Opening of the 1st Exhibition on Auroville at the Ashram.

Roger brought on 7th his first plans for the township (the rectangle and Nebula models). Mother was very happy and directed that an exhibition should be arranged where all would be able to see them.

The Mother will decide to send to the UNESCO delegations a brochure of the Nebula and the following paragraph which brought out in a nutshell the role of the Mother and her purpose in creating the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville:

The task of giving a concrete form to Sri Aurobindo's vision was entrusted to the Mother. The creation of a new world, a new humanity, a new society expressing and embodying the new consciousness is the work she has undertaken. By the very nature of things, it is a collective ideal that calls for a collective effort so that it may be realised in the terms of an integral human perfection.

The Ashram founded and built by the Mother was the first step in the accomplishment of this goal. The project of Auroville is the next step, which seeks to widen the base of this attempt to establish harmony between soul and body, spirit and nature, heaven and earth, in the collective life of mankind.²⁷

1966, April 23rd: The Mother tells Satprem:

And that's precisely what I want – that these two countries [America and Russia] clashing with each other should come here, and each of them have a pavilion of their culture and ideal, and that they should be here, face to face, and shake hands.

1966, September 21st: The Mother tells Satprem:

Unfortunately, following the present tendencies, for Auroville they are trying to get UNESCO'S support (!) I, of course, knew beforehand that those [UNESCO] people couldn't understand, but ... they are trying. Because everywhere people (it's a sort of superstition), everywhere people say, "No, I'll open my purse strings only with UNESCO's approval and encouragement" – I am talking about those whose contribution matters, lots of people, so ...

Only, to me, all this is the crust, the quite superficial experience – the crust; and things have to happen underneath, beneath that crust. It's just an appearance.

I said that to those who look after Auroville, I told them, "Those people [of UNESCO] are two hundred years behind the earth's march, so there's little hope they'll understand." But anyway, I didn't tell them not to deal with them – I don't give any advice.

But tiny details such as the one we spoke of just before [the French government's offer of a pension] are an indication: it is countries collaborating in the Truth without knowing it. And it's very good, it will do them good. It's good for them. It doesn't matter if they aren't aware of it [smiling]: they won't have the pleasure of having done it, that's all!

²⁷ In 1969 and 1972, this message was used again. Two words were added in 1972

1966, November: A resolution inviting participation and support to Auroville is presented on behalf of India to UNESCO's General Assembly by Mr. Poushpa Dass, who interestingly hailed from a place near Pondicherry.²⁸

While introducing this resolution, Mr. Poushpa Dass said:

A little more than 50 years ago, Aurobindo, a young and ardent partisan in the struggle for the liberation of India, moved by the Grace while in the prison of Calcutta where he was interned, came to take refuge in the South, at Pondicherry, then a French territory. There he took the decision to give up all political activities so as to consecrate himself to a life of concentration and meditation. Very soon disciples came to join him and thus was created one of those astonishing spiritual communities known in India as "Ashrams". There, Sri Aurobindo lived, meditating and writing. There reigned around him, by his subtle influence, an atmosphere of deep faith and peace of heart. From all parts of the world people came in search of 'that knowing which we know all the rest', and where there one single look of the master changed the entire life.

From 1926, Sri Aurobindo who had retired from active life to enter into the silence of the sages, confided the direction of the Ashram to an early disciple, a French lady who thus became the Mother of the Ashram. Since 1950, when the Master left his body, the Mother animates this astonishing collectivity where 'the multifarious play of life' goes on alongside the most implacable renunciations, where people, carrying in their secret heart the nostalgia of that immutable serenity which shines on the faces of sages and happy souls, mingle in the atmosphere of intense work and joy.

They are 1200, coming from all the corners of the world: engineers, architects, foremen, doctors, advocates, accountants, teachers, artists, agriculturists, and simple folk all of them exercise the same productive activity for the good of the community that they have joined, in the same way as they would for their own good in their ordinary social life. Thus they form a vast industrial and commercial collectivity with its stadium, swimming pool, hospital, playground, school, cinemas, foundries, its workshops for mechanical constructions and prefabricated concrete, its press, automobile workshop, bank, stores, dairy farms and poultry farms, etc.

Now this extraordinary institution, unique in the world, by its natural progression, seeks on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of our organisation and in harmony with its aims and principles, to enlarge its action and to radiate still further. It wants to regroup, in a vaster centre, a real town where people of the entire world will be ready to live according to the ideal of Sri Aurobindo's thought. It will be a town of beauty, of culture, of research, where each one will be able to live in harmony and freedom.

