



Welcome to the Summer newsletter. In this issue, we have a report on Auroville's work with the victims of the tsunami. Auroville was fortunate to have escaped so lightly, and although some communities had serious damage, there were no Aurovilians or Auroville guests seriously hurt, but the villages up and down the coast, with whom Auroville has had friendly relations for many years were devastated, with many lives lost and homes and livelihoods shattered.

Impressions of Auroville

The pioneers of consciousness.

Between February 20th and February 28th 2005, Marc Luyckx Ghisi, theologian, researcher in global cultural transformation and author was invited to Auroville as Member of the Auroville International Advisory Council. Here are some of his impressions.

Can you imagine a city where the average citizen you meet in the streets, after a short moment of contact, may be speaking about the necessity to take distance from one's ego in order to go towards one's deepest self where a spark of the divine has to be discovered? Is it possible to imagine a city, which is since already thirty years in the process of being constructed around the aim of raising the level of consciousness of Humanity?

You would probably say that this is pure utopia. And you are totally right.

I would even go further saying that this is radically impossible. And I would add a quotation from the French philosopher Pascal (17th century): *"Man is neither an angel nor an animal. However the irony is that when he tries to become an angel, he behaves like an animal."*

Because the very project of raising the level of Humanity's consciousness is basically aiming at transforming human nature, lifting human nature to another level.. All people of common sense will agree that this project is crazy, totally impossible..

And yet this city exists, and I have visited it. And am still in a state of shock.

After a lot of difficulties, as if fate was against this visit, I finally managed to arrive in Auroville on February 20th, 2005. Auroville is being constructed a few kilometres inland from the sea, north of Pondicherry, in the south-east of India. The city has been founded on February 28th, 1968.

In the years since then the first pioneers succeeded in transforming the desert area into a sub-tropical forest full with birds. Access roads look more like forest roads than city entrance highways. There isn't even a sign board on the main entrance road. One rather has the impression of entering a construction site!

And it is a construction site, but what kind of construction site!

It is a very authentic human construction site, but also a spiritual builder's yard! In this place the shadow is proportionate to the intensity of the light and energy. Indeed, there are problems and defects in this city, and the Aurovilians don't shy away from openly discussing them. The growth of the city is too slow. There are too few citizens (1800). There are many disagreements with regard to the city's future and to what the priorities are. Some residents criticize fellow citizens as being

profiteers, or betraying Auroville's ideals. Others consider that the local, Tamil villages are not yet well enough integrated into the city.

And yet, despite all these defects, it is a unique place of individual and collective spiritual growth. This is the reason why the shadows are so visible, as they are proportional to the light and to the energy radiating from the place. The fact that those flaws and problems and challenges are so openly discussed has deeply reassured me. I had been afraid to encounter a sort of angelic pretension that everything was OK, and that there was no problem, possibly because everybody was already at another level of consciousness! This

In this issue:

- ∨ **The New Auroville International Advisory Council**
- ∨ **Tsunami Report**
- ∨ **Tsunamika**
- ∨ **The ultimate relief, the gift of peace**
- ∨ **Matrimandir News**
- ∨ **International Meeting in Auroville**
- ∨ **Auroville's Conscious Connection with the World**
- ∨ **Other News**

'angelism' would have been indicative of a false spirituality..., and, potentially, of a sectarian movement.

What it boils down to, one of the residents told me, is that if you are not deeply, profoundly serious about this spiritual research and growth, both at the personal and collective level, you won't make it here, you just won't stay here, you will leave..

I have been deeply impressed by meeting with residents who lived for thirty or forty years in the city. When listening to them, one gets the sense of the very genuine, widening experiences they have gone through, and of their persistent determination to build this city and to work on themselves. And one realizes that without this they, indeed, just wouldn't have found the stamina to stay, and would have left one way or the other..

At the level of my own intellectual and spiritual reflection with regard to the actual paradigm shift towards transmodernity, I got the surprise of my life by discovering this very first trans-modern city. Yes, the Aurovilians are in perfect accordance with everything I wrote in my book¹. I now can say: "*Transmodernity exists; I have seen it in this city.*" Although it was the first time I was visiting Auroville, I had a distinct feeling of being at home. And I think that this impression was also shared by the Aurovilians that I had the joy to meet. There was from both sides the strong impression of recognition, of being on the same wavelength. Amazing, fascinating and very stimulating indeed.

Coming back in Europe, the contrast is not so much the drastic change of temperature: (- 45° Celsius!). No, the real contrast is the level of energy, which is so much higher in Auroville. I have seen this energy sparkling in the eyes of Paolo, a young boy, whose parents recently decided to join Auroville. He was full of internal joy. He told me that he was happy to be, for the first time, in a school he was enjoying. His creativity was bursting. He told me that he had learned to have a real contact with ponies, to familiarize with them, to have a real, living understanding with them.. This boy was touching and beautiful.

Here in Brussels, I keenly sense the difference of energetic level. Residents of Auroville do not feel their energy level. But the foreign visitor does. This entire town despite all its shadows is at a higher energetic level. It's an extraordinary realization.

This very audacious project, this 'superhuman' project, could not be but launched by two beings of an exceptional spiritual power: Ms Mirra Alfassa, called "Mother" (1878-1973) and Aurobindo Ghose, called "Sri Aurobindo" (1872-1950). They consecrated an important part of their lives and certainly of their extraordinary spiritual energy, not to fly off alone at the heights of infinite contemplation, but to transform and raise the level of human consciousness. And Auroville is possible precisely because of the energetic

breakthrough that these two beings achieved, individually and together. Auroville is like the incarnation, the materialisation of this spiritual victory they won for the sake of Humanity.

