



In this issue we look at housing in Auroville. This is a subject which is of concern to Aurovilians, Newcomers to Auroville and those visiting as guests with a mind to settle. Up until recently, housing has been in very short supply, with a long waiting list for both Newcomers and Aurovilians. Entry to Auroville was even suspended for a while due to the crisis. We explore the history to this problem, and look at how it is being resolved

## Towards the Future

Therefore the individuals who will most help the future of humanity in the new age will be those who will recognise a spiritual evolution as the destiny and therefore the great need of the human being. Even as the animal man has been largely converted into a mentalised and at the top a highly mentalised humanity, so too now or in the future an evolution or conversion – it does not greatly matter which figure we use or what theory we adopt to support it – of the present type of humanity into a spiritualised humanity is the need of the race and surely the intention of Nature; that evolution or conversion will be their ideal and endeavour...

They will adopt in its heart of meaning the inward view of the East which bids man seek the secret of his destiny and salvation within; but also they will accept, though with a different turn given to it, the importance which the West rightly attaches to life and to the making the best we know and can attain the general rule of all life. They will not make society a shadowy background to a few luminous spiritual figures or a rigidly fenced and earth-bound root for the growth of a comparatively rare and sterile flower of ascetic spirituality. They will not

One must have an absolutely transparent sincerity. Lack of sincerity is the cause of the difficulties we meet at present. Insincerity is in all men. There are perhaps a hundred men on earth who are totally sincere. Man's very nature makes him insincere – it is very complicated, for he is constantly deceiving himself, hiding the truth from himself. Yoga is the way to become sincere in all parts of the being.

It is difficult to be sincere, but at least one can be mentally sincere; this is what can be demanded of Aurovilians. The force is there, present as never before; man's insincerity prevents it from descending, from being felt. The world lives in falsehood, in all relations between men have until now been based on falsehood and deceit. Diplomatic relations between nations are based on falsehood. The claim to want peace, and meanwhile they are arming themselves. Only a transparent sincerity in man and among nations can usher in a transformed world.

accept the theory that the many must necessarily remain forever on the lower ranges of life and only a few climb into the free air and the light, but will start from the standpoint of the great spirits who have striven to regenerate the life of the earth and held that faith in spite of all previous failures....



Sri Aurobindo

The thing to be done is as large as human life, and therefore the individuals who lead the way will take all human life for their province. These pioneers will consider nothing as alien to them, nothing as outside their scope. For every part of human life has to be taken up by the spiritual, - not only the intellectual, the aesthetic, the ethical, but the dynamic, the vital, the physical; therefore for none of these things or the activities that spring from them will they have contempt or aversion, however they may insist on a change of the spirit and transmutation of the form. In each power of our nature they will seek for its own proper means of conversion; knowing that the Divine is concealed in all, they will hold that all can be made the Spirit's means of self-finding and all can be converted into its instruments of divine living.

Sri Aurobindo

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Auroville is the first attempt in this experiment. A new world will be born; if men are willing to make an effort for transformation, to seek sincerity, if it is possible. From animal to man, thousands of years were needed; today, with his mind, man can will and hasten a transformation towards a man who shall be God.

This transformation by the help of the mind – by self analysis – is a first step; afterwards, it is necessary to transform the vital and physical. Every cell in our bodies must become conscious. This is the work I am doing here; it will enable the conquest

of death. That is another story; that will be the humanity of the future, perhaps after hundreds of years, perhaps sooner. It will depend on men, on nations.

Auroville is the first step towards this goal.

The Mother



# Housing in Auroville

## The Background

Since the earliest times, finding a place to live has been a problem for anyone coming to settle in Auroville. Housing has always been in short supply, and for many, particularly the young, the cost can prove a serious barrier to joining the community. We investigate the issue and look at what is presently being done to improve the situation, enabling a greater number of people from all ages and backgrounds to settle and contribute to Auroville's growth.

### No ownership

The principle that individuals cannot own land or houses in Auroville dates back to the very beginning of Auroville. On The Mother's instruction, the first land for Auroville was bought by the Sri Aurobindo Society as early as 8 October 1964, four years before the official inauguration of Auroville in February 1968. In the brochures issued at the time it was explained that interested persons, once accepted by The Mother, could financially contribute towards a house in Auroville, but that they were only granted the right to live there with their family. Ownership of the house and land was never given, though it may be inferred that the right to live in the house would be extended to the person's family after the demise of the person.

