



Visiting Auroville

One of the jobs of Auroville International is to answer queries from people wishing to visit Auroville, or even to stay and become an Aurovilian. Many people are inspired, either by a friend who has visited, by the web site or just something they have heard. In these days of the internet, it would seem that we could be out of a job. The Auroville web site is comprehensive and well presented, but there is nothing like the personal touch, and a 15 minute phone call can often bring answers that hours of searching on the web has failed to produce, as well as personal insights which may be helpful and reassuring.

In this issue we give information about visiting Auroville, which we hope may help the first-time visitor, would-be Aurovilian, or returning guest and help to provide a better understanding of one of the the issues which Auroville faces.

Visitors and Guests

Day visitors

To begin with, we need to distinguish between day visitors and those who stay longer in Auroville guest-houses. Most day visitors are handled by the Visitors Centre. The main attraction is, of course, the Matrimandir. "If people are given the freedom, they will simply rush straight there," says Nicole, one of the managers of the Visitors Centre. "I see one of our main functions as breaking that wave so that they go on to the Matrimandir in a quieter state of mind. So visitors are encouraged first to see a Matrimandir video and an exhibition on Auroville and then they walk, or are taken in an electric shuttle, the last kilometre to Matrimandir."

Visiting the Matrimandir

Gilles, a member of the Matrimandir Access Group, points out that 90% of the day visitors just want to catch a glimpse of the Matrimandir. "For them we've created a viewing-point outside the oval because Mother said that people will only have access to this special area with permission." Serious visitors have to book in advance. They are given a short introduction explaining the meaning of the Matrimandir and the fact that this is neither a traditional religious temple nor a place for rituals. Then they are taken to the Chamber where they can sit for 10-15 minutes. The next time they visit, they can sign up to attend the one-hour visitors' meditation. "People understand this process very well, and they are very happy with it."

But the number of visitors to the Matrimandir is increasing dramatically: Almost 100,000 per month in the busiest period and increasing rapidly. "What we cannot do is to

forbid someone going to Matrimandir, even if we sense that a person is unsuitable. In most cases you simply can't tell! People select themselves because we ask them to make a little effort. As Mother said, 'They have to ask'."

Providing more information

The Visitors Centre is also feeling the pressure of the increased numbers of visitors throughout the year. "It's an enormous work for everybody here," says Nicole. Part of the problem is that many Aurovilians do not want to work on the front-line at the Visitors Centre – it's too demanding. Yet, judging by comments in the Visitors Book, most visitors seem very happy with their reception: many refer to the special atmosphere of the place. Those with reservations are generally frustrated by the fact that they cannot learn more about Auroville.

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The guest situation

Some years back, the options for those who stayed in Auroville as guests were limited: there was the beach, a café or two, and a Matrimandir that was under construction.

Today, those who stay in Auroville guest-houses do not complain about not having enough to do. This past season has seen a record number of courses, workshops and therapies offered, on topics like healing, kung fu shaolin, laughter yoga and belly dancing, as well as introduction programmes to Auroville, the integral yoga, and the surrounding villages. And all at rates far cheaper than in the West or elsewhere in India. Then there are the high-quality cultural events, the restaurants and shops, the international ambience, and, of course, the completed Matrimandir. So it's not surprising that the Auroville guest-houses, with their



Visitors at the Matrimandir viewing point



capacity of 500 beds, are fully booked up for these three months, and that guest-houses, shops and restaurants are mushrooming in the nearby villages. Many guests return annually, booking a year ahead.

Who is coming?

While some people worry that Auroville is attracting a different kind of guest these days, Auralee, at the Guest Service, values the contact with those guests who are open and really want to know more. "I really appreciate these people; it gives meaning to our work."

But what about the guest-house managers? Sonja, who runs a small guest facility, points out that many guest-house managers are much more selective in whom they take these days. "We want people who are really interested in Auroville".

"Then we become mamas!" says Sonja. "We get them a moped, bandage them when they fall off, nurse them when they get sick, we remove the funny animal from their room, we listen to their dreams. It involves a lot of support and care and we have to draw lines, otherwise we get overwhelmed. At the same time, we feel it's important that Auroville welcomes guests because they can give a lot back. They lighten Auroville up, they bring new perspectives and fresh energy, and they can be a valuable mirror to you – they make you look at yourself anew. And some of them become like family."

Nicole also points to a new trend – the number of young people, particularly from overseas, who want to do volunteer work in the community. "The Mitra hostel is really helping here because it's important that Auroville provides cheap, clean accommodation for youngsters like this."

Neither Sonja nor Tineke (who manages Centre Guest House) seem to have major problems with the guests they take: it is rare they ask a guest to leave. "But sometimes I apply a filter," says Tineke. "For example, I get phone calls from young Indian professionals in Chennai or Bangalore. When I ask them why they want to come they say, 'Just to chill out'. Then I tell them life here is very simple, there are no bars, no night clubs. That's usually enough to change their minds. But some people really appreciate the peace here, and others come for a course and get hooked by the deeper aspect of Auroville. You can't predict who will be touched. So I wouldn't want the doorway into Auroville to be too narrow."

Is Auroville guest-friendly?

Some guests with a deeper connection to the community come year after year and leave refreshed, recharged. But it's not easy to be a guest here. Many Aurovilians view guests as an irritant in the season, the cause of long queues at the shops and the Solar Kitchen, a source of danger on the roads, importers of alien preoccupations and, when they get lost, invaders of personal privacy.

