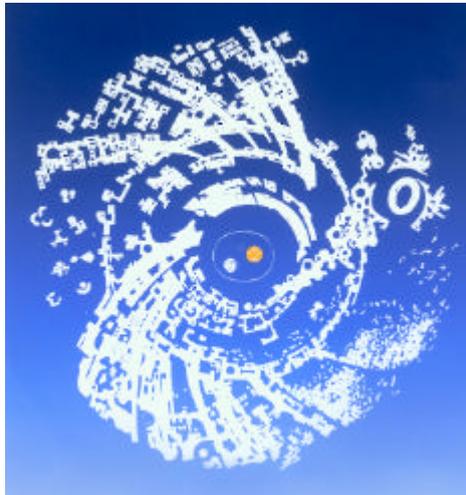


'The Inner Dimension of Globalisation & Potential Role of a City: Auroville - The City the Earth Needs – an evolving global city'

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Auroville Galaxy Plan

Short Outline/ Executive Summary

Globalisation symbolysis evolution. More than what, the question is how planners' community can contribute to the ever changing and evolving values of human society. Integration is the Key. To comprehend the nature and scale of this integration would essentially be one of the right initiatives to be able to play more useful and leading role. There are not many successful examples of such comprehensive diversity that could share the ingredients of this much-desired approach. Auroville – an International Township in South India is one such acknowledged case study. The emerging global city, based on the ideas of Human Unity, has people from 40 countries is constantly and consciously engaged in almost all forms & activities of life – experimenting and bringing out innovative solutions not only in Integrated Urban Planning for future but for life as whole.

Introduction

All the problems of the humanity are essentially the problems of harmony.
– 'Sri Aurobindo'

The above statement made by the great visionary and saint of modern India, Sri Aurobindo, brings forward a great realization for the entire human kind and also very clearly highlights the direction and approach towards achieving the goal of making the earth a more livable place for all.

The core theme of the conference "PLANNING IN A MORE GLOBALIZED AND COMPETITIVE WORLD", in this context, very strongly relates to the base aspect of harmony and truly an apt and very timely attempt to create a much needed awareness and further device & share the ways and means towards becoming 'universal citizens'.

Direction/Scope of this paper – The mentioned aim and objectives of the conference primarily intend to begin and boost the comprehensive dialogue on future directions of our cities with special reference to globalisation and competitive aspects. This vast line of thought can be viewed and handled by many angles. I wish to take part & contribute, through my this paper, in the line of exploration the aspects of emerging values of conscious evolving society of which cities are reflecting mirrors. Needless to mention that cities are the true 'diversified community' in the world today which has been bringing and embracing the 'change' and presenting the world with a role model of unification and evolved human society.

The paper deliberately highlights the 'human' aspects and its evolutionary crisis which will lead towards creation of a new order. Hence, a constant redefining will take place of the context and approach. The paper finally presents a concurrent case study by sharing the vision and experience of '**Auroville Universal Township**' in South India where I work not only as just a town planner but feel a strong part of growing universal brotherhood.

'We can not solve the problem by the same mind which created it'. We are all connected, rather very deeply connected with all the creations of not only of this planet but the whole cosmos. A truer realisation of it & collective participation towards can alone help achieving the effective Human Unity. If this broad direction is understood and agreed, let's first see ourselves, planners and other related professionals, in that human perspective – as a human being first. It would be appropriate, in my views, than to encompass other vital dimensions of the urban planning & management in this ever-changing scenario.

Changing Scenarios & Emerging Trends - Urban Planners, Urban Designers & other professionals

Since long, the community of urban planners and designers has been playing a crucial role not only in shaping the image and character of the cities but also constantly providing better facilities and environment keeping the pace with constantly changing values and activities of our human society. The type of cities planned, spaces created & facilities provided have always, obviously, been a reflecting mirror of the cumulative aspiration of that society in any given point in time. Today's time in that line, as unique as ever, rightly poses the deep question of what kind of society are we envisioning which can make cities sustainable. It is important, at this juncture, to highlight that the spatial planning and other associated elements alone can not make any neighbourhood, city, region and thus this earth a better livable place.

Changing Society & its values

The natural quest thus emerges is *'what are the essential ingredients of making a city/place sustainable – what are the changes required, in whom, how much and at what level to achieve the desired goal?'*

It has been adequately realised and sufficiently mentioned that we, humans, being the core unit of whole society/city and playing the leading role in all the activities of the planet, have to be sustainable first from within & then only any conscious thought or activity undertaken by them would lead towards creation of a sustainable environment.