At the personal level, one of the strongest experiences for me has been the visit to the 'Matrimandir', this sacred space in the centre of the city, which has the shape of a golden flower. From the moment I entered that unique place, I sensed a very exceptional energy that didn't correspond to any religious or other place I visited in my life. I had the impression to be flooded by and connected with an enormously powerful cosmic energy. I had the inner sensation of being visited, connected, cleansed, energized. I was, briefly, transformed by something absolutely beyond my understanding. I have lost the control of my life.. , a bit.

I will return

Marc Luyckx Ghisi, March 2005.

The New International Advisory Council (IAC)

The **Auroville Foundation**, the legal body representing Auroville, was established in 1988 under the Auroville Foundation Act by the Indian Government. The Foundation has three authorities: the Governing Board, the International Advisory Council and the Residents' Assembly. A Secretary resides in Auroville.

The International Advisory Council consists of not more than five members, nominated by the UNESCO unit of the HRD Ministry of the Government of India from persons who in its opinion are devoted to the ideals of human unity, peace and progress. The members of the International Advisory Council meet once a year in Auroville.

In November 2004 a new IAC was appointed for a period of four years, comprising :

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne , leader of the Sri Lankan 'Sarvodaya' (Universal Awakening) movement (re-nomination);

Sir Marc Tully, British, Indian-based journalist and commentator;

Prof. Diana Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University;

Mr. Doudou Diène, special rapporteur to the U.N. on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and director of intercultural, inter-religious dialogue and peace culture at UNESCO;

Dr. Marc Luyckx Ghisi, a theologian, researcher in global cultural transformation; previously advisor to the presidents Delors and Santer at the European Commission.

In February this year, the new IAC met in Auroville for the first time.

¹ "Beyond modernity, patriarchy and capitalism: the re-enactment of society" published in French in Paris L'Harmattan, 2001. English edition not yet published.

Tsunami Report

December 26th, the Disaster

On Repos Beach, Auroville, December 26th was different from the usually relaxing Sunday morning. At 8.30 that morning, a series of huge waves hit the beach and flooded the Repos community. The first wave was about four metres high, followed by smaller ones. A 'tsunami' had been triggered by a massive quake, measuring 9.0 on the Richter Scale, the biggest worldwide in 40 years, off the west coast of Sumatra, over 2000 kilometres away. At first, the scale of the devastation was not realized. Repos and the community of Quiet to the south escaped relatively lightly.

Pondicherry town was virtually untouched. But then reports came in of many homes being destroyed in nearby villages and of the deaths of villagers (almost 20 in Kalapet alone), particularly among the fishing communities close to the water's edge. It soon became clear that villages and Auroville communities to the north of Repos had been hit very hard. Although no Aurovilians or visitors were missing or seriously injured by the waves, there were a number of close escapes as houses were devastated in Sri Ma, and the community of Eternity was almost completely destroyed.

In the immediate aftermath there was panic and shock in the seaside villages near Auroville. Warnings that further tsunamis could be generated by aftershocks sent many villagers fleeing to higher ground, carrying whatever they could of their possessions. Some began to congregate in Kuilapalayam and Kottakarai villages on the plateau.

Within an hour of the tsunami striking the coast, a group



Feeding the refugee children on the first night

of Aurovilians came together to organize emergency aid. A tent-village was set up near New Creation to provide shelter, blankets, buckets, clothing and food to the displaced villagers, who soon numbered over 1,000. A relief centre was created in a Night School in Kottakarai to care for another 200 villagers.



Devastation in the fishing villages

Meanwhile, residents of Auroville beach communities put out an urgent call for Aurovilians to assist them in cleaning up the mess and in guarding whatever was left; there were security concerns as all the fences had been swept away by the water.

It was estimated that 100,000 families were displaced in Tamil Nadu and a further 30,000 in Pondicherry State. Many of these families lost not only their bread-winner and livelihood but also their houses and all their possessions. Wherever the tsunami reached (in some places up to 3 kilometres inland), the soil and water is now heavily polluted and salinated, making it utterly useless for cultivation and drinking purposes.

In Auroville, the Auroville Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Project was formed to coordinate immediate relief and long-term rehabilitation for the local villages and the affected Auroville settlements. The Tsunami Relief Team concentrated on providing resources and services not provided by other agencies, i.e. distributing trunks with locks in which the survivors can keep their belongings, and organizing daily clean-ups of the affected areas.

The Auroville Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Project has also been requested by other NGOs working on tsunami relief to act as a central node for sharing information, expertise and ideas among them. Work was begun on creating a Knowledge Centre, a virtual hub for the collection and sharing of tsunami rehabilitation knowledge, dissemination of best practices and communication among the various organizations and agencies contributing to the massive tsunami rehabilitation efforts in South India.

The long-term needs of the survivors are for housing (500 homes were destroyed in the villages close to Auroville) and livelihood rehabilitation: for those who wish to return to their old occupations that means fishing boats, engines and nets; for others, it means

training in new livelihoods. A huge fundraising campaign was begun, in Auroville, in India and abroad.

Villages and communities covered

Auroville is actively involved in relief and rehabilitation work in 24 coastal villages and communities, together with 9 Auroville beach communities, located in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry Union Territory. The farthest village north is approximately 20 kms from Auroville, and the farthest village south is located 8 kms from Auroville. All work is being done in collaboration and coordination with the Government agencies and NGOs working in the area.