'Auroville', for that will be its name, will stretch some kilometres from the north of Pondicherry. It will be on the Coromandel Coast, facing the Bay of Bengal a vast territory covering 20 sq. kilometres, offering, by virtue of its geography, an infinite variety of possibilities for housing. An area of great natural beauty will be preserved intact all around the city. At the centre of the town there will be the Park of Unity, a circle of gardens overhanging a lake.

All this, you will say is a mental construction, a dream. Perhaps. But does it not awaken an echo in the greatest depth of our soul? Don't we find there again that marvellous world of our hopes of long ago, the kingdom glimpsed and then lost, the castle where the beautiful princess sleeps, expecting the look of him who will awaken her? Don't we all carry in some part of our secret heart, the nostalgia of that immutable serenity, of that pure light, of that indefinable joy which radiates on the face of those happy beings and sages, of that smile which illumines the face of the Buddha?

Since those who live at Sri Aurobindo Ashram approach a certain perfection and marvellous plenitude, why should Auroville be different? For, in fact, the will to live, 'the aspiration for happiness' and the desire of an incessantly renewed quest translated by the great questions 'Why am I here? Where am I going? Do I have an aim? What is the meaning of my life? What is my own position considering the fact that I exist and I live? Are the only references which will ever be demanded for entry into Auroville and the only baggage truly necessary to sojourn there. All the rest will be given including the spirit of sacrifice, faith, hope and love.

That is why the Government of India wish that the General Conference, acting in conformity with the aims of our organisation, whose ideals we solemnly reaffirm on this 20th Anniversary, give to this unique and exceptional project in some respect unprecedented, its moral support and its confidence."

Then UNESCO's General Conference passes unanimously the following resolution:

The General Conference.

Being apprised that in connection with the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of UNESCO, the Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, India, a non-governmental organisation affiliated to the Indian Commission for UNESCO, proposes to set up a cultural township known as 'Auroville' where people of different countries will live together in harmony in one community and engage in cultural, educational, scientific and other pursuits,

²⁸ More resolutions of support will be approved in 1968, 1970 and 1984.

Noting that the township will have pavilions intended to represent the cultures of the world, not only intellectually but also by presenting different schools of architecture, painting, sculpture, music, etc. as part of a way of living,

Appreciating that one of the aims of ‘Auroville’ will be to bring together in close juxtaposition the values of different civilizations and cultures,

Expresses the belief that the project will contribute to international understanding and promotion of peace and commends it to those interested in UNESCO’s ideals.

1967, November 11th: Navajata (General Secretary of the SAS) gives a talk on All India Radio after reading it to Mother and obtaining her approval. Among other things, he says:

‘Auroville will also participate in the design of integrated living programme of UNESCO. There will be an integrated effort and a practical research towards creating conditions, where each individual can occupy the place for which he is best suited, develop himself to his highest possibilities, inner and outer, and give his maximum to mankind.

Permanent cultural pavilions for each country and also for each State of India are an important feature of Auroville activities. To give an example, the Japanese pavilion will have a Japanese garden, houses built in the Japanese style, a lake, a boat pier, a meditation house, rooms for the Tea ceremony, guest rooms, library, museum and an exhibition hall for Japanese handicrafts, works of art, etc. One will experience in this pavilion, the aesthetic sense and culture of Japan in a living manner. Thus each country and each State of India will plan its own pavilion.

Auroville will also have an International University, perhaps the first in the world, established specifically for world unity. In fact the whole of Auroville will be a living university.

1967, December 31st: The Mother explains Auroville’s economy to Satprem and tells him:

Ultimately, it must be a town for studies – studies and research on how to live both in a simplified way and in a way such that the higher qualities have MORE TIME to develop.

1968, January 12th: The Mother tells Satprem:

“It seems I have given Yvonne ‘full freedom’ to organise Auroville. So she’s calling it the ‘University Town’²⁹. She was told that the word was used in a strict sense; she said to me, ‘Oh, I explained,’ and on the invitations for the 28th [Inauguration Ceremony], she wanted to put “the University Town”; but we didn’t ask her advice, we made the invitations and put, ‘The city of universal culture’.