It is also understood that not whole of humanity will turn into a super conscious beings in a short period but it is quite possible, if willed & persuaded well, individuals and sections of the societies could develop that awareness which in turn could help others to lead a conscious life. At this forum, we are talking about the society of planners and related professions being more conscious in visioning the societies and cities of the future. They have great

responsibilities as well as possibilities to make cities a better place to live. This, I would like to mention as the first utmost necessary step in order to perceive the nature & quantum of change.

One highly relevant example in this line is of Auroville which I would be discussing later in this paper.

Connecting aspect of Globalisation – This aspect goes back to the creation of civilizations. It essentially relates to '*an individual and environment*'. It has been a classical issue also for deliberations as to the potentiality of impact of each other. The theme can be perceived in two major-broad and interlinked ways – local & global. It is a change of perception of scale as to what we consider local and global and when these two become one.

Globalisation symbolysis evolution. 'Connecting' has always been one of the most fundamental characteristics of not only of our human race but also of all the elements of the creation. It is the only natural way of further growth and progress of all. Here, at this point, what becomes most crucial in this 'context of connection' is the very definition and direction of it.

The true journey of connection (globalisation) begins with connection within. There lies the key of making a global connection effective and realisable in a sustained way. No other approach or process can provide that genuine connection which we all are seeking at present and for the times to come. This could well be the first point of basic understanding of the wholesomeness of connecting and its linked explorations with regard to this conference. The Cities are obviously, among the most important links of this vast chain.

A close look at the deeply disturbing trend of present days' sad, devastating and terror events simply further strengthens the need of better connections among the various parts of the world. It is indeed quite likely that once that kind of connection channels are attempted to be established, there would be a major positive change in the world consciousness. As mentioned, the real effectively of the connection begins with the citizens – realizing the ultimate goal of becoming the 'united citizens of the united world'.

It is against this background, I strongly feel that the city as tremendous vital resource as an environment creator & provider, has the opportunity and potential to link the citizens of the world. And it is already happening. Various forms and intentions of Connections have been the driving force behind the exchange of information about diverse cultures & regions has been taking place since time immemorial. It simply highlights the basis of changing role of planning in this globalising world.

Globalisation and City Connections

The linking of cities has been one of the oldest phenomenon of our civilisations – in various forms of exchange namely trade, culture & conquest. Motives of such interactions might have varied from time to time but such connections have always been bringing major changes in each other's society and thus forwarding the theme of globalisation every time. It has been the only path of collective evolution of our societies. It was the beginning point of coming together which slowly, over the centuries, resulted in bringing the various parts and cultures closer paving a path of new world order. Establishment of various World Organisations has been a natural extension of these evolutionary & historical connections. The humanity, at this level, has completed a full circle – from uncivilised, isolated and disperse living to the present days' understanding & efforts to establish and device ways towards new collective order.

The role these world organizations played & are playing remains very crucial in today's context. However, it has also been observed that their scale & nature of functioning and effectively is largely at the level of national governments and other high offices and thus has not been able to engage the vast majority of stakeholders of the world.

In spite of further growth and diversification of functions of these organizations they still apparently tend to work more in 'top down' manner. A need has arisen to win the confidence of the people of the world and to make them genuinely feel part of the whole collective 'globalised' system.

In modern times, connecting the cities has been a rather good practice and gesture of goodwill and cooperation reflecting one of the dimensions of globalisation. There have been and are many ideas, programs & events which have carried the messages of City twinning, Sister Cities and now rapidly growing concept of City Networking. The cities have been jointly working on various aspects of physical and socio-cultural developments. Such initiatives and supports indeed, have brought the people of places together up to some extent. A good beginning.

New forms of such partnerships are required to connect the people in a more effective way.

Auroville – a unique globalised society with human values and innovative practices: A Case Study

Auroville, at this juncture, offers a fresh perspective and its wonderful experiments and experiences to all the cities and citizens of the world.

“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 realize human unity.” (The Mother, founder of Auroville)

On 28th February 1968, youth representing 121 nations and all the States of India placed a handful of earth in a lotus-shaped urn, symbolizing the creation of **a city of peace, international understanding and human unity**. Inspired by the universal vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Auroville is dedicated to be a 'living laboratory' for addressing some of the Earth's most pressing challenges.

Auroville Charter

- 1. 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.**
- 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.**

To date, some **1,600 people from 35 countries** have joined Auroville to help manifest its vision. Located in Tamil Nadu, South India, Auroville is surrounded by **13 villages in the immediate vicinity with a population of approximately 40,000 people**, who directly or indirectly participate in the Auroville experiment.

Founded with the encouragement of the Govt. of India and the support of UNESCO, Auroville has been unanimously endorsed on four occasions in the latter's General Conference. It has also received, and continues to receive, the support and encouragement of the European Commission and various NGOs around the world.

Multifarious activities - Auroville is intended as a city for up to 50,000 inhabitants from around the world. The activities are multifarious, and include afforestation, organic agriculture, educational research, health care, village development, appropriate technology, and building construction, information technology, small and medium scale businesses, town planning, water table management, cultural activities and community services.