Numbers affected

In total 34,585 people are living in Auroville's area of concern. Of these people, some 10,425 have been affected in one way or the other by the tsunami. The number of people who died as a result of the tsunami was 104. In total 3,910 houses, 2,320 boats and 16,563 nets have been damaged.

Donations received and utilized

To April 2005, Rs. 3.4 crores (£400,000) has been received for village relief and rehabilitation work, of which 10% has come from Auroville residents, guests and visitors, 9% from elsewhere in India, and 81% from abroad. For the Auroville beach settlements, Rs. 52 lakhs (£62,000) has been received, of which 25% has come from Auroville residents, guests and visitors, 4% from elsewhere in India, and 71% from abroad.

Auroville Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme

There are now various projects aiming at rehabilitation



Many villagers were severely traumatised

of the affected villagers. The Rehabilitation Programme consists of four distinct but very much interlinked projects:

- **Tsunami Knowledge and Coordination Centre** is functioning as an interactive information platform for collecting and sharing all tsunami-related information, spreading of best practices, and development of consensus on rehabilitation strategies and implementation. A public tsunami-related website and a shelter prototype plot will be part of the Knowledge Centre.

- **Shelters and Infrastructure:** it is planned to build up to 1,000 new permanent shelters with accompanying infrastructure.

- **Ecological Restoration:** up to 100,000 trees will be planted on selected plots along the coast to protect the land, combat saltwater intrusion, and stop further degradation of the natural resources. Research, documentation and tree nurseries have started.

- **Livelihood Projects:**

A wide range of vocational training programmes is being offered to around 100 fishermen and village youths, making use of Auroville's training facilities.

Various handicraft workshops for women aiming at the establishment of self-sufficient women's-cooperatives are taking place in seven villages.

Some 250 boat engines are being repaired in a special workshop.

The Cash-for-Work project is offering residents wages in return for cleaning up their villages. Waste management programmes are being implemented to keep the villages clean.

Paalam-Coordination Structure:

In order to ensure the input of the affected villagers and to guarantee a need-based approach for all Auroville's activities, a *Paalam* (Tamil for 'Bridge') structure has been set up, in which each village or community is represented by one Panchayat member, one woman, one youth, and possibly one teacher. The *Paalams* meet every week and form an indispensable source of reflection and information on all projects.



Clean-up operations in a fishing village.

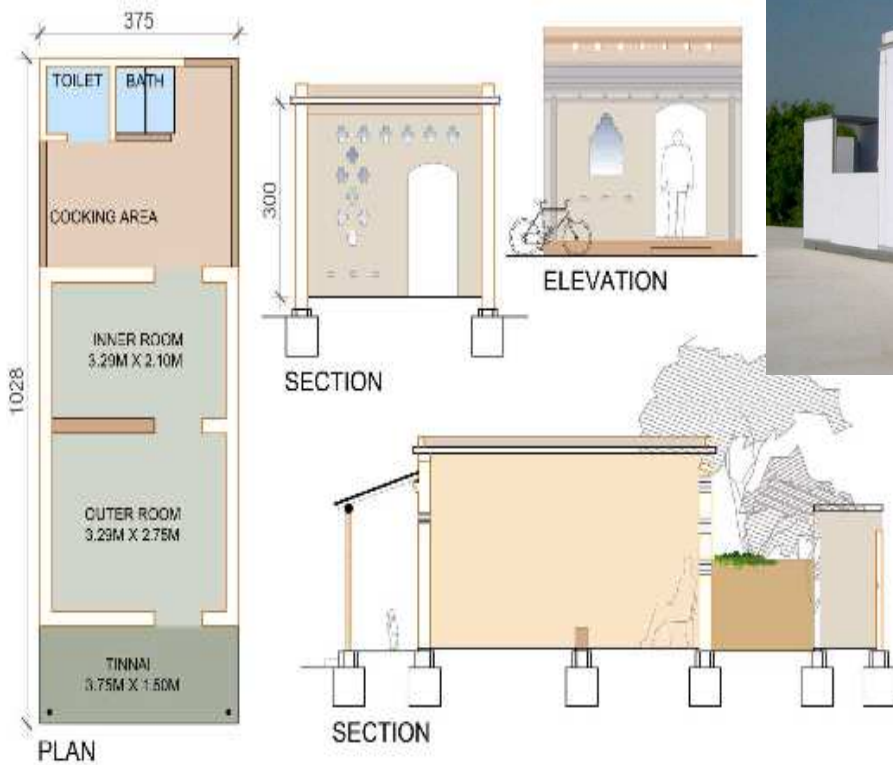
Towards the Future

Auroville is already looking at the future, beyond the rehabilitation programme. The work being done with the affected communities along the beach has highlighted the problems with the entire region, in terms of poverty, education, social issues and the environment. Of course, Auroville has been working with these problems for many years, but for many the

rehabilitation of the coastal region has provided an opportunity to focus on the whole of the Auroville bioregion, as no one area can be treated in isolation. AVI UK is now working with Village Action on a post-tsunami project, looking at the larger bioregion.

From *Auroville Today* and the *Auroville Web site*: www.auroville.org.

Housing Design



A group of Auroville architects has created a number of house designs. The first meeting with village elders to evaluate these designs has taken place. The most suitable designs will be built on a special prototype site.