That’s always the sign of people who have a purely mental power of construction: they want to force words to express what they want to say. I told her, ‘It won’t do, you can talk all you like, for everyone the word will have the meaning it has; invent another word or turn of phrase.’ [aggressive tone] – ‘But THAT’S what it means’...”

The Mother seems to be referring here to the word ‘University’ and to the fact that she had to change the name ‘Sri Aurobindo International University Centre’ into ‘Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education’ precisely because, at that time, in India the word ‘University’ could only be used by Government run institutions... Aster says that, in a letter the Mother wrote to her father (Indra Sen), she wrote that the word ‘University’ refers to an idea of the past – or something on this line I understand. (It would be good if Aster could share with us the Mother’s exact words.)

1968, February 28th: Inauguration ceremony of Auroville, in the presence of 5,000 well-wishers – including a large number of Ambassadors and Consuls. During this ceremony, youth representing each state of India and each country of the world places a handful of earth of their respective states or countries in a white urn as a symbolic gesture of human unity.

The Mother reads its Charter, which is mainly about research and education (university activities):

1. Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville one must be the willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.

²⁹ ‘Ville Universitaire’ in the original French – meaning: a city which has a university.

2. *Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.*
3. *Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.*
4. *Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity.*

Some high UNESCO officials attend the ceremony, together with many Ambassadors and Consuls. Following this event, Kailas writes for UNESCO a paper based on Sri Aurobindo's writings: "Auroville and the Ideal of Human Unity".

1968, November: UNESCO's General Conference passes unanimously its second resolution in support of Auroville.

1968, December 28th: An 'All India Radio Symposium on Auroville' is held in Pondicherry; Dr. M. Adiseshiah, Deputy Director-general of UNESCO, concludes and comments it at the end; he ends his speech by saying the following before reading the latest UNESCO resolution.

We have tried [to realise human unity] in UNESCO, in the UNESCO world, which represents the plusses and minuses of humanity which represents the world as it is, and not the world as it can be, or should be – we have tried every way, and we have failed.

And so now we turn to Auroville, and to its foundations, the firm foundation on which its human unity, its universal harmony, is to be built. That foundation is MAN... MAN in all his glory, in his divinity, in his unfathomable depths which he can reach, and which Auroville will make it possible for man from everywhere—from Africa, from Europe, from Asia and from the Americas—to achieve. It is not surprising therefore that UNESCO has embraced Auroville as a programme which embodies – its major and fundamental purposes.

1969, February 1st: Roger writes down the Mother's answer to his questions: Which program should be submitted to UNESCO in the framework of the commission to be created soon?

Education by television

The permanent university will be the key to Auroville's raison d'être. It must be a leap forward; so that it can hasten the advent of the future, of a world of harmony, beauty and union.

The University of Human Unity.

1969, February 28th: Dr. M. S. Adiseshiah, Deputy Director-general of UNESCO, is interviewed on All India Radio³⁰ by Melville de Mello, a very well-known interviewer at the time. Kailas has felt inspired to write the questions to be asked and she submitted them, through friends, to de Mello, who – amazingly – asks them exactly as drafted by Kailas. Two of these questions are:

Q.: Sir, in view of the fact that UNESCO is intensifying its efforts in educational research and programmes, how do you think UNESCO should, could or would help in the Auroville project of a World University?

Dr. Adiseshiah: I must tell you frankly we have not come to that stage yet in UNESCO. We have not yet thought of a way through, of what we will do in the individual projects that constitute Auroville. But I can say that just as the basic pedagogy, the psychology and the spiritual foundation of the educational system of Auroville, which I have just referred to, is that of UNESCO, embodied in UNESCO's Charter which we are striving after, which we have not been able to realise elsewhere, so too is the programme for a World University where men and women at the highest level, the intellectual elite of the world, could be banded together, not to split the atom and produce new bombs, not simply to explore space in complete secrecy, but to explore the heart of man and the minds of men in order to promote

³⁰ This interview had been arranged by Nandini Satpathy, who at that time was both close to the Mother and Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting.

knowledge, to build development in our under-developed countries in the third world, and to assure peace.

Q. It is said that Auroville, by its very ideology, architecture and aims, would present a spontaneous design of integrated living, the kind that is sought after in the UNESCO resolutions on the Design for Living. How far do you think this will be realised in Auroville?