Over the past three decades, Auroville has been dedicated to a wide range of development programmes, in many of which it has made impressive achievements. Programmes have been carried out in the following fields of activity:

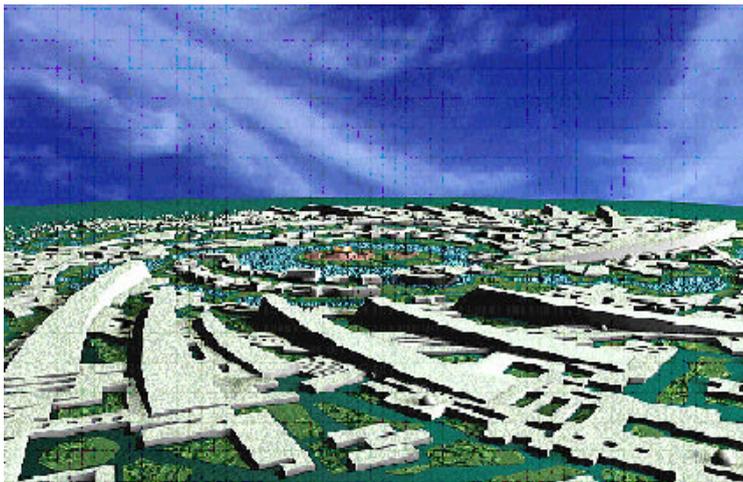
- Arts & Culture
- Educational Research
- Environmental Regeneration
- Handicrafts & Small-Scale Industries
- Health & Healing
- Innovative Building Technologies
- Integrated Urban Planning
- Health & Healing
- Innovative Building Technologies
- Integrated Urban Planning
- Organic Farming
- Renewable Energy
- Rural Development

Few of the above are being elaborated here -

Community Participation - One of the most outstanding and strong recommendations of the Local Agenda 21 has been the community participation. This aspect is closely associated with the decentralized development models and empowering the stakeholders to manage their resources collectively and enhance their quality of life. It is the one of the very founding principle and working mechanism of Auroville. There are various groups that deal with issues and subjects related to the community's development and the decisions are made only after a series



or awareness and consultative process. It has also been one of the paramount objectives of Auroville's – to experiment and explore the true aspect of self-governance. It is not to say that we have achieved the most perfect governing system but there is a sincere aspiration and application of innovative thoughts in that line...with mixed range of results, of course.



Integrated Urban Planning -

The township boundary is in the form of a circle of 2.5 km radius encompassing 20 sq km. Four zones will radiate out from the Matrimandir gardens: International, Cultural, Residential and Industrial. The Green Belt, an area for promoting biodiversity, environmental restoration and organic farming, will eventually surround the entire city area. While much of the land still has to be purchased, Auroville

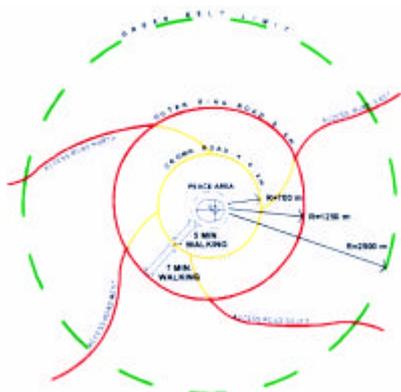
presently manages about three-quarters of the total acreage within the future city area, and about 25% within the Green Belt.

The present community of Auroville consists of some 100 settlements of varying sizes. Auroville has created a basic infrastructure of roads, water and electricity supply, and telecommunications, including an electronic communications network. Accommodation has been constructed for 1,500 people, and municipal services for food production, purchase and distribution, electricity and water supply, waste disposal and



recycling, education, health care, financial transactions, and town planning have been established.

The Auroville Township Master Plan 2000 - 2025, which has been recently endorsed by the Government of India, is dedicated to the challenge of creating an environment-friendly, sustainable urban settlement that, at the same time, integrates and cares for the neighbouring rural area.



Auroville's concept is therefore to build a city that will economise on land needs by introducing development approaches with an optimum mix of densities and appealing urban forms and amenities, while the surrounding Green Belt will be a fertile zone for applied research in the sectors of food production, forestry, soil conservation, water management, waste management and other areas which assist sustainable development.

The results of such innovative methods would be available for application in both rural and urban areas in India and the world.

Environmental Regeneration - Auroville has gained national and international acclaim for its wasteland reclamation and reforestation work. More than 2,500 acres of near barren and visibly dying land have been transformed into a lush green area. Comprehensive contour bunding and the building of small check dams for soil and water conservation have significantly enhanced the life-support potential of the whole area. Over 2 million forest trees, hedge trees, fruit, and fuel wood trees have been planted.