The principle of non-ownership of immovable assets was subsequently laid down in the Charter of Auroville of February 28th, 1968. The first line of Auroville's Charter states explicitly:

*Auroville belongs to nobody in particular.*

*Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole...*

and Mother explains to Satprem: *"So this is the material fact. Auroville belongs... I didn't put "to no nation" because India would have been furious. I put "belongs to nobody" – "nobody" is a vague term which I used precisely so as not to say "to no human being" or "to no nation". And I put "Auroville belongs to humanity AS A WHOLE", because it amounts to nothing! Since people can't agree together, the thing is impossible! I did it deliberately."*

When the Auroville Foundation Act was passed in September 1988, the Government of India became the temporary owner of all the land and houses, without paying compensation to either the Society or to individuals. The Government transferred the ownership of all these assets to the Auroville Foundation on April 1, 1992. In later years, the Auroville community, in its Housing Policy, designated how it envisions the legal ownership of the Foundation: "The Auroville Foundation will hold the ownership of all these assets in trust for humanity as a whole."

At present, all land required for Auroville is bought by the Auroville Foundation from donations made to Auroville Fund for this purpose. Individuals who wish to build a new house or move into an existing house in Auroville are also required to channel their funds through Auroville Fund. However, they will not own the house and if they leave Auroville they cannot sell it. The Auroville Land Policy and the Auroville Housing Policy, both documents made by the Funds and Assets Management Committee, specify the conditions under which Aurovilians have the right to use the immovable assets.

### The problem

Though the principle of no individual ownership of immovable assets is undisputed, the observance of the rule is fraught with difficulties. The first difficulty is the one commented on by a French visitor: in the outside world, an individual can take a 20 or 30-year loan on condition that the house bought with that loan is mortgaged to the bank. In Auroville, loans are not available and an individual has to make a donation to the full value for the right to build and live in a house. Not many individuals will be prepared to make a large donation to Auroville if they do not know for certain that Auroville will be their ultimate place of residence. The realisation that Auroville is not one's place might come years after one has joined.

Another risk is that the Government of India, for reasons of its own, might decide to cancel permission for a foreigner to remain in India. In neither case can the individual claim the value of the house back to start a life somewhere else.

Another consequence of the need to make a donation for a house is that it affects the balanced structure of Auroville's population. Few people in the age group of 25-35 join Auroville, as they normally have not yet been able to build-up a sufficient capital.

### No places for rent

To solve the difficulty faced by Newcomers – people who are admitted on a probationary period of 2 years – Auroville has built a number of small Newcomer houses that are made available against the payment of a monthly rent for a maximum period of two years. Also the possibility has been created that Newcomers build their own house. In case the Newcomer period is terminated for whatever reason, 80% of the money invested by the Newcomer would be returned; but if the Newcomer becomes an Aurovilian, the investment will be considered a donation to Auroville.

The Housing Service reported the shortcomings of this scheme. Newcomers are often unable, it appears, to make any full contribution and instead need to rent places. But hardly any spaces for rent are available, as some Newcomer units have been going to Aurovilians due to the housing shortage. For many Newcomers there is no other option than to take a room in a guest house, and go through a rigorous ordeal to try to secure housing for themselves.

A solution was proposed, to rent housing for Newcomers in the surrounding villages. This would allow the villages the opportunity to develop this industry and so be of benefit to all parties. But this viewpoint met with the objection that such an industry would be purely materialistic and not be in any way connected with the ideals of integration and co-evolution of Auroville with the surrounding villages. A suburb of Auroville in the villages might be the result and in this way Auroville itself would not develop.