Tsunamika

Tsunamika is a tiny doll made of waste cloth, but she has become a symbol of how regeneration and hope can grow out of disaster. Auroville fashion-designer Uma Prajapati, who runs Upasana Studio, wanted to do something for the women of tsunami-affected villages and started training them to make small dolls from leftover cloth. Workshops were held in a number of villages – eventually over 1,000 women will be trained in seven villages – and the dolls turned out so nicely that Upasana began using them as a complementary item attached to their products. Word spread, and soon students from the National Institute for Fashion Design in Chennai came to Auroville and used their creativity to come up with new product ideas and



prototypes: these include CD covers, decorative pins, brooches and bracelets.

The larger purpose of the Tsunamika project is to empower disadvantaged women by giving them the confidence to create and market their own products and train others. Uma hopes that, with sufficient support, self-sustaining women's cooperatives will be established, providing a chance for motivated women to earn a living. Now she aims to create a comprehensively documented model based on the Tsunamika experience that could be easily replicated all over India.

AVI UK and its Response to the Tsunami

Martin reports on his experiences in Auroville, and back in the UK.

On 26th December, the whole world was shaken by the disaster which hit South East Asia. The television news coverage was dramatic and relentless, with hourly updates bringing news of the increasing death toll. My wife and I were in Auroville on the 26th, we were visiting family and friends, and working with the various projects which AVI UK sponsors there. The morning of 26th December was like any other. We have no television at our place in the greenbelt, which was far enough from the sea for us to be oblivious of the unfolding events. We had just purchased a satellite radio, which somehow we had not taken the trouble to turn on that morning. For lunch, we decided to visit Ganesh Bakery, which serves simple lunches and excellent bread. It was only then that we heard of the floods along the beach, and the exodus of local villagers from the beach area. No one seemed to have heard the cause of the floods, nor the extent of the damage.



A shattered Auroville house in Sri Ma

So after lunch, we decided to phone our friends, Bob and Jean, who live at Sri Ma, a beach community just North of Auroville. They sounded rather shaken, but reassured us that they were ok, and their house, although having been flooded, was safe. Their neighbour's house, however fared much worse, and she was away in Europe visiting relatives. Help was needed to rescue belongings. At the same time, I logged onto the internet, and the BBC news showed the cause and extent of the disaster.

I took my motorcycle and rode down to Sri Ma. On the way, the scale of the refugee problem was becoming evident, as along the routes to the beach were many families moving away from the sea, or camped out along the roadside. My friends were looking tired and traumatised. Their house is only about 200 metres from the sea, but is substantially built and raised some height from the ground. The waves hit the house and poured in via the open grills above the glazed windows, flooding the downstairs with muddy water. Jean was in the shower and on hearing the noise, rushed to look out of the window, to see a car floating by, outside.

The neighbour's house fared much worse, being on lower ground. The water had swept through the house, taking the front door and all the windows away, demolishing one room completely, and destroying part of the roof. This had been a family house for more than 30 years, and was almost completely destroyed, with most possessions, including books waterlogged and

useless. A truck was hired to take away items which could be salvaged. It was fortunate that the owner was not there.

As the days went by, we heard more and more from the BBC, and from our friends whom we had managed to phone back home and became aware of the extent of the disaster. Auroville's response was immediate and on an unprecedented scale, and funds were needed urgently. An appeal went out immediately on the Auroville web site, and funds started to flow. More than \$100,000 was received via the USA web site within the first few days. We decided that an appeal should go out both on the

AVI UK web site, and by mail to our members in the UK. We had started to set up an online donation facility via our web site just before Christmas, but it was not yet operating, so I immediately contacted our son Paul, who had designed the site, to get the facility working. The facility was linked to the Auroville site, for people who preferred to make donations via Europe. It was soon operational, and donations started pouring in, with around £2500 received in the first

two days. To date, almost £7000 has been received via the web site, and around £10,000 received by cheque. Many people, who had visited Auroville in the past were touched by the work being done there, and decided to donate. We have to thank our son Paul, his girlfriend and family, for their big efforts in mailing out hundreds of appeal letters, and sorting out all the cheques.

Over the following days and weeks, we followed the work being done by Auroville, first in the immediate relief, then with the clean-up operation. We volunteered to help with the clean up, which was continuous for the first weeks, with buses leaving daily from the Tsunami Relief Centre. It was very hard work, but a rewarding experience, helping clean up peoples' homes in the fishing villages along the coast near to Auroville.

Back home in the UK, it was touching to see just how concerned everyone was for the plight of those affected, with so many fundraising events and appeals still going on, many weeks after the disaster.

On behalf of AVI UK and the Tsunami team in Auroville, I would like to thank all that have contributed to the relief work, both here in the UK and in Auroville. The response has been amazing!

Martin Littlewood, Secretary to AVI UK.

The Ultimate Relief: the Gift of Peace.

Providing more than material goods to the tsunami affected.

The two fishing villages of Thanthirayankuppam and Nadukuppam are located next to each other on the coast. They've been feuding for years – the young people refuse to speak to anyone from the other village, just like their elders.

After the tsunami, all the fishermen up and down the coast decided they wouldn't go fishing until the government paid the compensation – they didn't want them to say it was all fine now, and back to normal, and delay for ever their receiving all the money which they know has been collected in their favour. That gave those of us in the rehabilitation scene quite a challenge: it's not been possible to just go ahead with getting everyone back on their feet, to get over the trauma by getting on with life as usual, to work off the shock with lots of hard work. Faced with so many healthy young men in enforced idleness, we took up their request to organise a cricket tournament between all the cricket clubs of the 23 "kuppams" (fishing villages) which Auroville is working with. The elders promised that they would maintain law and order.