Innovative Building Technologies - Auroville has gained a considerable knowledge and expertise in the field of innovative, appropriate and cost-effective building technologies, especially earth construction and ferro-cement.

Renewable Energy - Concerned with the ecological implications of energy consumption, Aurovilians have been experimenting with the use of renewable energy sources from the beginning. The major forms of renewable energy utilised in Auroville are solar, wind and biomass. At present, more than 1,200 photovoltaic (PV) panels are in use for electricity and water supply. About 150 houses use solar PV electricity and heaters for their energy requirements. There are many houses and small establishments which are entirely living on 100% solar and other forms of renewable energy. In addition, there are about 140 solar water-pumping systems. Some 30 windmills of various designs are in operation for pumping water, and specially designed ferro-cement biogas systems process animal and vegetable waste to produce methane gas and organic fertilisers. Today, Auroville has become a major testing ground for renewable energy sources in India.



Sewerage and Sanitation - All residential units have their own system for sewage disposal. There are about 20 community-level treatment facilities (for residential as well as industrial and commercial units) consisting of septic tanks, Imhoff tanks, baffle reactors, and root zone and lagooning systems. The latter, numbering 22, are of experimental nature, and a study has been taken up to test their efficacy in delivering waste water that will not pollute the ground water.

Solid waste disposal is managed by the Eco Service, which was started in 1995. It is estimated that about 3500 kg of wastes are generated per week. About 2000 kg. of this quantity is organic and generally composted at the site itself. About 1000 kg. is recycled. The non-recyclable wastes of 400 to 500 kg, like rubber items, thermocole, fibreglass and PET, and storage batteries are stored in a temporary storage facility until an acceptable disposal solution is found. This waste disposal management has been made possible by the introduction of **segregation of wastes at the source**.



Communication – Auroville is fairly well advanced community in this regard. Auronet, Auroville's email and electronic bulletin board network, both within Auroville and with the outside world. The township has its own internal messenger service and the weekly Auroville News provides information about the happenings in Auroville to all the residents.

Auroville publishes for internal as well as external circulation two regular newsletters in English, and one in Tamil. English-language newsletters are the monthly 'Auroville Today' and the quarterly 'Auroville Outreach', and 'Kaliveli Nilam' is in Tamil. Auroville is equipped to handle its information and outreach through well-established printing and multimedia resource units.

Auroville - City Networking

Linking Auroville with European and Indian Cities - Networking with European cities started a few years ago in Auroville on a small scale, when members of AVI Spain contacted the city of Pamplona and the region of Navarra (Spain). As a result, the Government of Navarra and the municipality of Pamplona are now supporting health care and water supply projects in Auroville's neighbouring villages with an annual budget.

More recently, contacts were made with the municipalities of Ancona, Bologna, Ferrara, Firenze, Milano, Rome, Treviso and Venice in Italy, Lyon, Orleans, Paris, Poitiers and Strasbourg in France, Bent in England, Almere and Rotterdam in The Netherlands, Copenhagen in Denmark, and Köln in Germany.

In February 2001 a second project, called **"City Networking for Sustainable Development and Human Unity"**, was presented to the European Commission for funding under the Asia Urbs programme in partnership with Venice, Paris, and the Province of Treviso in Italy.

The scope of the project is to provide opportunities for sharing experiences, resources and information in the field of sustainable urban management and cultural integration. The project targets Asia-Urbs project holders, cities in the European Union, Indian metropolitan cities and medium-sized towns, NGOs and professional associations in India and Europe.

Lalit Kishor Bhati, The Inner Dimension of Globalisation & Potential Role of a City': Auroville - The City the Earth Needs – an evolving global city, 39th ISoCaRP Congress 2003

A **Conference** was held in Auroville from the 25th to 28th February 2002, where a selected delegation of Asia-Urbs project holders, representatives of Indian, SAARC, and EU cities, NGOs and professional associations were invited. The total attendance was 86 from 23 cities of India and 27 cities of Europe. The project also includes the establishment in Auroville of a full-fledged resource and city networking service centre. A database of EU and Indian cities will be set up as an information tool for European, Indian and South-Asian cities, interested in decentralised cooperation.

As such, Auroville stands as a global, evolutionary experiment on the planet that, according to its Charter, "belongs to nobody in particular but to humanity as a whole". And it carries the vision, the hope, the challenges, and the aspiration to become truly "the City the Earth needs" in globalising and competitive times!

For Further Resource Information, Kindly visit

Auroville Web Site: <http://www.auroville.org>

Auroville Township Planning Information: <http://www.auroville.org/thecity.htm>

Auroville Township Master Plan Document: <http://www.auroville.com/cur/index.htm>

or write to

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