The problem was painfully illustrated when, over the last six months, there was an influx of potential Korean newcomers. A visibly upset member of the Auroville Housing Group explained the difficulty: "They all are in their mid-thirties, they are full of energy and we have to tell them that we have no newcomer houses empty. Then we tell them that they had better come with a substantial sum of money to build themselves a house, but if they leave after they have become Aurovilian, they have lost their donation. And they simply cannot afford this. India is a difficult country, Auroville is unknown and challenging, and they are not sure that even after two years they will be fully committed. So they leave. But if Auroville is to become a vibrant city, members of that age group need to be present in large numbers. It is ridiculous and unacceptable that young people are not welcome unless they bring cash." Evidently, the people who

now apply to become newcomers are more cautious than the idealists who joined Auroville in the seventies and eighties.

Solutions to all these problems have still to be found. One solution, often suggested to attract young people to Auroville, is that Auroville builds apartment buildings and rents them out. However, Auroville lacks the money to do so and frowns on borrowing. But there may be no other solution. For is it realistic to expect that benevolent outsiders will solve our problems by making large donations for this purpose?

**This article was written and published in Auroville Today in 2004, and although the housing problem is still with us, much progress has been made in the last few years, as the next articles will show.**

## Housing Update January – February 2010

**This report was presented to the community for Auroville's birthday this year, and indicates the progress made in the last two or three years in tackling the acute housing shortage, which has stunted its growth. We all look forward to this development continuing well into the future.**

Dear fellow Aurovilians,

As the 42nd Anniversary of Auroville is coming closer, at our service we look into this event from our particular perspective...housing...and try to find some signals in our common horizon, in our next year of work, that can bring some hope to us...that could justify a hearty celebration!

We look around and what do we discover? Around us there are nine or ten ongoing housing projects with a total number of more than 120 apartments of various sizes and types. We try to remember... and we cannot find another moment in Auroville's history in which such a volume of development has taken place... probably we are witnessing today the biggest construction program executed here.

What else?...We continue looking and we discover also that if we put together the number of apartments of **Citadine** (just now being completed),

**Inspiration** and the youth project of **Muyerchi** (that will be finalized around May), there are about 50 apartments and rooms that will be offered for free ("pro bono") to Aurovilians...wow!!!, this indicates that we have been able to create almost 40% of new housing under this category!!... what an achievement!!

We look back, to just two years ago and we remember the acute housing crisis...the total lack of housing projects that we were facing and we have to admit that sometimes a

crisis is the best occasion to find new and illuminative solutions. We should recognize that if we are facing this changed and most promising horizon it is thanks to the dedicated efforts of a large number of Aurovilians that have made this possible.

They took the challenge resolutely, and now we can witness the blossoming of all these initiatives. We could, then, take this Anniversary as a favourable moment to reflect about all this and refresh our faith in the hidden force that in spite of all our contradictions, weaknesses and compromises...is leading Auroville toward its final, decreed destiny.

We have to renew our confidence and trust in ourselves, in our collective capacities and determination to work, to dream and to manifest so many other necessary things that are waiting to be realized. Perhaps this

can be a special moment also to feel, share and express a deep gratitude. In this context, the Housing Service wishes

to express its uttermost gratitude to all those who have contributed in so many ways to make this change possible, and we want to mention especially the team of Citadine, because beyond any criticism they have been the biggest contributors to this hopeful moment.

And now we would like to give you some recommendations:

- ◆ If you have some free time we invite you to walk around and visit some of the numerous sites where construction is going on and you will appreciate the diversity of answers given

### Funding for New Housing

The total cost of the projects that are now being built, or just completed is Rs 15 crores (£2.1 million) or more. About 63% is paid by the future inhabitants or by the Auroville Housing Service from their income from contributions; 14% is a donation from the Government of India (the Joy project); and the rest, approximately 23%, comes from private donations.



*Citadine Project*



to improve the housing situation. There is a lot to see...there is a lot to enjoy!

- ◆ Please, don't forget to visit the Citadine site, where some Aurovilians are already living and you can get a sense of what they are creating.
- ◆ In the eventuality that you have some Crores (Rs 1 Crore = £140,000) lying around in some account and you don't know what to do with that money...please stop by the Housing Service...definitely we have some initiatives in mind to improve the housing situation.

- ◆ If your feelings are more positive after these visits we invite you to express yourself in writing and send something positive to somebody or some team working in this area. There is a lot of criticism in our usual communications, that for one day we could try collectively something more luminous, grateful and hopeful...and let's see what happens.

And overall we want to wish you...a luminous and joyful celebration of this 42nd Anniversary!