Alas, when it looked like Thanthirayankuppam would win against Nadukuppam, youth and even the adults couldn't control their emotions, and a brawl broke out. The game had to be called off, the tournament was stopped, and the elders felt embarrassed and disgraced. Thanthirayankuppam leaders even drew up plans and an estimate to build a big wall between the two communities.

But it didn't end there, when Moris, the Coordinator of Village Action, went to discuss this with the elders, it came out that they'd been feuding for years, and wanted to take the opportunity of Auroville's presence to settle it. Several preliminary meetings had to be held, and several postponements occurred, but eventually the elders of both villages, together with the respected elders of the other villages as well, met. They brought up stories from 10 years ago, they screamed and shouted. Moris was afraid the Kuilapalayam villagers, in whose Cultural Centre the meeting was being held, might come and protest, adding to the fire, but they didn't. And finally, they agreed to bury the hatchet, give up their old resentments, and carry on freshly. It was wonderful to see the handshake between the two leaders, the sense of relief as if a great burden were being removed from their shoulders, and to see immediately the young men slapping each other on the back and talking animatedly together.

A few days later, the headman of Chinnmudliarchavadi Kuppam told Moris, "This is really by far the most valuable thing you have given us, it's worth more than all the food and boats and houses." We think so too, and feel that the mutual recognition of this is a tiny step toward Human Unity which is our Aurovilian goal.

Bhavana, Auroville Village Action.



Completing Matrimandir

An intensive push to find solutions, and the Mother's Grace has brought us close to the completion of the Matrimandir. Most of the technical and design issues have been finalised and only hard work and resources are needed to execute the plans. More than 10 teams are busy in separate work areas to finish the main structure, the meditation rooms in the petals and the infrastructure for the inner gardens.

We are targeting two years for the completion of the main structure and the petals, while the garden infrastructure and garden work will go on simultaneously and is expected to take more time. It is estimated that a total of around £1m is needed to complete the Matrimandir, and a fundraising campaign is underway to raise the needed funds.

The push towards completion:

The Matrimandir is pushing ahead towards completion with an increasingly remarkable and visible speed.

In the month of May, when the temperatures climb to 40 °C and the human beings on the scene tend to drip with sweat and droop in the blazing sun, it's as if the Matrimandir itself had decided to counterbalance this

season's natural slowdown by moving things ahead at an even faster pace.

The scene that is visible any morning from a vantage point 100 meters from the main sphere on the North axis: some seventy people, divided into three teams, can be seen busy at work up on the structure. They start work at 6 am to beat the heat of the day. One team, on the left, is putting the discs back up on the outer skin,

for on that quadrant the new waterproofing layer has been applied. Row by row, the shining golden discs are being remounted on their stainless steel legs.



To their right, two other teams are at work: the one lower down is applying the fresh waterproofing coat to the outer skin, while a third team is busy, some ten meters higher, building the scaffolding and preparing platforms for the team that will remove the discs.

As if one group were chasing the other, each team works quickly to stay ahead of the one behind it, for nobody wants their team to be accused of holding up the work! These acrobatics on the Matrimandir are well coordinated now that we have the hang of it, and the progress of the work is very visible.

Listening, one can hear the steady rumble of a large diesel-fuelled air compressor which sits on the West axis, just beyond the large petals surrounding the Matrimandir. It is supplying air to the sand-blasting gun of a fourth team which is at work early today. This team is busy inside the Matrimandir, removing the paint from a section of one of the two spiral ramps that lead from the second level up to the Inner Chamber. Sand blasting is the first step in the process of repainting the ramps. The project creates a huge amount of dust inside the building, despite the elaborate plastic-and-gunny bag enclosures that have been set up around the work area to contain it. It is urgent that this work is done now because it has to be completed before finishing the work on the inner skin. In any case, it is clear now that the work on the Inner Chamber will not be completed before September. This and the subsequent repainting of both ramps may take about four months and only

then will we be able to move on to the works which require a dust-free environment for their execution.

The Inner Chamber is sealed off from this dust storm and has its own temporary A/C machine to cool and dry the air inside there while the work on the ceiling and the installation of the new A/C ducts is going on. The Chamber's centre has been filled by the aluminium scaffolding, built up over the well shielded crystal globe to reach the top of the ceiling where the modification work is proceeding smoothly.

On May 3rd the original cone at the apex of the ceiling through which the sun's ray has descended up to now was opened and the large lens used for focusing the ray was removed. The cone has now been rebuilt in a new form to accommodate several changes in the ceiling design. The new central opening will house not only the ray-focusing lens, but will also accommodate the artificial light to be used when there is no sun, as well as allowing the cooled A/C air to pass through this space into the Chamber below. This job is quite complex and will take a few more months to complete.

Outside the Matrimandir, we cannot help but notice the other activity which is going on at this early morning hour: the constant back and forth movement of tipper lorries passing just behind us on the Oval road that encircles the gardens area. The trucks are busy on the eastern edge of the Oval carrying loads of soil that a powerful excavator is carving out the earth.