Some guest-house managers are 'hands off', giving little or no information about Auroville and leaving the day-to-day

running in the charge of employees with little skill in handling guests. Quite a few guests also feel overcharged for the facilities provided. No wonder some feel that Auroville is only after their money.

Solutions

The guest situation is more complex. While not everybody is convinced that there actually is a 'guest problem', many of those working in this area feel we need to begin by ensuring that the right kind of person stays here. How to ensure this?

Suggestions include requiring all guests to fill out an application form before they come here to clarify their intention in visiting the community, and extending the minimum stay in Auroville guest-houses to ten days.

However, a ten day rule would discriminate against those people who can only get away for weekends and the 'drop-ins' who get deeply touched by their visit.

Other ideas include greatly expanding volunteering possibilities and low-cost accommodation to attract young, committed people, and requiring all guests who want to offer or follow workshops to attend first an Auroville introduction course.

As to the workshops offered, at present there is little control over who offers what during the guest

season: it is largely up to the discretion of the Aurovillian managing the workshop space. Many of the workshops are offered by Aurovilians and have an Auroville 'flavour', but one community hosted a one-month festival in February which was largely run by guests. While many people enjoyed the energy, some questioned the relevance of some of the workshops to Auroville's ethic and the festival closed prematurely because of complaints.

One thing is clear, however: More and more Aurovilians and guests are dissatisfied with the present situation. We need to ensure that the people with the right motivation come to stay here, but then we need to offer them the best possible experience of Auroville. The hope is that as more and more of the 'right' people come to stay here, perceptions of guests will change and more Aurovilians will be attracted to work in this field.

At the same time, we should see that it's not only certain guests who are the problem – it is ourselves. Guests can also become a convenient target for our own insecurities. And complaining about the behaviour of guests can be an excuse for keeping Auroville small and cosy, insulated from the outside world.

Which returns us to the core questions. Why are we here? And who are we here for?

We have never sat down as a community and looked deeply at the guest situation. With the finished Matrimandir already being described in the national press as a "second Taj Mahal", it's clearly time to do this.

Alan from "Auroville Today"



Visitor's Centre Cafeteria

A Guide for Guests

Visiting Auroville

Between the lines

On the surface, Auroville can appear rather incomprehensible. It is an intense and challenging experiment, attempting the seemingly impossible, and one needs to be ready to actively participate in such an adventure. The meaning of Auroville only becomes clearer in the context of the vision of its founders, which has stimulated people from all over the world to join in this 'laboratory of evolution'.

For casual visitors

Visitors to Auroville are sometimes disappointed to find here no Ashram, no typical tourist attractions or generally welcoming atmosphere. This is firstly because Auroville is quite different to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, where people are considered to have consecrated their lives to integral yoga (as compared, in Auroville, to an experiment in human unity), and secondly because Auroville is not a tourist place, despite being referred to in travel and tourist literature, and does not devote as much time and energy to welcoming tourists as sites established specifically for that purpose.

Casual/day visitors are encouraged to go first to the Visitors Centre, which is open daily from 9:00 to 17:30, and offers information, exhibitions, a video viewing facility, a cafeteria and shopping facilities.

Accommodation

For those who come with a deeper interest, guest accommodation is available in various settlements around the township area. The charges vary between Rs 150 and over Rs 1000 (£2 to £14) per person per night depending on the type of accommodation and facilities provided. Pre-booking is advised, especially for the December to March and August to September periods. This can be done by visiting the Auroville Guesthouse website on www.aurovilleguesthouses.org, or by contacting one of the guest houses directly.

On arriving, each guest is requested to fill an arrival form from the Indian Authorities and to obtain a guest card valid

for the period of their stay. Guests can also open an account with Financial Service as within Auroville there is no need to carry cash as the account can be used like a credit card. Deposited money will cover bills using the various facilities such as Pour Tous stall, Solar Kitchen, Cafeterias and snack bars, bakeries, health centre, internet, classes, etc. The

Financial Service can cash foreign currencies, travellers cheques and can accept a credit card. A contribution of Rs100 (£1.40) per day is asked from all guests as a contribution to Auroville's maintenance and development (there is a reduced contribution for students and teenagers, and none for younger children).

Guest Tours

Guests are recommended to take an organised tour. These are held regularly during the guest season,

and last either 3 or 5 days. During these tours, guests are given an extensive tour round the community and talks by Aurovilians on various aspects of Auroville life.

Work

There is opportunity for work and study for guests who stay for longer periods, and this is recommended for all those who wish to find out in more depth about community life.

General costs (approximate - based on a rate of Rs 70 per £)

- A meal at the Solar Kitchen costs £1. A Guest Card is required
- A good meal in Pondicherry costs around £1.50, or more, depending on the class of establishment.
- Bicycle rental is around 50p a day
- Moped and motor bike rental is around £1.20 to £2.00 a day.
- The Auroville bus to Pondicherry (3 times a week) is free, Guest Card is required.
- Classes (yoga, dance and so on) require normally a contribution of around £1.50 from guests. A Guest Card is required.

Taken from the Auroville Website.