*Housing Service 28 February 2010*

## Realization

### 64 hours to build a house!

The team of the Auroville Earth Institute, along with volunteers, built the caretaker's house of the *Realization Project* in 8 days.

The house was pre-cast in the *Auroville Earth Institute* premises in about 6-7 weeks:

Blocks of the house were made by volunteers of the *Realization project* in October / November 2007. Precasting was done by 3-4 paid masons and a few workers from the Auroville Earth Institute from December 2007.

All materials were transported to the site in 3 days and the house was assembled in about 64 hours by a daily team of 16 paid workers and 10 to 15 volunteers. This house has been conceived as moveable and no cement mortar or cement concrete has been used to assemble the house. Only earth mortars and earth concretes were used to bind the compressed stabilised earth blocks.



*Volunteers building house in Realization*

This house can be dismantled with a minimum loss of materials, transported anywhere and rebuilt as such. We

organised a huge construction game, a kind of Lego game for children from 11 to 60 years old. This house of 31 m<sup>2</sup> (built up area) cost about Rs 2.1 Lakhs (£2900). including a solar system, water supply from Creativity, a waste-water system and all finishes.

We want to thank all the volunteers and paid workers who contributed to this challenge. We want also to thank the Housing Service who agreed to finance this house and people from Creativity for their kind support. The house can be seen on the side of the radial road on the way to Prayatna, north of Creativity.

Satprem Maïni for the [Auroville Earth Institute](#)

see also: [Realization Project website](#)

## **AUROVILLE'S DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

### ***A personal view from an early Auroville resident.***

On one of my recent visits to Auroville, in February 2009, I was very pleased to see that there was a significant increase in planning and development activity after 40 years of stalemate. However, I was concerned with the nature of the process and the extent to which it embodied Mother's emphasis that Auroville is for making *experiments*. I noted that with so much emphasis on just getting on with it, on doing rather than talking, there was a danger that true participation would be sacrificed in the rush to implement Roger's galaxy plan.

Historically, the stalemate was between Roger and his supporters for whom the galaxy plan had become almost like Scripture, sacred and not to be tampered with, and the original pioneers and early settlers of Auroville. The early

settlers were given free rein to build where they wanted to and as they wished to, so long as it was all 'temporary'. However, the early settlers developed places spontaneously in accordance with actual ground and local realities, in accordance with the climate and the availability of materials and labour, in accordance with the need to create human habitat and water management and afforestation. The early development was organic in nature, and without the energy of the early settlers there would be no Auroville.

At some point it was realised that this stalemate had to come to an end for Auroville the City to develop. The galaxy plan was formally adopted and agreed upon by the community as the form of development for the City, and L'Avenir d'Auroville was formed and tasked to get on with

implementing the city. My concern was that with so much emphasis on building the galaxy plan as a fixed architectural and essentially sculptural concept, a true participation process would be sacrificed. To implement the city is to find an integral process, which does not pay lip service to participation whilst in actual fact, largely ignoring all those troublesome early pioneers and settlers, all those dreamers and visionaries. To implement an Auroville that can truly be an example to the world means also to be prepared to be flexible and holistic, taking into account ground realities, actual physical conditions, local social and larger current global concerns. I had the impression when with AVI, we met l'Avenir d'Auroville and others involved with the process, that the talk of participation was something of a PR exercise, and that there existed the danger that those tasked with implementing the galaxy plan had to some extent made a religion out of it, something so profoundly sacred that it could not be challenged.



*The Galaxy Model*

Particularly here in the UK, we have seen the reality of new towns, where the urban form is a rigid mental concept, conceived at one point in time, then implemented without sufficient regard for local or changing global realities, to become a stagnant place that no one really wants to live in. The real problem with all Masterplans is that by the time you come to implement them they are already out of date. We don't want to see Auroville make the same mistakes. The best and most beautiful places have always been those that have grown organically.

I was particularly disappointed to note two developments that were in evidence at the time of my visit. Firstly, a housing development close to the centre, which appeared really to be the old process - obtain funding, build housing, get people to move in. No consultation, no involvement by possible future users. Secondly, having invited participation, the alternative proposals for the Crown Road prepared by the Dreamcatchers group, seemed to me to have simply been ignored. Dreamcatchers represent something much closer to the experimental, organic, subjective and intuitive process of planning which is in keeping with the evolutionary movement of consciousness, the manifestation of which is the whole point of Auroville.