Over the last year, all these structures have been moved outside of the Oval, allowing the present operation to get underway. The excavator has been in action for three weeks, to bring the ground down to the "zero" level, the average horizontal level given for the whole ring road. On the western end of the gardens, where the old Workers Camp used to be, the level of the ground is below this zero level, so the lorries are busy carrying the excavated earth to that area, to bring it up to the desired level. It is a huge work, one that would have taken hundreds of men months to do by hand, as it was done thirty-four years ago, when the crater for Matrimandir's foundation was excavated.

With this step completed, the gardens area will have been brought roughly into the shape required by the original design. Though there is still a lot of fine tuning of the levels to be done in this freshly excavated section, the bulk of the work is over. And the stage is thus set for the next phase: the laying down of the garden infrastructure, the water and power lines that will feed the irrigation and lighting systems of the future gardens. The creation of this infrastructure is a big job which will be tackled in the coming months, while continuing the many other works now underway to complete the structure by the end of next year.

From a report by the Matrimandir group in Auroville

We invite you participate by making a contribution.

Donations can be made via AVI UK. Please send your donation to the address shown at the back page of the newsletter.

Impressions from the Auroville International meeting 2005

Auroville, January 2005.

The Auroville International meeting 2005, held this year in Auroville, which officially took place from January 14th to 18th, brought a broad range of interesting presentations and discussions between AVI members and Auroville groups and individuals. The speech of Sraddhalu at the opening session beautifully set the tone for the whole meeting (see next page). I quote: “Those of you who live elsewhere in the world but are part of this consciousness, are also living in Auroville. What you do there, the way you live, the way you think, has its effect on the world as if you were here, has its effect on situations here, because you’re part of the consciousness and for this consciousness distance doesn’t matter.”

Pongal (The Hindu harvest festival) brought another special treat for us: Aurelio took us to the Mohanam Cultural Centre in Sanjeevi Nagar, showed us around this beautifully reconstructed Tamil house and explained his admirable work to engage village youth in preserving their own rich culture. Later we were invited to a traditional Tamil lunch in the beautiful coconut grove next to the Cultural Centre. After lunch we were presented with a beautiful dance performance by the Mohanam girls’ dance group and with a very charming theatre performance, a scene from the Mahabharata, with young men acting and village elders reciting and playing their drums. This was truly a highlight for many of us!

To mention some major program points: We were taken to a tour around Matrimandir and were updated on the plans of the Matrimandir team to finish all construction works within the next two years. On another occasion, representatives from the main Auroville schools, gave us an insight into their impressive spectrum of activities. Some of us followed the invitation to the very charming, well-prepared presentation of eight Future School young people who were preparing to attend a conference in Mexico. Extremely uplifting was a presentation by Kathy about the manifold activities and contacts of AVIS (Auroville Volunteering, Internships & Studies programs), also in the field of education on Human Unity and International Understanding. A full day was reserved for discussions with the International Zone group in the Unity Pavilion. Future co-operation should be intensified, the International Zone being seen as one of the main grounds for AVI involvement in Auroville’s development. The Saturday night cultural program, a dance to world music under the stars, was a highly appreciated change to the many hours we spent in meetings.

To round up the official part of the meeting we had a session with members of the Working Committee and

Auroville Council to talk about future communication and co-operation.

Parallel to these interactions with Auroville, we had our internal AVI meetings and annual General Assembly with the election of a new AVI board. Also a new team of Auroville representatives to AVI was nominated which consist of Kathy, Tine and Lella, Kathy being the main coordinator.

The AVI meeting was extended by several follow-up presentations and invitations from different Auroville groups, to see work including environmental education, Auroville’s farms, village development and village education, and some Auroville businesses.

Then Bhavana invited us to the Tsunami relief office



and explained, together with Hans, the complex situation of the relief operations, while the buzzing atmosphere in the office somehow was self explanatory - our great admiration for all those who were and still are actively involved and for the community as a whole which bears with this outstanding humanitarian action! From our AVI experience we can say that the tsunami wave showed very clearly how related thousands of people around the globe feel to Auroville: once the tsunami news went out to the world, our telephones at home kept ringing, our mailboxes filled with the one question “How is Auroville doing? Was it affected? How can we help?” The material support, the donations channelled through the AVI centres, is likewise overwhelming, still now money keeps flowing in.

We were all very grateful to all those Aurovilians who took an active part in hosting and organizing the meeting, and to the Tibetan pavilion team who hosted most of our gatherings. We really felt warmly invited and welcomed, thank you Auroville!

From a report from Friederike , AVI Secretary

Auroville's conscious connection with the world

From a talk given by Sraddhalu Ranade, in Auroville, January 14th 2005:

Two years ago I was in the Tibetan Pavilion, in the beginning of the new year. I had come to attend the 'thousand lights' ceremony. It wasn't the first time I have come to Auroville, but somehow, the moment seemed special. There was a feeling of something achieved, something alive.. We were together, but somehow the individual faces didn't matter, because of the general outline of the silhouettes .., and one felt that each person there presented a state of consciousness..., linked to millions all over the world..

And in that gathering, all these different beings of different countries, nationalities, cultures, types and threads of human beings, had been drawn together by some divine presence, and were tied up, bound together. I had the distinct sense that something had been accomplished, that for the future of the world, unity is safe, is really accomplished here; the rest is a question of unfoldment in certain sense. This is the purpose for which Auroville has been established: to manifest a practical, working human unity, well before its time..., something that for the rest of the world is still impossible. And all these threads which have been gathered here, which are present here through each of us, form part of a thread that has begun more than thousand years ago, millions..

