New Dawn
SEMIOTICS OF AUROVILLE

by
Aiyana Gunjan
July 2017

Toplines
Auroville (City of Dawn) is an experimental township in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. It was founded in 1968 by Mirra Alfassa (known as “the Mother”) and designed by architect Roger Anger. As stated in Alfassa’s first public message in 1965:

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.

Auroville...

From a semiotics point of view, Auroville intrigued me, fascinated me. Imagine 50 nationalities= 50 cultures living together to build One Culture called Auroville. And Yet each Aurovillian lived as an Individual, in his and her right.

I was inspired to decode the Auroville culture as in present, in context with The Mother’s Vision, from evolutionary trajectory point of view.

This was my journey into a new consciousness emerging...to decode every aspect, every facet of life and living, applying the cutting-edge technology of Semiotics.

With Gratitude
Aiyana Gunjan
2017
“It urges us to live at its height”

I dedicate this work
to Partho and Vijay Bharti
the Guiding Light in my life

My deep gratitude
to Uma, Manoj
for opening the doors of
Auroville and empowering me.

My special thanks to Lalit,
Aneeta, Elaine, Mariane for all
the support.
Thanks to all my Auroville
friends who made this journey
happy.
Applying the ground rules of Semiotics

- The point of departure for Semiotics is CULTURE. Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which people interpret their experience and guide their action.
- The world that is part of our everyday. The taken-for-grantedness causes culture to be mainly invisible. Consumers can only articulate the conscious text.
- Semiotics is an outside-in perspective where culture and communication is the object of the study.
- Starting with culture and communications, semiotics analyses the codes and ‘texts’ - any kind of message in any medium, that impact the social construction of people’s identities and the representation of the world they live in.
- Nothing is arbitrary. Everything conveys a meaning (even absence of a sign).
- Context is the message.

Semiotics can “read” the visible tip of the iceberg so we can understand what’s going on below the surface. We tap the Subconscious.

We do not interview people.
SEMIOTICS INTERVENTION involves an immersive and intensive process of sourcing, classifying and decoding multi-dimensional data (text, visual, sensorial stimuli as well as cultural context).

We don’t talk to people but we analyse every text that talks to people.
How will Semiotics help Auroville Culture?

1. Bridges the Mother’s Vision and the Manifest reality of the Auroville culture.
2. Helps to resolve the cultural complexities of the international township that are difficult to explore by other traditional research methodology.
3. Maps cultural patterns and codes trajectory to understand the AV evolutionary process. Identify emergent codes that opens new possibilities for AV.
4. Empowers decision making and collaboration by setting a structured cultural framework.
**The Semiotics Map**

A structured framework mapping the codes of behavior and norms that define and influence the Culture.

**TENSIONS**

There is no meaning in the culture without opposition.

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**TERRITORY**

The fundamental areas that define the culture.

**CODE**

The *unwritten* systems of shared rules; ways in which we understand and communicate.

**DIMENSION**

The key faces of how the codes work and are expressed.
A Dream  

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; a place where the needs of the spirit and the concern for progress would take precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the search for pleasure and material enjoyment. In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their souls; education would be given not for passing examinations or obtaining certificates and posts but to enrich existing faculties and bring forth new ones. In this place, titles and positions would be replaced by opportunities to serve and organise; the bodily needs of each one would be equally provided for, and intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority would be expressed in the general organisation not by an increase in the pleasures and powers of life but by increased duties and responsibilities. Beauty in all its artistic forms, painting, sculpture, music, literature, would be equally accessible to all; the ability to share in the joy it brings would be limited only by the capacities of each one and not by social or financial position. For in this ideal place money would no longer be the sovereign lord; individual worth would have a far greater importance than that of material wealth and social standing. There, work would not be a way to earn one’s living but a way to express oneself and to develop one’s capacities and possibilities while being of service to the community as a whole, which, for its own part, would provide for each individual’s subsistence and sphere of action. In short, it would be a place where human relationships, which are normally based almost exclusively on competition and strife, would be replaced by relationships of emulation in doing well, of collaboration and real brotherhood. 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. The realisation is certainly far from perfect, but it is progressive; little by little we are advancing towards our goal which we hope we may one day be able to present to the world as a practical and effective way to emerge from the present chaos, to be born into a new life that is more harmonious and true.
The Auroville Charter

The Charter thus forms an omnipresent referent that silently guides the people who choose to live and work for Auroville.

• Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But, to live in Auroville, one must be a willing servitor of the divine consciousness.

• Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.

• 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.

• Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity.

Mother’s Vision
There can be no meaning without oppositions. The interplay, the dynamics, the conflicts, the dilemmas, the tensions create new insights, resolutions and ideas within the cultural context = Evolution

The four Territories define the key domains impacting Auroville culture

The Pillars define the space and the boundaries for each territories.

From Vision2 manifest reality...

What are the key tensions in the territory?

What are the key tensions in the territory?

What are unwritten cultural codes defining attitude and behavior?

How are they expressed?
**The Vision**

**Inner Work: Guidelines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grow Within</th>
<th>Seek Divine</th>
<th>Self Development</th>
<th>Self Giving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcend; Renounce all religions; Freedom from ideological influences; Sincere, true, no pretense</td>
<td>Seek Truth; Not by mystical means BUT in life itself</td>
<td>Inner directed Self Mastery; fighting instincts; according to one’s capacity and means; Not mechanical.</td>
<td>Not be slave of desires; Work is indispensable for inner discovery; At service of the Truth, beyond social/religion/political ideologies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INNER WORK
- NEED FOR BALANCE
- AV Integral Life-Lab
- Seeking, searching
- Conflicts, dilemma
- resolution, transcend, new solution, idea = human evolution

TENSIONS
- Inner meditation time
- Project work
- Outer

CODES
- INTROSPECTION
- CHALLENGE
- INTIATIVE
- SELF DEVELOPMENT
Introspection

Vision2Manifest

- High aspiration
- Contact with inner core
- Control over emotions;
- Yoga of Now
Challenge

Vision2Manifest

- Question deeply; confront reality
- Challenge assumptions
- Challenge self limitations
- Challenge cultural differences
Initiative

Vision2Manifest

Organic; Inside-out approach

Pioneering spirit

Self Starter

‘Not what we have done BUT what we can do’
Self Development

Self Discovery; exploring, expressing talent, skill and capabilities

Self Giving; sharing knowledge/talent/ skill/ money/ time
The Vision
Collective Guidelines

Universality
- All nationalities;
- Transcend boundaries of creed/color/class;
- Freedom as Citizens of Universal Town

Collaboration
- Creation founded in Truth;
- Self supporting;
- Mutuality
- Not competitive

Service
- To whole group;
- Satisfaction to all;
- Material needs to be simplified.

Governance
- No taxes;
- Contribution to collective welfare, in work/kind/money;
- No rules;
- Organic, supple. progressing

Universality
Transcend boundaries of creed/color/class;
Freedom as Citizens of Universal Town

Collaboration
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Mutuality
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Service
To whole group;
Satisfaction to all;
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No taxes;
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No rules;
Organic, supple. progressing
COMMUNITY
AV Integral Life-Lab
Seeking, searching
Conflicts, dilemma
resolution, transcend, new
solution, idea = human
evolution

CODES
HUMAN UNITY
ALIGNED INDIVIDUALISM
COLLABORATIVE ACTION
AURO BRIDGE
NEW DAWN: SEMIOTICS OF AUROVILLE © AIYANAGUNJAN. JUNE 2016. NOT FOR CIRCULATION

CODES
HUMAN UNITY
ALIGNED INDIVIDUALISM
COLLABORATIVE ACTION
AURO BRIDGE
Human Unity

Transcend religion/ideology/ nationality; Belong to humanity as a whole

Centred in spiritual foundation

United in common aspiration at spiritual and material level

Cultural diversity, key ingredient for the human Lab; individual aligned to nation soul
Collaborative Action

Vision2Manifest

Multidimensional team structures

Go beyond the obvious/ current limitations;
look inward = create value

Working approaches
Nature Vs. Geometry

Decision-making approaches
authorative Vs. consensus in participatory process
Aligned Individualism

Freedom to explore and express as an Individual, BUT with discipline and license

Expanding of personal boundaries; aligning of Self with the collective identity

‘Gated Community’
I Vs. Others; Inclusion Vs. Exclusion
Conflict resolution group