By contrast, I was pleased to see in a recent issue of Auroville Today some housing development initiatives which seem to confirm that Auroville is moving in the right direction, for instance the Luminosity development and now

**The conditions for being an organiser (it's not "governing" it's "organising") should be as follows: no more desires, no more preferences, no more attractions, no more repulsions – a perfect equality for all. Sincere, naturally, but that goes without saying: whenever insincerity creeps in, it acts like poison. And then, only those who are themselves in that condition are capable of discerning whether someone else is or is not.**

**And now, all human organisations are based on: visible fact (which is a falsehood), public opinion (which is another falsehood), and moral sense, which is yet another falsehood! So....**

*The Mother*

Aster's call for people to be involved in the process. At a recent AVI UK meeting in London, Gilles brought us up to date with the current developments. If I understood correctly, the members of the Working Committee had changed as had the constituent members of l'Avenir d'Auroville. There was a mood of change bringing with it a change of attitude. The participation and involvement of all is now a priority. It is accepted that the rigid implementation of a fixed formal concept is counter-productive to meeting the changing needs of Auroville. Change is life, rigidity is death.

Auroville needs to develop and perfect an integral process. There may be nothing wrong with having the galaxy model as the *template* for the form of the city. It is a beautiful and inspiring form. In

implementing the concept however, Auroville needs to engage the energies of all, respect the land and the planet and its present and changing realities. Thus Auroville can manifest the galaxy, *but organically*.

The process of planning will inevitably mean that not everybody gets their way. It means that some individuals or groups, be they planners or early settlers, even where they have invested all their care, their personal means and their love, have got to learn to let go and consider the needs of the whole from a widest perspective. In Auroville one owns nothing.

Auroville belongs to nobody in particular.

*Vikas*

#### **Editor's note:**

Since this article was written, there have been some significant changes in Auroville's planning and development authority L'Avenir d'Auroville. The term of office of the group who had been serving for 3 years ended and they have been replaced by a new team. There has been a long process for the renewal, aimed at making the group more relatable to the community, and the decision making process more participatory. The new team has just been appointed, and the final approval process is now almost complete. The old team had undoubtedly achieved much, particularly in developing new housing, which has been a huge achievement, but we all look forward to a new, more open approach to the development of Auroville, which will have the trust and confidence of the community.



## Litter-Free Day!

We'd been warned! For weeks posters and t-shirts had been appearing around Auroville preparing us for the big event – Litter-Free Auroville (LFA) 2010. The big day, Friday, 29th January, arrived.



*Aikiyam School children picking up litter in the green belt*

From early morning, groups of Aurovilians and schoolchildren could be seen picking up plastic, glass, food wrappers, old chappals and other assorted litter and waste (which included a complete toilet) from roadsides, fields and building sites and stuffing it all into sacks. After an hour or two, vans appeared to pick up the sacks and then all the litter, and all the people streamed towards Certitude.

They arrived to find numerous stalls and knowledgeable Aurovilians ready to explain how the mantra of the day – Reduce, Recycle, Reuse – could be put into practice. 'Cowboy' B. stood beside his waste-compressed blocks, explaining that if the 100 kilos of un-recyclable waste which the community generates each day could be made into building materials like these, there would be no more need for an Auroville landfill.



Next door, Herve was showing some excited schoolgirls that wastepaper could be made into beautiful

papier maché objects, like the waste basket he held in his hand. Just before lunch the much-awaited Great Waste

**For thousands of years we have been developing outer means, outer instruments, outer techniques for living – and in the end those means and techniques are crushing us. The sign of the new humanity is a reversal of outlook and the understanding that inner means, inner knowledge and inner techniques can change the world without crushing it. Auroville is a place where this new way of living is being worked out, it is a centre of accelerated evolution where man must begin to change the world by means of the power of the inner spirit.**

*The Mother.*

Puppet Theatre of Auroville premiered before hundreds of kids and adults, the waste robots gyrating to techno and Bollywood pop. And all the while the vans kept bringing in the sacks and quietly, inexorably, the waste mountain grew and grew.