Nature has struggled for ages to develop specialised lines of consciousness so that these lines could split into further specialisations. Sometimes they have merged to then split again. Sri Aurobindo refers to this constant principle of nature that she takes a single trait and opens from it many lines of specialised development. When each line has been fulfilled to its extreme, sometimes even appearing to be opposing lines, she brings all those lines back to unite them in a richer, wider, larger harmony. The present phase of human evolution is one way that all these lines are being brought together. But precisely because these lines have often specialising, contradictory directions, the struggle to find the harmony is greater.

There is a certainty of a success because nature has drawn each line originating from truth. But to enable to tie them altogether and harmonise and unite them, nature has to struggle. It's as if nature is weaving together the tapestry of all these lines, and in that tapestry an image is to form.., an image of the divine.. But that image is not a static image. That particularly unfolding pattern will be one of the divine delight and freedom, in which all these threads will not be statically bounding as in a carpet, but will continuously flow through each other, uniting, merging, playing, twisting, and uncurling in a movement of constant growing delight..

If this is the future towards which humanity is growing, nature has still one great challenge to surmount. Although the entire carpet is woven around the globe, some way she must bring these threads together and bind them. Perhaps she concentrates on one small patch

of the carpet.. It's a little like what we do in a chemistry experiment, when in a liquid where sugar dissolves, one plants one grain of sugar, a catalyst, around which all the mixed molecules coalesce to trigger off a chain reaction that leads to the granulation of all the sugar dissolved in that water.

It's as if the divine sweetness, now fragmented in chaotic lines dispersed all around the world, needs one tiny grain as a catalyst, which will spark off so many such crystals of the divine sweetness.

That grain is Auroville.

The ideal of Auroville, the reality that it manifests, has been in existence ever since the universe was born. It has waited through many billions of years. And every time that it seemed as if the idea might lose its hold on the possibility of manifesting itself, the divine has precipitated it upon earth even when circumstances were not ready, - simply to keep that ideal alive. You all know of Mother's reference to an attempt in Egypt , which was ahead of its time, which was in between, but it had to be done to keep the ideal alive. And people were drawn to it, were aligned to that ideal. They had come together for that purpose, and had to pass through the pain of the failure of the ideal.

Mother observed once that everyone who has come here, be it in Ashram, be it in Auroville, everyone who has come here, has been brought here because they were promised, long ago, that when the time came for the fulfilment of the ideal they will be given a chance. All of us have been brought here. We do not remember it, but something deep in our hearts knows. When we ask ourselves why we came to Auroville, we probably will find no rational reason, or perhaps a chance event, but the event was only a trigger to bring forward something which knew. And even now it's that thing that knows, that keeps us here, and that makes us struggle against the odds. It's that promise that the divine has kept with us. The time has come for that fulfilment. The whole of evolution has waited for this moment. The human age is about to dawn. And here a nucleus, a seed, has been established.

Why here..? Long ago, long before even the idea of Auroville had touched the human mind, when the Mother used to drive through what is now the East Coast road, she has on several occasions stopped and stared in this direction. When one of her attendants asked what it was that she was seeing, she said "One day a huge city will be established here." At the time it was considered a strange idea because this was desert land, nothing grows, why here..? She 'saw' it.., she didn't choose it.., she 'saw' it. Because the divine will had already chosen this space, and prepared it, for centuries.

Recall the Mother's observation that all the world's problems have been brought to India, because it is in this laboratory where a spiritual culture already exists,

that a resolution to the problems of humanity has to be found. But if those problems of human nature have been brought to India, there is a still greater problem, on a more external level, which is the problem of various cultures and nationalities. This is more complex than just the human type. How shall we bring together so many distinct and perhaps opposite cultures, in a way that a larger harmony can be established, a dynamic unfolding harmony without letting one culture swallow another..? Allowing the distinctiveness of each to co-exists and enrich each other, without dilution?

So within India a special space had to be chosen. That is Auroville.

But why then? Why not earlier, why not later? And again we find that there was a great preparation before Auroville could be established. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram was established first. And there, in the concentrated atmosphere a space has been created in the consciousness where the supramental consciousness could descend and commit to physical matter. In that concentrated space, once that link was established, and the supramental manifested on earth, it was then possible to work on Auroville.

It still took the Mother a decade before that possibility could be organised in external circumstances, the right people found to build the city of the new age.., the catalyst, the seed of the sweetness of the future.., and then the location, which had been prepared over thousands of years.

The new age is not to be built from existing forms, it has to be built from scratch, from its very foundation up, so only barren land would do.. And you have to begin by planting trees, and to begin with changing the climate.., you have to begin by bringing the water.., not a single rupee.., you have to gather all from scratch. And what will you create, where will people live, what kinds of houses..? Nothing of the old is to be working,

Integral Yoga in Auroville

In innumerable ways, perhaps even unknown to its residents, Auroville is an experimental field for Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's work towards a spiritual transformation of the world. Auroville, envisaged a township for 50,000 people, can be seen as a step towards establishing spiritualised society. While in some messages, especially the early ones, Mother seems to indicate that having goodwill is a sufficient quality to an Aurovilian, from many other recorded conversations it is clear she expected Aurovilians to "belong to the enlightened portion of and to be open to the discovery and practice of the divine that is seeking to manifest itself." The Auroville Charter states, "to live in Auroville, one must be the willing servitor of the Divine consciousness". During her lifetime, through a selective process, Mother hand - picked those she deemed worthy of becoming Aurovilian.

every step is new on earth, newly perceived, newly created. The first school established here.., Mother names it 'Last School'.