Atithi Grihar Guest House



Centre Guest House

Joining Auroville

Before formally applying to become a member of Auroville, you must first inform yourself about the conditions for joining Auroville. You can get this information from the Entry Service office in Auroville (entry@auroville.org.in) or from Auroville International UK

Pay a visit beforehand

The present Entry Service asks that all applicants come for a minimum three-month stay before deciding to join the experiment.

If, during your stay here, you decide to join Auroville, you should schedule an interview with the Entry Service, located

in the Multi Media Centre, Town Hall, at the end of your guest period (but at least a month before your departure) to formally confirm your decision to join. You will be asked to fill out an application form, schedule an interview and later a meeting with the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, who normally issues the recommendation letter needed for your return. Upon your return to Auroville your Newcomer process can begin.

Visa details

For foreign nationals, a Tourist Visa may be obtained from the Indian High Commission, Embassy, or Consulate nearest your home.

For foreign nationals, it is the Auroville Entry Service, which arranges the necessary letter of recommendation requesting the Indian High Commission, Embassy, or Consulate of your home country to issue an Entry (X) Visa. **While you can visit Auroville on a Tourist Visa, this visa cannot be converted into an Entry Visa.**

You are obliged to return to your home country to get an Entry Visa, since the entry process cannot commence without it !

Residential Permit

A Residential Permit is granted, upon your return with an Entry Visa, on the basis of being an honorary voluntary worker in Auroville.

Newcomer period

Your Newcomer period will then begin, and last for a period of one year. From the beginning, you will be a full participant in Auroville's life. You will be expected to take up an activity useful to the Community and at the same time conducive to your integral personal growth. Starting a new undertaking during this period – be it a service, commercial unit or an independent project – is only allowed with permission of the Entry Service. You will be encouraged to join in various collective activities, open community meetings and other gatherings.

You are expected to remain in Auroville for the full year. In case you have to leave Auroville temporarily or permanently, you must inform the Entry Service.

Newcomer contribution

Upon becoming a Newcomer, you will be asked for a contribution towards the community. More information about this contribution can be received from the Entry Service. The person is also asked to support themselves for the first year.

All foreign nationals also need to deposit a return flight ticket or the equivalent funds (refundable upon becoming Aurovilian or termination of the Newcomer period).

Studying in Auroville

There are many opportunities for guests to study in Auroville, either with short workshops or longer term study or internship programmes. For information on these opportunities, the Auroville website (www.auroville.org) is the best source of up to date information. Here are some examples:

Basic needs

A budget of Rs 8,000 per month per person is suggested in order to cover one's basic needs (various contributions, food, sundries, clothing, vehicle maintenance, etc), although people fresh from the West may require more, certainly in their earlier stages of acclimatisation.

Contact person

You will be welcomed by the Entry Service and introduced to your contact person who will guide you throughout your Newcomer period. The Entry Service will announce, after consultation with the contact person and the community in which you stay, your status as a Newcomer to the Community at large.

Recommendation

At the conclusion of the Newcomer period, you will be invited to meet the Entry Service again who may recommend your joining to the Residents' Assembly. If there are no sustained objections from the residents of Auroville, you will become an Aurovilian. Your name will be entered on the Master List and you will be full-fledged resident of Auroville and member of the Residents' Assembly.

It is the duty of the Residents' Assembly to see that the guiding principles given by the Mother for Auroville are observed by its residents. Should these principles be seriously and repeatedly violated by an individual, his/her status as resident can be put in question by the Residents' Assembly at any time.

Housing

Anyone joining Auroville is expected to build their own home or join a housing project, in consultation with the Housing Group and Development Group, once they have been accepted as an Aurovilian. During the newcomer period, they may be housed in 'Newcomer' units or be expected to stay in guest accommodation or with friends.

Although the situation is slowly improving, it's not easy to find accommodation in Auroville at the present time, and anyone planning to come here is advised to contact the Housing Group or Entry Group for more information at that time. Especially in the case of families we strongly advise that at least one parent comes to see and arrange things beforehand.

So long as one remains an Aurovilian, the right of the person who constructed the house to live in it is respected by the community, likewise the right of that person's children to continue to occupy the house after the parent's demise or departure from Auroville. Only in the case of someone leaving Auroville for a period of 5 years or longer, and thus losing their Aurovilian status, does the right of occupation officially cease.

LEAP – Learning Experience Auroville Program (www.leap-auroville.com)

Here you will find information about courses in: Healing and Health; Movement and Energy; Communication and Transformation; Creativity and Play; Sustainability in Life and Technology; Auroville and the Villages.

AVIS – Auroville Volunteering, Internships & Studies programs (www.auroville.org/education/avis/avis.htm)

Here there is information about longer term programs for students. AVIS was founded in 2000 in response to an increasing number of requests from both independent students and volunteers as well as institutions in India and abroad interested in undertaking educational programs in Auroville.

Quiet Healing Centre (www.quiethealingcenter.info)

Apart from offering a range of therapies, Quiet Healing Centre also offers courses and workshops in subjects such as

Ayurvedic Pressure Massage; Ayurvedic Massage; Heartworks Lomi Lomi Massage; Peas versus Pills; Watsu Healing etc.

Auroville Earth Institute

(http://www.auroville.org/thecity/architecture/appr_tech_nology/appr_building_technology.htm)

The Auroville Earth Institute has developed a range of technologies for appropriate building technologies and earth construction and is conducting regular training programmes in earth construction.