Dr. Adiseshiah: Now you touch on another programme of UNESCO for which we are grateful to this country. It was at the international symposium held here in 1966 in New Delhi, to commemorate the life and contribution of Jawaharlal Nehru, that this great programme called the Design for Living was initiated. It is a programme, an inter-disciplinary, an international programme for restoring man's lost equilibrium with nature. Well, we are making a start on this programme and it is our hope that Auroville will be one demonstration of this large programme which will once more restore to man his primacy over the world which he inhabits, and bring him into equilibrium with nature and with his environment, whether it be the rural countryside or the urban living conditions which characterise so many of our countries.

Kailas manages to obtain the tape of this interview – even before it was aired – and she plays it to the Mother who holds her hands and tells her:

Kailas do you know what I felt when I listened to the interview? A very powerful being came down and tied Auroville to the ground. It was needed and he did it. Now, Auroville will be a reality and the world will see it.

1969, October 26th: Kailas Jhaveri writes to the Mother and Kireet reads her letter to her:

I had a talk with Kireet [Joshi] on the U.N. project of the World University. On the one hand it seems better to work quietly by ourselves without bothering about this project. On the other hand, we felt that perhaps the time has come when we can no longer work in isolation inasmuch as the world around us is fast-moving and we wish to combine both these movements in our experiment. Personally I feel that this project has come up on this large scale to celebrate the centenary of Sri Aurobindo and fulfil one of his visions: human unity. I feel sure that He will preside over its execution.

However we realise that we cannot accept the U.N. project unless we can have the freedom to work it out on our lines (The Mother affirms this sentence by a gesture of nodding, writes Kireet in the margin). But I see a line of action whereby it seems possible to secure the requisite freedom for our action.

It is on the following basis. This being an educational project, the U.N. would undoubtedly consult UNESCO. And most probably [Dr. Adiseshiah] will represent UNESCO at the U.N. for this project. Inasmuch as [Dr. Adiseshiah] has publicly commended our Centre of Education as the only place where the dream has become a reality and affirmed that its pedagogy; its psychology and its spiritual foundation is that of UNESCO, embodied in its charter and which they are striving after but they have not been able to realise it anywhere else. (The Mother makes a note of these words.) I feel that the opening has already been made for us and this project will be given to us in the interest of the world.

Since [Dr. Adiseshiah's] remarks are based on our Centre of Education we can demand the requisite freedom of action for the Auroville University only on the grounds that it will be an extension of our experimentation in the Centre of Education which has worked independently on the lines of Sri Aurobindo's teachings without any outside interference. And if they find that our experiment will fulfil the aims that they have in view – as the Deputy Director-general believes it will – they may collaborate in its development. This can be worked out with [Dr. Adiseshiah] without any difficulty.

Incidentally, since [Dr. Adiseshiah] is not well-grounded in the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and does not have the full picture of the practical side of our education, I feel it would be best if he is assisted by Kireet. I suggest Kireet for more than one reason, but also because Kireet and [him] have

mutual liking and admiration for each other and they go very well together. Besides, the U.N. requires a person of great dynamism, strong conviction and indefatigable perseverance of will, and I can think of no other person better suited for the job who can handle it with equal keenness of mind and caution. (The Mother remarks on the passage Kireet had underlined and asks “*What does this mean? Does it mean that you have to go? For that is impossible.*”)

Knowing the U.N. and its manner of work, its diplomacy and difficulties, it seems to me to be a crucial issue and I am aware that one would have to handle it with caution, but in spite of all the difficulties I can foresee, I am certain of Your victory. Is this Your Will? Do You feel that it would be good to link up the World University project of the U.N. and accept Auroville University as an expansion of our Centre of Education? Would You approve of our working on the lines suggested? I await Your reply and direction with all humility and surrender to Your Will.”

Kireet writes down the Mother’s reply:

It is not exactly like that. It is not an extension. It is a New Creation. The whole of Auroville is education. It is to teach how to live for the New Tomorrow.

1969 (late): Mme. Maurice Herzog³¹, representing UNESCO visits Auroville.

1970, March 15th: First meeting of Auroville’s Administrative Committee (C.A.A.). It is to meet every Sunday and its members (selected by the Mother) are: Anjani, André, Navajata, Laljibhai, Suresh, Dayanand, Malik and Roger. Shyamsunder is to join them for legal matters and Wil is to be the Committee’s secretary.

1970, April 17th: Minutes of the special meeting on World University.

