In our newsletters, we have the great satisfaction of highlighting and honoring the major contributions made by Auroville's pioneers who came from all over the world to build the City of Dawn. In recent years, several of them have been filmed, sharing the life-changing inspiration they received by meeting The Mother.

Here, we are pleased to share the recollections of Auroville pioneer André Hababou in a short interview filmed by Fred Cebron in 2017. In this 5-minute clip, André shares the deep moments of his 1969 landmark meeting with The Mother, which provided the inspiration and energy for his over 50 years of work for Auroville. (in French with English sub-titles). All thanks to Fred for this film. https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=meeting+the+Mother%2C+Andre

About André:

Andre Hababou spent the first 13 years of his life in Tunisia, and then the next 13 years in France where he studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, was a painter, and worked in architectural offices. André spoke about his life and work in Auroville in several interviews over the years with « Auroville Today » and we thank AVT for sharing excerpts below.

About the turn in André’s life path took that led him to The Mother and Auroville:

« I had an inner quest. I was very interested in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and I had been trying to put them into practice for over two years but I was finding it very difficult to achieve any results. In March 1968, I wrote to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and Pavitra answered me saying I could come for a stay at the Ashram. I did not know of Auroville as yet, but along with the letter there was a brochure on Auroville. When I saw the brochure I was totally taken. I received the brochure in May '68 and I was swept away by the Charter of Auroville and the Galaxy on the first page. »

« When I saw that, I told myself, ‘This is extraordinary. It's exactly the place I am looking for, where I could offer what I could do best.’ »
As a result, André tried to come immediately and he sold some of his paintings to get some money together. « I came out over land, hitchhiking. It was the period of the hippies. I left in a group. We hitch-hiked till Turkey and from there, we took buses and trains. It took us a number of months, we thought it would never end. »

Once at the Ashram, The Mother asked him to work in the Auroville Architectural office with the main architect, Roger Anger, which he did for many years. He spent his time between Auroville and the Ashram. When he first went out to Auroville, he (like others at that early time), had a big surprise when he saw what already existed of the Township: « Nothing. I was loaned a jeep and we went out to take a look. Having seen the model in Paris - that was so well done – I thought the city existed already. I remember we arrived at the Centre of Auroville and there wasn't even a building. And I remember I wasn't disappointed – I wasn't happy either - and I told myself that it was up to us to build the city; that we had to transform ourselves through doing it. It was a process that had meaning. »

At that time, the Auroville Architects' study-office had been set up in a very beautiful colonial house in Pondicherry, where there were a lot of draftsmen, architects and modelmakers. « We were all plugged into Auroville. Roger went to see the Mother about three times a week. She communicated to him, during all those years, her vision of the town. And when he came to the office, he was all charged up with that force; it was very concrete, we all felt it. It was a privileged time, for we had the feeling of being carried along. … It was a very creative period for me, thanks to the talents of Roger; he pushed and pushed to make it better, I was 26, and not very mature. I learned a lot from him and I am very grateful to him for that. Roger was very creative, loved beauty and he did he had an incredible thirst for perfection. »

And André said, « It was a time of grace, living in the direct atmosphere of The Mother. »

In the years following his soul-awakening meeting with The Mother, André made important contributions to the material development of the City of Dawn working at Aurofuture and the Auromodele Atelier. With Roger Anger, André worked on several houses in Auromodele and then conceived numerous others by himself: the school buildings at New Creation, the CRCP building at Fraternity, and he also conceived all of the buildings at Auromode.

One of his major achievements was designing the community of Surrender, the first and largest phase of which was completed in 1998, consisting of 17 houses arranged along a crescent road, and a number of staggered apartments with a higher density.

For André, there is a deep meaning to architecture: « When I make an architectural design, my first aim is to manifest harmony and beauty. But to be sensitive to that magic of beauty and form, of the relation between the inner and the outer, the integration of architecture into the landscape is much more difficult. The building has to be functional…. I keep in mind the general plan, and the environment. It is an excellent exercise in common sense. »

Over the years, he first stayed in a hut at Aspiration, then lived at Auromodele and finally at Auromode with his partner Prema, and their daughter, Pavitra, where he still resides.

On collaboration for building Auroville, back in in 1991, he said « What I most believe is that through working together we will find this new way of facing problems, a truer way of living. It is that which will make the town not just a town, but the Town that She wants. »

With all our gratitude to you, André, for everything you've contributed!
Now, here’s a photo history of André at work helping build Auroville over the past 5 decades:
Now, 2022 - early morning tea at the Matrimandir

With Jaya, another early pioneer

With gratitude to all the Auroville builders, old and new!