The Newcomers get organised

in conversation with Dianna



“We need to make our activities visible to the world,” says Raghu, an Indian Newcomer from the Netherlands .

“When I became a Newcomer last November, I was surprised there was no handbook or information package for Newcomers,” says Raghu, who had been visiting Auroville on and off since 1990 and returned to India

permanently in 2008 and settled in Auroville.

“I didn't know the other Newcomers, what they were doing, or where to find them. Each of us was individually trying to find our way around Auroville, which is a complex place. It was frustrating, so I decided to do something about it.” Raghu made a proposal for a ‘Newcomer Programme’ which received positive feedback from many Aurovilians and Newcomers.

Raghu explains. “There are now about 140 Newcomers. There is not much opportunity for bonding as there are no occasions to meet together and the first year can involve many pressures including finding work, often moving from one house to another, and trying to find your way around Auroville.

“Newcomers are a very mixed and varied bunch. There are returning Aurovilians, partners of Aurovilians, children of Aurovilians, people who have lived or worked here for a long time as guests or volunteers and who have finally decided to become Aurovillian. Then there are the young Europeans who want to explore different ways of life, young Indian professionals, middle aged people opening a new chapter in their lives, couples with children, young aspiring Tamilians and, of course, a few lost souls.”

“Some people are very clear about what they want to do and dive into their work right away and don't get to explore many areas of Auroville or meet people. Some others explore various work places and communities and continue

to move from one area to another. Even then, it is hard to get an overview of what is going on in the community.”

“So I feel it is necessary to have a broad understanding of various activities and get to know a cross-section of people across the community. Without this, it will be difficult to take part in the community discussions and communicate with others in later years.”

“We started the Newcomer Programme in January this year and the first event was hosted by the Working Committee, L'Avenir, and FAMC (Auroville administrative groups). Carel, Raman, Toby and Otto talked to us about their work and it was very interesting for everyone. Our second reception was hosted by Wellpaper, Svaram, KOFPU and Saracon (Auroville business units). Orly told us about how her partner Danny and she had set up Wellpaper; Chandresh spoke of his early struggles as a Newcomer, and gave us a history of the place. Aurelio's team entertained us with music, and Anandi served us a great organic dinner. It was a memorable and inspiring evening.”



Shraddhavan (second from left) discussing Savitri with Newcomers at Savitri Bhavan

“The next event was hosted at Pitchandikulam Forest with Joss giving us a tour and showing us the remarkable projects in ecology and training at the Pitchandikulam Bio-Resource Centre. Our most recent event was a visit to Savitri Bhavan which emphasized the spiritual aspects of Auroville. It was well received and over 50 Newcomers attended this session.”

“It is a special experience to see all the Newcomers gather together. Everyone is so different and it gives a feel of the new energy. What surprised us most was the number of young Tamil women and men who come to the events. About half of the attendees are Tamil Newcomers, who are very attentive and take part in the small-group discussions.”

Raghu explains how in their group discussion on issues facing Newcomers, housing and work are the two critical issues that came up. “Since then,” says Raghu, “we announce to newcomers any work openings at the Auroville

units, and also try to find work if a Newcomer requests it. Housing is a much more complex problem and we have not been able to address it yet. This is a topic for another meeting.”

The group plans to host about 10 to 15 events in 2009 that will expose Newcomers to various areas and activities of Auroville – farms and forests, health and healing, crafts and industry, governance, spirituality, architecture, village action, waste management etc.

“From what I have seen since last year,” observes Raghu, “we are not giving out the right message [to the world] and we seem to be attracting mostly tourists. The Auroville website needs a complete revamp with up-to-date content.

We need more publications like The Auroville Experience and The Auroville Architecture book. They are impressive and give a lot of good information. Auroville Radio is also doing a great job of broadcasting current happenings.

“We need to fund these vital media groups, and encourage all units and projects to showcase their activities to the world. We have such a wealth of diversity and activities in such a small community, and we need many more talented and skilled people in various areas.

“By showing the world what we do here, we will inspire and attract the kind of people who will want to take part in our activities and help us realize the vision.”

Published in “Auroville Today”

To be a True Aurovilian

1. The first necessity is the inner discovery by which one learns who one really is behind the social, moral, cultural, racial and hereditary appearances. At our inmost centre there is a free being, wide and knowing, who awaits our discovery and who ought to become the acting centre of our being and our life in Auroville.

2. One lives in Auroville in order to be free of moral and social conventions; but this liberty must not be a new slavery to the ego, its desires and its ambitions. The fulfilment of desires bars the route to the inner discovery which can only be attained in peace and the transparency of a perfect disinterestedness.

3. The Aurovilian must lose the proprietary sense of possession. For our passage in the material world, that which is indispensable to our life and to our action is put at our disposal according to the place we should occupy there. The more conscious our contact is with our inner being, the more exact are the means given.

4. Work, even manual work, is an indispensable thing for the inner discovery. If one does not work, if one does not inject



The Mother

his consciousness into matter, the latter will never develop. To let one’s consciousness organise a bit of matter by way of one’s body is very good. To establish order around oneself, helps to bring order within oneself. One should organise life not according to outer, artificial rules, but according to an organised, inner consciousness, because if one allows life to drift without imposing the control of a higher consciousness, life becomes inexpressive and irresolute. It is to waste one’s time in the sense that matter persists without a conscious utilisation.