Present: Navajata, Julie, Norman, Seyril, Kireet, Yvonne, Medhananda and Suresh. (Roger, André, Anjani and Kailas are not able to attend the meeting):

The reason for calling the meeting was explained briefly by Suresh. Julie Medlock explained further details from her memo sent to all the members of the meeting. She has received a letter from Arthur Lall who has been appointed by U. Thant to handle the setting up of the U.N. World University. In his letter the following important points were mentioned:

- i. Japan is making a bid to have the World University at Japan.
- ii. It is felt that the university should have campuses dispersed over several parts of the world.
- iii. Each campus would have 50 to 75 faculties with about 500 scholars.
- iv. The country bidding for a campus should provide all facilities and funds.
- v. The university should be for post-graduates.
- vi. The aims of the World University are (i) to realise the U.N. Charter in all its aspects (ii) to set up interdisciplinary problem-oriented fields like pollution, urbanization, cultural exchanges, and others.

This initiated questions on the concept of World University at Auroville. The following concepts were prominent.

- i. The city of Auroville itself as a university in an experimental form.
- ii. The education at Auroville on the whole is meant to bridge the gap between life and education. The education is provided by providing an educational environment for the “students” of Auroville.
- iii. Auroville could be the World Centre of Education by a chain of three Televisions satellites which would cover whole of the World.

In fact: as Auroville wants to be a new creation, education at Auroville may or may not be continued as an extension of the work done in education at the International Centre of Education. It was felt that Auroville should not compete with others in order to get a World University. In any case we do not want a university in the accepted sense of the Word University. Our concepts being totally different to those of outside world, it could mean that our concepts may

³¹ She was also the wife of Maurice Herzog, former conqueror of the Annapurna summit in the Himalaya and Sports Minister of General de Gaulle in France’s government.

not be accepted.

As a clear agreement was not reached it was decided to hold another meeting on Wednesday 22 April 1970 at 8 p.m. at the Society House. At this meeting, members will be asked to bring written matter which will be discussed and a suitable conclusion will be drawn from these.

1970, April 22nd: Minutes of the special meeting on World University. (Present: Anjani, Navajata, Jay, Maude, Kireet, Yvonne, Medhananda, Shanti, Kailas and Suresh).

Yvonne started the discussions by suggesting that what ever material prepared for the World University should be sent directly to U. Thant and a copy to Arthur Lall. Julie Medlock explained that Arthur Lall had been appointed by U. Thant to handle the World University program. It was later decided to send the material through Anjani to Arthur Lall, UNESCO, the external affairs ministry and other relevant official channels for their information and necessary action.

A draft of a covering letter prepared by Yvonne was read to the members present. All the members were very much impressed by the draft and it was decided to include it in the package to be prepared with very minor modifications.

Then the question of the World University concept was discussed. It was clear that the concepts at Auroville outmoded the multi-campus concept as outlined in Julie's letter. It brought forward various aspects of a World University Centre as envisaged by the Mother and published in a Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in 1952. The concept was to have cultural pavilions of each country, built and maintained by the country concerned.

In order to help build these pavilions at Auroville, we should gift the land to the country concerned and invite the country to build a pavilion. The invitations would have to be supported by the Government of India.

Julie suggested that a possible package could include the following:

- i. Yvonne's letter,
- ii. The Mother's 'Dream',
- iii. The extract from 1952 Bulletin,
- iv. A general covering letter,
- v. A specific proposal on what campus we would ask for on the basis of the talents and resources available at Auroville.

The idea of campus was objected to on the grounds that it meant U.N. control over our ideas and ideals. However as the whole idea of education at Auroville is experimentation, it was decided that the so called, campus would be an experimental "campus" where any external controls would destroy its experimental status. It was pointed out that if Auroville were to grow as we expected it to grow, then a World University as envisaged by the Mother would automatically emerge which would eliminate any UN controls or interference. In view of the present conditions, Auroville needs all help it can get from a world wide body like the U.N. It was argued that the UN is not likely to grant a campus to Auroville without controls.

It was pointed out that Auroville would get the campus through UNESCO as it is the agency through which the UN deals with subjects like the World University. Auroville will be able remain independent of external controls on the basis of its experimental nature of which UNESCO recognises.

It was finally decided that a package would be prepared by Yvonne, Kailas, Seyril and Anjani and would be read to the Mother by André for her approval and then sent to Arthur Lall and others.

