Jaya – a pioneer for the City the Earth Needs

I came to Auroville in 1971, a young girl at the age of 19. With Mother’s permission I was allowed to come to Auroville. From the first meeting with Mother I knew that this was my path of life, this was whom I wanted to serve. This is the picture of me that I sent to the Mother:

Friends from Sweden who had already come to visit Auroville knew Mali in Utilité (Utility) and so it came natural to contact him and move out on the land. Utility at this time had one hut and a small store room, there was no water, no bridge over the canyon, no roads and no other facilities. I slept on the floor on one side in Mali’s hut while I had a hut built for me on an adjacent field. A third person joined us, Mordecai from Canada, a Palmyra was laid across the canyon as a bridge, a well started to be dug and the first crop of black-eyed beans sowed.

We walked across the sandy fields to Aspiration for water, food, to bathe and wash clothes. And sometimes we’d take the bus into Pondy. I remember going into Pondy for the Darshan day … it must have been for 24th November … all dressed up and happy for the Balcony Darshan, to see Mother again.

At the same time, I was very attached to Sweden and the circle of friends there. An active Auroville group developed in Sweden with the intention to build an Auroville-like community. But by 1982, after several visits over the years, I came back to live in Auroville.

As I write, images of Auroville that come up are the large Mango tree outside Mali’s hut in Utility … the very old gnarly Tamarind trees in the then very poor and simple village of Kuilapalayam … and going to Forecomers one day - suddenly seeing a Casuarina forest-like plantation with the beautiful sound of the wind through the pine-like trees – a sudden feeling of home in the beautiful but barren landscape!
Over the years I worked in many fields: education; construction; business; organization. Most of the time, I had several commitments and projects - taking care of a small piece of forest, building the house and planting the land we bought, as well as raising our family with four children together with my husband Nico. Here we are in the early ‘90s in our place in Gaia where we lived until very recently. (Now I have grandchildren who follow the family tradition and are Aurovilians too!):

Then, I became involved with the International Zone and by the end of the Nineties this led to the Unity Pavilion project – a beautiful sign of Auroville’s greater maturity and flowering! Shivaya and myself together with an expanding team of great collaborators have through the years been developing the space and widening the scope of activities. In 1996, Auroville was honored to receive the 3rd George Nakashima Peace Table – meant to represent the continent of Asia – which was installed in the Unity Pavilion, housed in its Hall of Peace. The other tables are in New York (for the Americas) and in Moscow (for the continent of Europe).

Since the completion of the main Unity Hall and the Hall of Peace, the Unity Pavilion has been hosting peace meditations and peace-related activities and trainings, cultural events in collaboration with the International Zone Pavilion groups as well as workshops, conferences, community meetings and gatherings, exhibitions, student interactions and more. SAVI, the organization for internships and volunteering is hosted in the Unity Pavilion Compound. The IZ and AVI earlier also had their headquarters at Unity, but have now moved into the Bharat Nivas Campus. Every year, the Unity Pavilion has well over 200 events and interactions with a peak of more then 360 during the 50th Anniversary. We work with an approach of a gift economy and in all aspects of our activities we are very clear and consistent in our alignment with the ideals of Auroville.
After 2010 the Unity Pavilion work led to the research on the 12 qualities as a matrix for creating tools for the collective change of consciousness. The 12 qualities of the Matrimandir petals, the four aspects of the Mother, the Matrimandir Gardens, the various constellations that emerged; including Mother’s work on Flowers and Their Messages - it all came together.

The Sourcing Our Oneness project is an outcome of this approach. It has brought together members of Auroville, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the Sri Aurobindo Society, The Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch, World Union, Sri Aurobindo’s Action, SACAR, the Golden Chain, AVI, the Sri Aurobindo Association USA and other organizations connected to the work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. A main event is the yearly one-week Sourcing Our Oneness camp in Nainital, hosted by the Delhi Ashram, which brings together people from all over India and abroad.

The Land is close to our hearts and in 2015 we were happy to host the Art for Land Exhibition-Auction arranged by Jasmin, Aravinda and Mandakini as an action of the Acres for Auroville land campaign. The year after, there was a willingness to support it on a larger scale leading to the “Art for Land” Exhibition and allied fund raising events in its present form. By now, more than 90 artists from Auroville – and also from the Ashram, India, and Auroville International centers - donate art works for this exhibition in a cycle, with land donors, of “flowing generosity”.

Performing artists from Auroville, the Ashram as well as others offer their performances and presentations. Each year we hold an Inauguration to open the Exhibition season, and a Closing Gala dinner and concert with food donated by AV eateries, with many concerts and presentations in between.
For last year’s 4th Edition, a person asked: I do not have much money and I am not an artist, how can I also contribute in kind? This request opened the door for the “Generosity Fair” held one Sunday afternoon during the Exhibition. People were invited to give things they did not need: beautiful, useful or fun things. Then we asked people who bake if they would contribute in kind and they did: the restaurants, individuals, even kids and the TLC school who has an English teaching baking class. This altogether resulted in a wonderful afternoon with Russian music, a lovely fair and a fantastic tea party with a spread of delicious cakes such as Auroville has not seen before… and this afternoon alone brought in Rs 80,000 for the land! Many people, individuals and families, came and enjoyed so much that it is clear this event will be part of this year’s upcoming program.

If you’re in Auroville, be sure to come and participate – the 2020 Art for Land Year 5 will be held at the Unity Pavilion from January 5th – February 21st, with the Generosity Fair on Sunday 16th February.

Mother said: “The Lands for Auroville are to be bought and can be bought. The money is needed. Will you help?” She stated an imperative – The lands are to be bought. They can be bought. The money is needed. And she asks if we will help.

This is a mantra that stays with me. I love Auroville, I am very grateful to live here and in my heart I very much feel the urgency of the land. It is the base for the emergence of the city - for its buildings and organization, for the generations that will live here to serve its purpose, with the Matrimandir at the center – The City the Earth Needs.

For Her work, what each one of us as we can do, nothing is too big, nothing is too small, until the land is fully and completely secured. And I have a wish – I want it to happen in my lifetime, I want to see Auroville’s missing land secured for the future! It is a gift we can give in gratitude for Life, for this earth, and for being part of this journey of consciousness and love.
May 1970.

The lands for Anuvilla are to be bought and can be bought. The money is needed. Will you help?