‘Auroville Hierarchy’
For ALL Vs. For ME
Freedom Vs. Rules
Auro-Bridge

Vision2Manifest

Village transformation/ empowerment initiatives; going beyond Govt. intervention

Integration of Auroville with outside world
Inside out and Outside-in
A challenge/ opportunitt
# The Vision

## Economics: Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Aim</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Money</th>
<th>Belongs-to-no-one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating rich and beautiful life for all;</td>
<td>Not means to earn</td>
<td>Not to produce money but help in growth of</td>
<td>Liberate from the idea of personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not competitive or corporate; Not to create a</td>
<td>livelihood; to express</td>
<td>consciousness; Not exchange but giving;</td>
<td>possession;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huge engine of production;</td>
<td>Self; Not egoistic;</td>
<td>Not the Sovereign Lord; Real wealth = value</td>
<td>Belongs to humanity;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For collective Unity;</td>
<td>individual worth, not material/social standing</td>
<td>Joy and liberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for Joy of Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXTERNAL

ECONOMY
M Consciousness
Flow of Fund/For whom
AV Integral Life-Lab
Seeking, searching
Conflicts, dilemma
resolution, transcend, new
solution, idea = human
evolution

INTERNAL

For Me

ECONOMICS

TENSIONS

For All

For Me

Codes
Yoga of Work
Ownership Challenge
M-Consciousness
Integral Business

For All

External
ECONOMY

Creativity

Business
Commercial viability
Contribution
Expansion/ what next

For Me
For All

Growth

Basic

For Me

Ownership Challenge
Consciousness
Vs Consumerism

For All

Lifestyle

CODES
YOGA OF WORK
OWNERSHIP CHALLENGE
M-CONSCIOUSNESS
INTEGRAL BUSINESS
Yoga of Work

Collective usefulness; not selfish

Mutual giving; not commercial exchange

Volunteerism; Earn-in-Learn
Inspired hearts

‘Team spirit; in collaboration
Ownership Challenge

Land ownership: Auroville Vs Villagers; Green belt under threat

House ownership: pressure of ‘urbanization’
Funding/ refund/ rent-house sitting- own/ maintenance/ 2nd generation Vs. new comers

Business ownership: funding/ challenge of taking the business to next level – expansion/ selling; decision making

Material ownership - basic Vs. lifestyle; sustainability Vs. consumerism
M-consciousness

Divine Power in Money as energy; Beyond tangible value;

No exchange of money internally
Contribution to community welfare growth of consciousness

Inflow of money from external sources;
funding by Govt/ donors/ self funded

Maintenance for Aurovillians
Eligibility Vs. Entitlement;
*a salary? Who gets how much? Why not me?*
Integral Business

**Vision Manifset**

**Vision** = the spirit, principles and usage of business is for higher good.

**Entrepreneurial spirit of the individual**
- Self starters, pioneering, organic growth;
- Self funded/ raised; contribution to the community

**Focus on research, creativity and innovation**

**Small scale industry; labour intensive;**
- Production expansion Vs. Creativity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accelerated Evolution</th>
<th>Constant Progress</th>
<th>Integral Education</th>
<th>Aesthetics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Force &amp; Creation;</td>
<td>Research &amp; Discovery; Not mystical but in life itself; Live in simplified way; develop higher qualities</td>
<td>Grow &amp; Develop; Without losing contact with soul; Enrich existing capacities; Bring forth NEW</td>
<td>Beauty &amp; Refinement All forms; accessible to all; Harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority on the need of the Spirit; Bridge between past and future; Futuristic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIFE LAB TENSIONS

**Spirit**
AV Integral Life-Lab
Seeking, searching
Conflicts, dilemma
Resolution, transcend, new
Solution, idea = human evolution

**Closed/limits/rules**

**Open Freedom**

**Matter**

CODES
COLLECTIVE EXPERIMENT
PROGRESSIVE CREATION
SOFTWARE OF LIFE
INTEGRAL NATURE
Collective Experiment

Vision2Manifest

Experiential learning from life itself; inner discovery; not mystical; inside-out

Emergence of New Consciousness
Conscious agents in the evolution of Auroville; Aurovillian brings in their nation soul as a potential gift to new collective consciousness

Success and Failure are of equal value for the discovery of Truth

Go beyond. Knowledge Economy
Vast free knowledge; research and experiment; cross pollination, accessibility and freedom
Progressive Creation

**Vision2Manifest**

- Limitations fuels creativity
- Diversity channelized in the creative force; innovative thinking
- Focus on the aesthetics mind; creating beauty and harmony
- Enlarge field of creative experience = accessible to all
Software of Life

Vision2Manifest

Consciousness First approach

Go beyond the obvious, conscious; in-depth research in the inner process of life.