1970, May 3rd: Excerpt from the Minutes of the Administrative Committee (C.A.A.) signed by the Mother with blessings:

World University: It was felt that a whole session should be devoted to this subject and it was decided that this should be done next week.

1970, May 17th: Excerpt from the Minutes of the Administrative Committee (C.A.A.) signed by the Mother with blessings:

World University: It was felt that there should be coordination between the people who are working on the project, so that different sets of literature are not posted to the various organisations.

A number of other issues regarding the setting up of Cultural Pavilions were considered. The various issues will have to be specifically placed before the Mother and Mother's guidance sought regarding of the constitutional set up of the pavilions, who will be in charge, to whom the pavilions will belong, how the work will be organised, etc.

There are very urgent issues which letters to Government of India have to be sent within a week's time, since instructions from the Government of India to the Indian Delegation to the United Nations will have to be issued shortly if at all we expect the Indian Delegation to sponsor Auroville's cause in the July session of the United Nations.

1970, May?: Navajata asks Kailas to write a project report for a World University for human unity; he adds that the U.N. deadline is in two weeks. She calls for Sri Aurobindo's help and is able to complete the task within the two weeks. This is her introduction:

COMPILER'S INTRODUCTION

Basically, we may say, "Auroville is Education"; for the educational future of the world is bound up with this growing City of Dawn where a new consciousness is to be variously "educated". But, for convenience's sake, we have three sections in the material I compiled here. A paper on Auroville and its *raison d'être* precedes that on Auroville University, and one on Education and Research in Auroville succeeds it.

The first paper shows how Auroville with its ideology and the background of cultural pavilions of all nations of the world offers the right and unique conditions for a free search after the Truth and hence serves as a necessary basis for the fulfilment of the aims and objectives of the kind of university envisaged in the second paper.

This paper on Auroville University indicates its lines of researches, the vision behind them and the programme; its ideals and aspirations; its aims and objectives; its own unique contribution and its necessity for humanity. It is an attempt to sketch, in brief the crisis of our age, the basic issue, the proposed solutions, the reason of their failures to end war and revolutions and to bring about peace, order and unity by systems of international law and control of armaments, education, ideal of brotherhood, religion, etc.; the true solution of all problems and the unique role of Auroville University, which to state very briefly – adapting some words of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's – is as follows:

A perfected world cannot be created or composed by men who are themselves imperfect. The conditions under which men live are the results of their state of consciousness. ("Wars are made in the minds of men and it is therefore in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." We go a step further and call for a change of consciousness which alone, we believe, can transform not only the mind, but all the other members of one's being, including the body itself.) To seek to change conditions without changing the consciousness is a vain chimera. For man is not a machine and cannot be changed by any machinery of laws, social, political, economic, religious, or moral. However, a change of consciousness can only be brought about by a conscious evolutionary process and an attempt, at self-finding, self-perfection and self-transformation.

To be or to transcend and become something or to bring something high and noble into our being is the whole labour of the Force of Nature. Knowledge, thought, action, whether social, political, religious, ethical, economic, or utilitarian cannot be the essence or object of life. They are activities of the powers of being or the powers of becoming, the dynamis of the Spirit and its means of discovering what it seeks to be. To be and to be fully is Nature's intention and the necessity in Man. To become complete in being, in consciousness of being, in force of being, in

delight being and to live in its integrated completeness is the perfect living. To be fully is to be universally, to be one with all...

All this implies that the function of the University in Auroville will not stop with providing conditions and facilities for the development of all the powers of one's being through the study of arts, humanities and sciences and their researches, which are necessary parts of the disciplines of university education. Through them all and above all, the true function of this university will be to bring forth from the inner potentialities of its students a new creation, the creation of a divine race.

The distinguishing feature of Auroville University will therefore be not only the researches into all that was and even all that exists and their synthesis – synthesis of all knowledge; synthesis of all aspects of the Truth; synthesis of all ideologies; synthesis of all realisations of the Past, Present and Future; synthesis of all cultures; synthesis of all nations, paving a way for the realisation of human unity in diversity, peace, development and progress in all parts of the world; a bridge between Matter and Spirit or Science and Spirituality; a bridge between man's external realisations and his highest aspirations, etc. The unique contribution of Auroville University will be a new creation with a new culture that will be integral and universal, thus changing the whole life of the earth-consciousness and bringing about a new world order...

The aim of Auroville University will be always to move forward ceaselessly towards greater and greater perfection by an endless education, constant progress and a youth that never ages.