5. The whole earth must prepare itself for the advent of the new species, and Auroville wants to consciously work towards hastening that advent.

6. Little by little it will be revealed to us what this new species should be, and meanwhile the best measure to take is to consecrate oneself entirely to the Divine. The only true liberty is that obtained by union with the Divine. One can unite with the Divine only when the ego is mastered.

The Mother

Conditions for living in Auroville

From the psychological point of view, the required conditions are:

1. To be convinced of the essential unity of mankind and to have the will to collaborate for the material realisation of that unity.
2. To have the will to collaborate in all that furthers future realisations.

The material conditions will be worked out as the realisation proceeds.

The ideal of the Aurovilians must be to become egoless – not at all to satisfy their ego. If they follow the old human way of selfish claim, how can they hope the world to change?

Every good Aurovilian should strive to free himself from all desires, preferences and repulsions. Equality in all circumstances is the chief aim to be attained in order to live in Auroville.

It is true that to live in Auroville a great progress of consciousness has to be made. But the moment has come when this progress is possible.

We want the Truth. For most men, it is what they want that they label the truth. The Aurovilians must want the Truth whatever it may be.

Peace through Human Unity:

Unity through uniformity is an absurdity.

Unity must be realised through the union of the many.

Each one is part of the unity; each one is indispensable to the whole.

To establish in Auroville the harmonious atmosphere which, by definition, ought to reign there, the first step is for each one to look within himself for the cause of friction and misunderstanding. For these causes are always on both sides and before demanding anything from others, each one would first strive to eliminate them from himself.

The Mother

Man is a transitional being, he is not final. Evolution is not finished; reason is not the last word nor the reasoning animal the supreme figure of Nature... There is something that he is not yet which he has to be; he is reaching always towards the

something yet unrealised; his whole life and nature is a preparation, an endeavour of Nature towards what is beyond him.

Sri Aurobindo

Roy's Boarding Appeal

We present here a short report on Roy's Boarding. This was started by New Creation Bilingual School's (NCBS) one time principal Roy Wicks in the 1990's to enable children disadvantaged backgrounds to attend the school. AVI UK has been a channel for funds for the facility for many years, and many of us are regular visitors to the house, where we are always made so welcome. The report is written by Heidi Watts, a professor from the USA who gives teacher training in schools throughout Auroville, and regularly stays at Roy's Boarding as a guest.

Seven children with rice, egg curry and salad are tucking into their food around the big dining table in Roy's House tonight. With me, clockwise around the table, are Sathya, Vanitha, and Tixon, young people in their '20s who were once children in this house. We also have Matt, a volunteer from the University of Washington; and Ron, a volunteer from Antioch New England Graduate School; Ramalingam, the school's art teacher; and his wife, Janaki. There is a lot of laughing and talking back and forth in a mix of English and Tamil. Tomorrow, Pongal, the great harvest festival of south India begins and the children will disappear into their homes in the village for sweet rice, bullock races and Pongal presents, but this evening meal together is part of the daily ritual of the House. An hour ago the children were doing their homework around this table. Some of the children and adults will have prepared the meal and others will soon clean up as part of the well organized rhythm in which all share routine chores.



Coming, as I do, every year, I notice with surprise how the children are shooting up while the centimeters pile on, and how much their English has improved. The infusion of English speaking volunteers and Sathya's extra English classes are clearly making a difference. Tixon, who quietly holds the reins, slides easily back and forth between English and Tamil.



Geetha and Parimala

There have been some significant changes since last year. Sathya completed a BA in English Literature and finished her teacher certification course in the summer. After a few months of practice teaching at Udavi

School she has assumed the position of English teacher at NCBS and is rapidly becoming an indispensable part of the school where once she was a student. Vanitha will complete her BA in mathematics in 2009 and hopes then to go on to do her masters in mathematics.

Parimla, the oldest of the girls in the House is completing her 10th standard and Geetha is the younger one. The youngest of the boys, Nirmalraj is in third standard, and the oldest, Dhinigar, will complete the 8th standard this year. The remaining three: Parasuram, Iyyappan and Parthiban are scattered in-between. Parthiban and Iyyappan won an award as best students of NCBS.

There are two houses which comprise Roy's Boarding: the main house with the kitchen and its large communal room is also where the children and most of the staff live. Some staff, volunteers and guests live in the adjoining "Annex". The houses, built in the early '90s, are gradually deteriorating and are in need of major repairs.

The original houses and land are our legacy from Roy, who has returned to England but is still in frequent communication with "his children." But beyond this inheritance, all the other expenses of the household: food, transportation, medical expenses, clothing, school and personal supplies, must be met by donations. Most of the children have a sponsor. The adults have jobs, or sponsors if they are still in school, and the volunteers pay a minimal amount. There is enough money to cover day-to-day operating expenses but, just barely enough. We are grateful to all of you who have contributed and continue to contribute so generously to the health and well being of these children and young people. In many cases, help to one of the children is help to the whole family, relieving parents and relatives of some part of their financial strain and anxiety.

Heidi Watts

Roy's Boarding needs help. Its income is entirely met by donations. If you would like to help support this work, by sponsoring a child, or by making a single or regular donation towards the running of the house, please contact us by e mail (info@aviuk.org) or using the address on the last page.