Transformation of people’s energy and matter = resource for auroville

Alternate therapy, soft solutions dealing with the software of life. Inside out intervention
Integral Nature

Vision2Manifest

Conscious, concentrated action to preserve, grow and sustain Nature

Nature Interpretation
Research, learning,
sensitizing, educating
Living Text-Book

Nature Intervention
Eco-Balance/ Eco-Credits
Eco-duties in daily life
Eco-design
Integrality

Mother’s Vision created in-built polarity and opposition in the DNA of Auroville Cultural Blueprint with Integrality as the core defining code. It is not about thisVs that but it is about transformative immersion in the cultural oppositions...embracing, judging not, resolving, transcending towards CONSCIOUSLY creating new cultural patterns

= HUMAN EVOLUTION
SUMMARY

1. Culture
2. Brand

2. Evolving Auroville Foundational Framework
The Auroville Cultural Semiotics Map…
Creating Brand Identity
rooted in culture coding

WHY = Ideology.
Understanding of mythological and idealogical connections of the brand rooted in the market, culture and society

WHAT = Core Competence
Understanding of brand communication in context of competitors, and cultural background of the market

Semiotics looks at the relationship between branding and culture through the medium of signs. Through examining signs and what they mean to consumers, semiotics reveal often overlooked meanings and create attention or differentiation.

HOW = Working & Processes
Understanding of code usage in context of communication, competitors, and the market, in relation to brand execution.
**Why = Ideology.**
The central circle represents the core essence of Auroville- aspiring for Human Evolution

**What = Competence**
The four petals represent the four Powers of Auroville - the core competencies - the unique perspective offered to the world = resolution of the cultural oppositions

**How = Process**
The twelve petals represent the powers manifested for the working of the Auroville Integral Life Lab
Aiyana brings Brand & Cultural Intelligence into the marketing/brand interventions. She follows an incisive strategic approach towards the brand development process. Aiyana has been doing pioneering work in the specialized field of Semiotics, impacting global-local strategies. She has tracked the socio-cultural shifts and patterns in India since liberalization.

Aiyana Gunjan did her schooling from Moden School, Barakhamba Road, B.A.(Hons.) in Economics from Lady Sri Ram college and Masters in Business Economics (MBE) from Delhi University. Aiyana has more than two decades of experience in the strategic planning function in the advertising industry (at Ogilvy and JWT, and as Head of the Planning function at Mudra, Bates-141, Dentsu and Law & Kenneth).

Art, culture and traveling are her passions. Aiyana is also an Artist/Calligrapher where she has taken the traditional calligraphy into the language of contemporary abstract. She has participated in several shows in India and abroad.

Aiyana is an independent Brand Semiotician, representing Indian market on global projects. Aiyana collaborates with the International network of cultural experts, to bring cross-cultural perspective on the project. She has worked on several international projects like J&J, Pepsico-Gatorade, Nokia, AstraZeneca, with UK companies (Space Doctors, Truth Consulting, & Visual Signo). Aiyana spearheaded the Ford Car Foundational Framework Project in India for Team Detroit (WPP)-Ford Motors, USA., (in collaboration with Visual Signo, UK) and Semiotics of Auroville (international township), Semiotics of Art & Culture.


She has an extensive strategic brand planning experience of having worked across wide range of global and local brands, across product categories (FMCG, durables, technology, lifestyle) like Nokia, Canon, Lotus Herbals, Sony Ericsson, Samsung, Lavazza, Horlicks, Boost, Maggi range, Yamaha, RayBan, Swatch, GPI, Seagrams, Motorola, Cargill Nature Fresh, Dabur, Reckitt and Coleman Mortein.

Future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious.
“Work is Love made visible”
- Kahlil Gibran