The end of a mind-set, the beginning of a new line of development..

Then, the time came for Matrimandir to be made. You will recall, someone cycling through had a vision of the Matrimandir and reiterated it to the Mother. Thus far she did not know, but the fact that it was received by a human being was an indication that the time had come for its foundation. That thing waiting had managed to touch the mind of a human being. And the work began soon hereafter.

Each individual here represents a focal point of humanity's aspiration. And therefore, every problem one sees here is also a problem that humanity has to resolve, after it can be done here. So even if you come with the best of intentions, with the clearest of consciousness, the fact that we come for this purpose makes us a representative of humanity and those problems *will* manifest around us, whether we like it or not. Because that is precisely the role Auroville has to play. The problems in Auroville seem to be ever exaggerated because they must be solved in the most intense condition. It doesn't help when the problem is solved when it is not intense. If you look from this perspective at the problems in Auroville you may wonder "Is it worth living in a space where all problems are going to be in the most extreme?" But that's the fulfilment, the challenge, the adventure that our souls have chosen. And those very extreme problems can be resolved here because the base of this entire project is the spiritual consciousness; it is the supramental consciousness of unity.

The full talk can be seen on the Auroville web site on:
www.auroville.org/organisation/avi_2003/avi_2005_Auroville_Sraddhalu.htm

Whether the residents of Auroville consciously practise the Integral Yoga or not, it is believed that each individual has a role to play in the collective transformation of humanity. As Sri Aurobindo explains:

For a spiritual and supramental yoga, humanity should be variously represented. For the problem of transformation has to deal with all sorts of elements favourable and unfavourable. The same man indeed carries in him a mixture of these two things. If only sattwic (virtuous) and cultured men come for yoga, men without very much of the vital difficulty in them, then, because the difficulty of the vital element in terrestrial nature has not been faced and overcome, it might well be that the endeavour would fail.

From "*Integral Yoga, The Spiritual Ideals of Auroville*" by Bindu Mohanty, Auroville, available from AVI UK



Other News

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be in London on Sunday 28th August. One of our Trustees, David Widdicombe, has kindly offered the use of a room in his house for the meeting, which is situated in a beautiful area, just opposite Primrose Hill. The address is:

5 Albert Terrace
London NW1 7SU

The meeting will start at 11:30 am. Please bring a contribution to a shared lunch.

The meeting will also be listed on our web site nearer the time, with a map. Take a look at www.aviuk.org.

Matrimandir Talks

Gilles Guigan, an Aurovilian who has worked for many years for Matrimandir, is coming to the UK to give a series of talks about Matrimandir. The following venues are planned:

Saturday 9th July, 2:30 pm

Auromira Centre
126 Whitton Avenue East, Greenford,
Middlesex, UB6 OPY

Saturday 9th July, 6:00 pm

The Mother Sri Aurobindo Centre
5 Fairfax Mansions, Finchley Rd,
Swiss Cottage, London, NW3 6JY

Sunday 10th July, 10:30 am

Ma Sri Aurobindo Circle
8 Sherwood Avenue
Streatham Vale
London, SW16 5EW

Regular London Meetings

We are starting regular meetings in London, also at David Widdicombe's house (address above). They will be held on a Sunday from 2:30 to around 5:30, and will be a chance to explore the quieter and more spiritual side of the essence of Auroville, with readings from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and meditation. The exact form that these meetings will take, and the frequency (perhaps every other month), has yet to be decided, but it is proposed to have the first meeting on 24th July.

Anyone is welcome to come. Please ring David on 0207 586 5209 if you are interested.

Next International Meeting

The next Auroville international meeting is to be held in Spain from September 30th to October 2nd, at the invitation of Auroville International Spain. If anyone is interested to attend please contact Martin Littlewood at the address below.

AVI UK Website; new online donations

AVI UK has a website. It can be found at www.aviuk.org. Please take a look at the site, and find out more about what we do. There is more information about our projects, about making donations and how you can participate. We now have a facility to make secure credit card donations online. These can be made for any purpose, either by choosing from a menu, or by sending an e-mail. Gift Aid tax relief can be arranged automatically, when a donation is made. If anyone has ideas for inclusion, please contact Martin on martin@aviuk.org. We are always looking for new ideas for the site.

Auroville Today

For those who wish for a more detailed and up-to-date view of Auroville we would strongly recommend subscribing to *Auroville Today*. The magazine is produced in Auroville and is published monthly. It is an interesting and stimulating publication with news, comment and discussion about all aspects of Auroville life. Some of the articles we use in our Newsletter come from *Auroville Today*, so if they interest you, why not subscribe? If you are interested, please write to:

Auroville Today, *Sincerity*, *Auroville 605101*, *Tamil Nadu, India*

The yearly subscription is £25.00 and cheques in £, can be sent payable to *Auroville Fund (Auroville Today)*, OR see enclosed form for our special membership offer with *Auroville Today* included.

NOTE: To save on our administration, would subscribers to *Auroville Today* who do not take advantage of our special membership scheme please send their subscriptions direct to Auroville, to the address above and not to Auroville International UK.

Next issue

If you have anything to offer for inclusion in the next newsletter, please contact Martin. We would welcome any offerings from those who have visited Auroville recently or any thoughts which you would like to share.

Address:

For all correspondence please write to our Secretary, Martin Littlewood, whose address is:

30 The Green, Surlingham, Norwich,
Norfolk, NR14 7AG
Tel. 01508 538300, E mail: info@aviuk.org