Auroville International looks forward

Report on the recent AVI meeting in Holland

The annual meeting of the Auroville International (AVI) Centres took place at Conference Centre Venwoude, at Lage Vuursche, The Netherlands in the first week of May. It was attended by representatives of Auroville International Canada , USA , Spain , France , England , Germany , The Netherlands , and by Aurovilians and a member of the International Advisory Council of the Auroville Foundation.

The seven days of activities had been rigorously organized by our Dutch hosts. Information sessions on Auroville alternated with presentations of the work done by the Auroville International Centres, introductions on the significance of Sanskrit mantras, and meditations on Sri Aurobindo's Savitri. Discussions were intense and often went on late into the evening. Aurovilians Aloka and Joan guided some of the participants through 'Awareness through the Body' sessions, which were appreciated as a timely gift from Auroville to a world desperately in need of techniques for self-understanding and observation. There was a well-organized trip to Amsterdam which included a visit to the Van Gogh Museum. All enjoyed an evening of puppetry presented by Puppet Theatre Koekla. And Nadaka and Gopika gave a concert on the theme of Shantakaram – the Sanskrit word for 'embodiment of peace'.

One day called 'Connectivity Day' was open to the public and it filled the room to capacity. Over 80 attendees were shown the latest videos 'Vannakkam Auroville/Welcome to Auroville'. Auroville Radio provided a live video link between Loes Keyzers and Linda-Grace Mosselman in Venwoude and Shraddhavan, Deepti and Margarita in Auroville on the theme 'How can the Dream become reality?' concentrating on today's priorities. Lastly, International Advisory Council (IAC) member Dr. Marc Luyckx Ghisi gave a speech on contemporary capitalism and its painful transition into a post-industrial phase.

The sessions on Auroville included a presentation on the arts in Auroville with a request to the AVI centres to organize exhibitions to promote the work of Auroville's artists and photographers. A video was shown about New Creation Bilingual School and its success over the last few years. Vani spoke about the work done at Sadhana Forest, and Shivaya updated the audience on work in the International Zone. The work at the new Health Centre at Kailash was explained, as well as Auroville's work for village dental projects. Videos

on the Inuksuk (a giant statue originating from the indigenous Canadian people) and the visit of HH the Dalai Lama were screened as well as presentations on the Realization housing project.

Luigi, the Fundraising and Networking Coordinator of L'Avenir d'Auroville, gave an overview of latest developments in Auroville. He spoke about the urgent necessity to protect the lands included in the Master Plan and the need to create housing for the increasing number of people who wish to join Auroville. A major part of his presentation and ensuing discussion centred on Auroville's International Zone; are the Centres ready to actively participate in its development? This question was countered with the question 'Is the Master Plan of the Zone sufficiently developed so that the pavilions can be built'.

Mia suggested we should lean more towards a living dialogue as an alternative to pavilions as the need for education in the world is of the utmost priority.

"We should look towards the future, not the past. True, the Inuksuk monument is magnificent, but it does not inspire me to think of the future, which is something Mother emphasized all the time." Someone suggested that instead of elaborate pavilions, building spiritual symbols such as the Inuksuk monument would be more appropriate and inspiring.

These discussions also pointed to a change of focus for the Auroville International Centres themselves. In the early years, providing information on Auroville was a major task. But today information is extensively available on the Internet. Auroville has entered a new phase in its development now that the Matrimandir is ready, and for these reasons the Working Committee and L'Avenir d'Auroville had jointly proposed to the Centres to concentrate now on four other activities which are very much in line with AVI's previous and current efforts.

The first is to start study groups – or strengthen the groups if they already exist – to study the fundamental genius of the



Conference Centre Venwoude, The Netherlands



nation to which they belong and determine in which way one's country has contributed to the evolution of humanity. As The Mother said, "Just as each individual has a psychic being which is his true self and which governs his destiny more or less overtly, so too each nation has a psychic being which is its true being and moulds its destiny from behind the veil: it is the soul of the country, the national genius, the spirit of the people, the centre of national aspiration, the fountainhead of all that is beautiful, noble, great and generous in the life of the country."

The second is that all AVI Centres investigate the possibilities of helping to complete the Unity Pavilion complex, which is central to the development of the International Zone. This complex provides a space in the International Zone which everybody can use until their own National Pavilions are in place. The Unity Pavilion will also have the Hall of Peace where the Peace Table of Asia will be housed. For completing the Unity Pavilion complex, Rs 60 Lakhs (£80,000) is required.



AVI Board meeting in Holland

The third request to the AVI Centres is to start identifying government and non-governmental organisations in their country which would be willing to participate in the financing of the pavilion of their country. Also, as big amounts of funding will be required for the development of Auroville – for building houses, infrastructure and institutions – each Auroville International Centre was invited to identify government and/or non-governmental organisations in their country that are willing to help and sponsor the development of Auroville.

Lastly, the Centres were asked to contact universities and institutes of higher learning in their country to invite them to send their students to Auroville for internship and to initiate student-exchange programmes.

The representatives of the European AVI Centres agreed to collaborate in fund-raising for the creation of a European Plaza in the International Zone. In October 2009, a meeting on this topic will take place in Berlin, organized by AVI Germany.

Dianna from an article in Auroville Today

New Auroville International web site:

A new web site for Auroville International has been designed and can be found at www.auroville-international.org. This contains information about all 24 AVI centres and liaison groups around the world, and has details of news and events. It includes a full report of the meeting in Holland, and details for future events around the world.