Come evening and everybody flooded down to the Visitors Centre. There was a buffet and all the Auroville bands were going to play, but the really big attraction was the 'Trashion Show' where 27 Aurovilian designers, amateur and professional, were to show their latest fashion creations made only of trash and un-recyclable materials. Beautiful young people sashayed down the catwalk tastefully adorned with CDs, cement sacks, bubble wrap and coffee powder wrappers. Accessories included Tetra Pak boots and woven cassette-tape handbags. It all looked great. There was even a



*"Trashion Show" models*

sensational wedding dress made up of shredded plastic.

Finally, Aurovilians and visitors danced under the stars to the brightest and best of our home-grown musicians. The young organizers of LFA 2010, Soma Waste Management, had wanted to make this the biggest community happening since the inauguration of Auroville in February, 1968. And they succeeded: over 1600 people attended the festivities. But, more than this, the professionalism of the organization and the enthusiasm and idealism that permeated it showed that a new generation is ready and capable of leading, in their own unique way, Auroville into the future. A litter-free future, of course.

*Alan (From Auroville Today)*

## Health and Healing

*Auroville hosts a myriad of healing modalities to help people address and grow in a variety of ways, but few modalities are as holistic as aquatic bodywork.*

*The unique warm water environment and the special experience of 'weightlessness' and cradling the body enable aquatic bodywork to touch the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels of the being at once. Its multiple benefits make it an ideal experience for elderly, ill, pregnant and physically or mentally challenged individuals, as well as for those seeking to release or look inwards. In Auroville, it has become a highly coveted regular treatment for many.*



**A**quatic bodywork was introduced to Auroville in the 90s after Quiet Healing Centre constructed a warm water pool, but didn't take off until 2004, when experienced Aurovilians and qualified instructors from outside began offering training courses. Today, dozens of Aurovilians are on the path to becoming practitioners, hundreds request treatment, and many open-minded souls have been drawn to Auroville to improve their aquatic bodywork skills. Interest and demand for this highly beneficial therapy will only increase in the future.



With the growing attention on water work, the single pool can no longer meet the demands in the community. The number of Aurovilian therapists seeking to offer their skills and services has grown considerably, but they have only one pool in which to provide sessions or practice. The number of Aurovilians and guests asking for services has also increased, making it difficult to find available appointments—especially during the guest season when the pool offers multiple courses, and guests have a priority over Aurovilians. More people are interested in learning the skill, so securing a space in courses is increasingly difficult, and

there are only four hours a week available for students to practice. One pool is not enough.

The current pool faces other challenges as well. It's not handicap accessible, making it difficult for those who could benefit most from aquatic bodywork—such as the elderly or physically challenged. Because there is no roof and the heating system is dependent on solar energy, the pool must close at night and in cloudy or rainy conditions. And travelling on the ECR after receiving a session, quickly unravels the deep state of relaxation you just entered...

The time has come to create a centre dedicated to aquatic bodywork that complements Quiet and overcomes the current challenges facing Auroville's single warm water pool. That centre is Aquatica.

Aquatica will be located in the heart of Auroville, near Arka and the Auroville Institute for Integral Health (AIHH). With a roof, hybrid electrical system, and easy access, the pool will be available to more, complementing the offerings at Quiet.

As Aquatica grows, we envision a centre in the heart of Auroville, that hosts many holistic treatments that leverage the awesome healing power of water, from mineral baths to birth pools and beyond. We are working in close partnership with AIHH, as our practitioners will be part of their healing teams and their patients will have priority bookings for treatments. We are also building a partnership with Deepam, a centre serving physically and mentally challenged village children, so some of those who can benefit most from aquatic bodywork have regular, free access to the facility. And as a service of Auroville, we will schedule ample practice and training time for Aurovilian water-work students, and all certified Aurovilians will be welcome to use the pool.

However, to manifest Aquatica, we need help. The dream centre costs £100,000, of which we already have approximately 30 percent raised. If you are interested in contributing, please visit [www.aquatica.in/donate.html](http://www.aquatica.in/donate.html).