We are confident that Auroville will provide the right and necessary conditions to make a full and free enquiry into the glorious future of the human race by a rich and vast synthesis of all our gains on the material and spiritual planes which will fulfil the highest and most noble aspirations of humanity everywhere.

The Mother hears the letter and this synopsis and wants to listen to the whole paper. While Nolinida, COUNUMA, Amrita and Navajata wait outside. She listens with rapt attention to the whole report on "Auroville and Education". Pournapréma returns the synopsis and the papers and writes down the Mother's comment:

Dear Kailas, It is very, very good.

The Mother writes to Kailas separately:

Kailas, it can be sent. Blessings.

Kailas' article will come out later in the *Mother India* issue of July 1970 and will cover 28 full pages of this "Monthly Review of Culture".

1970? Kailas writes to the Mother:

Kireet told me that You approve of the linking up of the World University Project of the U.N. with Auroville University, provided that we are given the requisite freedom of action to work on our own lines.

On the other hand, I am told that a letter has been sent to U. Tant, asking them to accept Auroville University as a World University and to send their committee of experts to draw up with us a plan for Auroville University. I pray for Your forgiveness for any transgression in this note, but I write it because I fail to understand Your intention in this approval inasmuch as to me it seems to be rather difficult and precarious approach, and may invite unnecessary interference. Besides, our direct action may place us as one among many applicants for the U.N. project.

The Mother asks Kireet to write her answer:

This is horrible. I did not know that Norman was to give the letter. It should be stopped.

What I had in view when I sent my note with Kireet was to let UNESCO make this proposal to the U.N. in the interest of the world, which I felt could have given our project its due perspective and importance and at the same time would have left our hands free to work out our own plan...

To Kailas' suggestion that the letter should be sent to Dr. Adiseshiah – UNESCO – and that he should present it to the U.N., the Mother says: *That is better.*

1970: Following a visit by Roger to discuss with her UNESCO's project Design for Living, Kailas writes to the Mother:

Roger came to talk about Auroville and UNESCO. He told me about his talks with Pouschpa Dass and Gilbert's trip to Delhi in that connection. I do not know if You would approve of my writing this, but since the matter came to my attention and Roger wanted me to give my views regarding it, I put before You what I feel impelled from within, not as a criticism, but as a concern. And I pray for Your forgiveness for any error or transgression.

I have enquired with Navajata too on the subject and I am told that a decision has been taken to make Auroville a part of the project of Design a Living sponsored by Ramesh Thaper and a few others, and that we are proposing to offer Auroville for their experiment, because it is believed that the Design for Living will be soon accepted by UNESCO and a huge sum of money is expected to flow to it.

I do not understand why we have to tag ourselves to somebody else's tail for the sake of money. It seems to me quite undignified, undiplomatic and uncalled for. I feel that it implies a lack of faith in the merits of our own project and the strength of the vision of Sri Aurobindo and its sure action.

I do not see why Auroville should not be accepted on its own merits by UNESCO, fulfilling its aims, when [Dr. Adiseshiah] as the Deputy Director has publicly expressed his strong convictions and the importance of Auroville, our International Centre of Education and the Ashram for India and the world and extolled them as the only hope for humanity.

Besides, I am told by Roger that in spite of all oppositions and great difficulties, [Dr. Adiseshiah] has been able to get the preliminary sanction of \$ 3,000 from the Executive Board of UNESCO as a token of their acceptance of Auroville. It seems to me most ironical that we are ready to have more faith in the Design for Living than in Auroville in spite of Your Force working with us all the time and that we are ready to make Auroville a part of the Design for Living project, thereby giving it a subsidiary position just for the sake of money! Somehow, I feel that this action is vitiated by our overdue concern for the money.

I have studied the Design for Living project and in spite of their good points and common objectives, Mother, I feel that our fundamental aims, approach and the basis of work are quite different from their and I am a bit apprehensive about unnecessary interference from them if Auroville is offered as a part of their project and experiment. And I feel that any association must take place, it should be the Design for a Living which should become part of Auroville since our aims and objectives are much vaster and far-reaching than theirs, and the request must come from them or from UNESCO rather than us going after them.