Auroville.com Auroville's new online shopping experience!

Auroville has recently launched a new online shopping service, where products from many of the Auroville businesses are available for purchase. Product ranges include accessories, body care, children's items, clothing, crafts, food, coffee, tea, homeware, incense, books, magazines, videos and stationary. Auroville units represented include Maroma, Shradhanjali, Auroville Papers, Auroville Press, Naturellement, Prisma, Well Paper and many others.



You can order and pay online using PayPal or credit card, and the goods will be sent to you directly from Auroville.

The store has the following to say about its work:

"auroville.com is an online store presenting the products and services of Auroville to the world. The products on this website are produced in Auroville by its numerous units and all funds and profits from the sale of products go to furthering the development of the township. We pride ourselves on the quality and fineness of all products and also on the ethical way in which they are produced".



So just try it! Go to www.auroville.com.

Matrimandir

Matrimandir Newsletter – June 2009

Progress in the Garden of Unity

The Garden of Unity was the scene of a massive concreting effort during the first week of May, over six days to concrete the curving pathways of this garden. Under the hot May sun, a train of wheelbarrows carrying the cement, were wheeled into place, and their contents were then levelled.

It was a great effort on everyone's part. All the paths concreted are sloped so that the monsoon rains flow towards the oval road that circles the gardens, and where eventually the valuable water will be collected for further use. Several of these paths radiate out from the Banyan tree, which stands at the inner boundary of this garden.

Having completed this phase of concreting the paths, we will now remove and recondition the composted soil within the circular sub-sections of the garden before beginning the work of cladding the paths with red Agra and green slate paving stones.

The Stone for the Garden of Existence .

There are times at Matrimandir when a sense of humour is really essential ...and this was one of them!

We started the garden of Existence on April 16th. It was wonderful that day to see the beginning in matter of the Gardens that have been studied and planned for so long. Then an earth mover was called in to level the area where the large central stone would be placed, surrounded by a field of white gravel.

The garden team began to search for this stone, making exploratory forays to granite quarries some 40 km west of Auroville. Finally, a stone was found which seemed to fit the bill...it was six meters long, two and a half wide and a meter thick. Just what the designers had in mind for this central symbol of the garden of Existence . The problem was that this large stone was very, very heavy, estimated to weigh 18 tons!. No ordinary lorry would carry it and an especially strong crane would be needed to lift it.

Several days went by before the needed equipment could be assembled. Everything seemed ready, but then, on returning once more to the quarry for the final loading (so we thought), we got the bad news that our wonderful stone had been shattered to bits by a routine quarry-mining blast that was set

off nearby! Nothing remained of the huge boulder but a small pile of chunks of rock!

Then it was back to square one: we would have to mount fresh expeditions to locate another stone. However, something had very much changed on the site, in the spot where the stone was to come: the oval-shaped area where the stone was to be placed was levelled now, the soil having been removed from the contoured wave form which reaches out to the Oval road. There is an outline too, showing where the stone would have sat. But there is something more -- there is a real sense now of the presence of a stone, this anchor of the garden of Existence . The garden has somehow taken root and begun to grow, and it grows in spite of this temporary setback.

One is reminded there are no easy solutions here, everything requires a constant effort and attention, sometimes to be redone, obstacles to be overcome, and a continuing search for the perfect result. It is very much a part of the process here. And perseverance is required, to hang on, to move forward, and to let ourselves, finally, be shown the way.

And so it will be with the stone: the search will be started again, we will look in places we did not look before and eventually the right stone will be found; it will be brought here and be placed, just so, at the focal

point of this garden.

Aligning the Sun's Ray

There are many tasks involved in maintaining the Matrimandir these days, and ensuring that the sun's ray stays vertical in the Chamber and centred on the globe is one of them; for sometimes, occasionally, the ray moves slightly out of position, and then the maintenance team must act to put it right again.

There are three mirrors on top of Matrimandir. The first is the heliostat, a movable one, which rotates to catch a ray of sunlight. This ray is then reflected through a window to a second mirror, which is fixed, and which reflects the ray horizontally over to the third mirror positioned exactly above the crystal globe at the centre of the Chamber floor. This third mirror reflects the ray down to the globe, some fifteen meters below.



Concreting in Unity garden near the Banyan tree



*Existence: Pink Hibiscus
Psychic Power In Existence.*

Now occasionally, the alignment of these three mirrors gets slightly skewed, whether due to an adjustment bolt becoming loose or due to someone inadvertently bumping into one of the mirrors - and then the ray no longer strikes the centre on top of the globe in the Chamber. An error of even a few centimetres is visible to anyone in the room.

To set things right two people are needed -- one positioned on the roof near the mirrors and one in the room near the globe. Peering down at the transparent globe through the opening in the Chamber ceiling, the bright reflected rays from the globe make it quite hard to see what is going on below, so a target, like a bull's eye, is placed on top of the globe. (The target has felt padding so that there is no chance

of its scratching the globe.) This white and blue target makes it easier to see where the ray strikes. The person standing next to the crystal has to give hand signals to indicate which way the mirrors need to be adjusted. The person on the roof, moves one of them, tilting it slowly, first one way, then the other. Eventually moving in smaller and smaller increments, one converges on the exact centre of the bull's eye. Finally the job is done. The ray is centred again!