This approach of ours at present seems to me quite undiplomatic and unnecessary – perhaps because I feel strong possibilities of UNESCO accepting Auroville as a major project and taking the initiative for its fulfilment if [Dr. Adiseshiah] takes it upon himself to pursue and then the funds may be directed to Auroville. Would it not perhaps be wiser to work through the key persons in UNESCO – [Dr. Adiseshiah], Tewfik, Kirpal, Poschpa Dass – and explain them how Auroville embodies in its very ideology, conception and town planning the very objectives envisaged in Design for Living and goes even further than those objectives to fulfil the larger aims, rather than running after Ramesh Thaper and asking them to accept Auroville as a part of their project?

But if you have approved of this approach, I must admit that the Design of the All-wise Diplomat still escapes me and I would be grateful for Your enlightenment on the subject.

The Mother writes her reply on Kailas' letter:

If it has at all been taken, it is without my knowledge – because I say to it an emphatic NO

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NO

*I do not know who told
you that - but there is
a misunderstanding somewhere
because to hand over the
management of Auroville
to any country or any
group ~~no~~ however big it
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I do not know who told you that – but there is a misunderstanding somewhere because to hand over the management of Auroville to any country or any group however big it may be is an absolute impossibility.

Blessings.

1970, November: UNESCO's General Conference passes its third resolution in support of Auroville:

The General Conference

Recalling resolutions 4.36 and 4.131 concerning Auroville which were adopted by the 14th and 15th sessions of the General Conference,

Noting that the Charter of Auroville aims inter alia at establishing "a place of unending education, of youth that never ages", and living embodiment of an actual human unity",

Conscious of the new responsibilities cast on UNESCO in the wake of growing unrest among youth from almost every part of the world; and which has taken the form of an open dispute with the universities and society,

Aware of the urgent need to welcome the "newly vocal young as allies in the search for a better world," and in keeping with the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for the promotion among youth of ideas of peace, mutual respect and understanding between peoples, and in conformity with the Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Co-operation,

Noting further that towards this end Auroville is already preparing and creating an instrument of education capable of meeting the formidable demands of our age, linking East and West in a new relationship,

Considering that UNESCO's Major Projects on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values gave a pioneering start, and recognising that Auroville can be an effective and integrated follow-up to this project,

Requests the Director-General to take such steps as may be feasible within the budgetary provisions, to promote the development of Auroville as an important international cultural programme.

1972, March 4th: After meeting with the Mother, Roger notes:

Each country has a particular relationship with nature and the way it expresses beauty; this is what interests us in Auroville.

Each Pavilion must be the expression of the culture of each country so that the whole becomes the representation of all the cultures on earth.

No politics in Auroville, no politics. This must be repeated and understood; it is Auroville's raison d'être, and while waiting for it to be realised in the world, it must exist here first. Each State must express its particular relationship with nature, its culture, its industry and must forget all politics. Those who will take care of the pavilions will be Aurovilians because it will be compulsory for them to live in Auroville.

1972, March 10th: After discussing with Roger about a fire in a mechanical workshop at 'Aspiration', Mother tells Rijuta:

I can see, I have truly the occasion to see that if I left, I have nobody here, it would be our destruction... Then if the work must be done, if Auroville must be built, not only do I have to remain in my body but the body must become strong.

Twenty months later the Mother left her body. This probably explains why Auroville had to face, and is still facing, so many extraordinary difficulties. The fact that the Mother left her body should have led to Auroville's *destruction*; it came very close to it... but miraculously it did not happen.

Epilogue: (downloaded from Wikipedia)

The **United Nations University** (国際連合大学 *Kokusai Rengō Daigaku*?) (**UNU**) is a United Nations agency established in Tokyo in 1973 to "research into the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare that are the concern of the United Nations and its agencies". It is a think tank for the United Nations and the member states. Its creation was set in motion by Secretary-General U Thant in 1969.



The university motto is "Advancing knowledge for human security, peace, and development".

The **United Nations University** provides educational opportunities to researchers, mainly at the graduate and post-graduate level, through an extensive range of fellowship schemes. It operates through a number of research centres around the world where research fellows or Ph.D. students from other universities, especially those in developing countries, can come to do research. UNU is headed by a Rector and is headquartered in Tokyo, Japan. It does not receive any funding from the regular UN budget; it relies entirely on voluntary contributions from member states which are currently valued at US\$350 million. The budget of UNU is approximately US\$37 million per annum. UNU relocated its Institute of Advanced Studies to the Minato Mirai 21 development in Yokohama, Japan in March 2004.