"The most important thing is this: the play of the sun on the centre. Because that becomes the symbol, the symbol of future realisations."

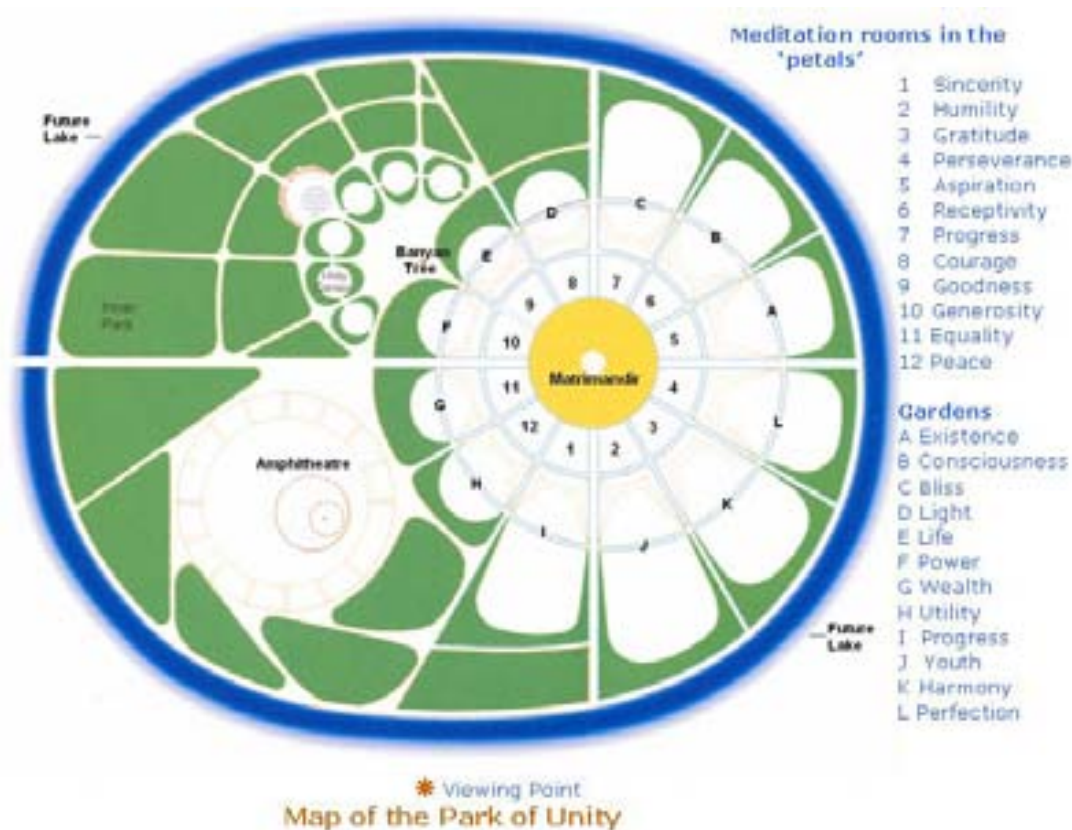
The Mother

The Mother said of the Matrimandir gardens:

"It must be a thing of great beauty, of such beauty that when people come they will say "Ah, this is it". It must be an expression of that consciousness which we are trying to bring down". She added: "One must know how to move from consciousness to consciousness."

The twelve gardens were given names by the Mother:

Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Light, Life, Power, Wealth, Usefulness, Progress, Youth, Harmony, Perfection.





Other News

Next Meeting

SUMMER AUROVILLE PRESENTATION

The presentation will be held on Sunday 13th September at 10:30am at:

Auromira Centre,
126 Whitton Avenue East,
Greenford, Middlesex, UB6 0PY
Tel: 0208 903 6504

The nearest underground station is Sudbury Town (Piccadilly Line)

We have invited two Aurovilians to speak to us about their experiences, so we look forward to an interesting day.

Anyone interested in Auroville is very welcome to come along. Please bring a contribution to a shared lunch.

London Meetings

Regular London meetings are held about every two months, at the home of one of our Trustees, David Widdicombe. They are held on a Sunday from 2.30pm to about 5.30 pm.

The meetings afford an opportunity to study the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They start with a meditation and an introduction on a chosen subject by one of those attending, and then a discussion. Among the subjects chosen so far are "Our Many Selves", "Surrender", "Sadhana through work", "Death", "Meditation", "Religion and Spirituality", and the recent Auroville book "Awareness through the Body", "Human unity and cultural differences in Auroville".

The address of the meetings is:

5 Albert Terrace, Primrose Hill, London, NW1 7SU

To find out when the next meeting is, please phone David on (020) 7586 5209.

Next International Meeting

The next Auroville international meeting is to be held in the Auroville in February 2009. It will be a chance for Aurovilians and members of AVI groups from around the world to meet. If anyone wishes to come, please contact Martin at the address below.

AVI UK Website

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. News of forthcoming events can be found at the top of the home page.

We 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 info@aviuk.org. We would welcome any contribution.

Donations

You can make a donation to AVI UK or to any Auroville project with a credit or debit card via our web site. Just go to www.aviuk.org/fundraising.htm. Otherwise please send a cheque, payable to *Auroville International UK*. We are always grateful for your help.

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 Unity 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