*Be benevolent if you want to have a good digestion (from the Dhammapada)*

**O**ne advice given here is to be always benevolent. You must not take it as an advice of the commonplace type. It says quite an interesting thing, very interesting even: "Be benevolent and you will be free from suffering, be always contented and happy, and you will radiate quiet happiness"

Be always kind, come out of all bitter criticism, see no more evil in everything, obstinately force yourself to see nothing but the kind Presence of the Divine Grace and you will see not only within you, but around you, an atmosphere of quiet joy, peaceful trust, luminous hope spreading more and more and not only will you feel happy and quiet yourself, but the major part of your bodily disorders will disappear.

It is quite remarkable that the digestive functions are extremely sensitive to a critical, unkind, sour attitude, a harsh judgement. Nothing more than that and the functioning of the digestion is disturbed. There is only one cure, namely to deliberately come out of this attitude, to refuse absolutely to have it and to force it on yourself, through constant control, a willed attitude of thorough kindness. Try and you will see that you are much better in health.

*The Mother*

## Auroville in the U.K.

Dick Batstone has been connected with the the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and with Auroville since the 1960's and has recently put together a short history of the work of those who brought the vision of Auroville to the UK in these early times, founding an organisation which was to become Auroville International UK.

Early in 1968 a letter came from Maggi Lidchi asking for some British earth to be put, along with earth from other countries, in the Urn, on the occasion of the founding ceremony of Auroville on the 28th February, 1968, I sent some soil from the garden of the Charterhouse in London, and some from a hilltop in the Quantocks in Somerset. In 1969, Jobst Mühling came to England from Germany and spoke about Sri Aurobindo's yoga and about Auroville to young people wherever he met them - in the street, at the Sri Aurobindo Centre, or where he was staying. He himself had visited the Ashram and Auroville in the early days.

Indian Jute merchant, Nirmal Sethia, played a major part in the organisation of this Concert.

In November 1972 Nava Kala, an Indian cultural group, arranged a program of Classical Dance at the Commonwealth Institute. The net proceeds were donated for the Construction of the Matrimandir.

Although there was no formal structure for the U.K. support of Auroville, there was a considerable amount of activity going on during the next ten years. There were visits to Auroville by individuals, many of whom bought Auroville goods (clothes, incense, bed-spreads..) with a view to selling them in aid of various Auroville communities. The white carpet in the Bell Street London Sri Aurobindo Centre began to be tinged with the red dust of Auroville. And there were a number of people, also, who went to Auroville and are still living there.

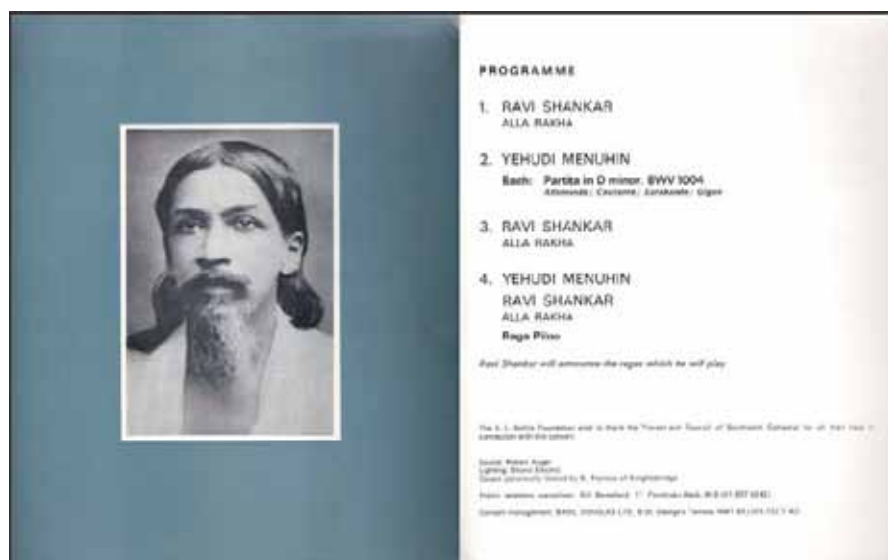
The arrangement of lectures and talks went on steadily; such, for instance as that in June '73 by Karen Singh on 'The Message of Sri Aurobindo and 'A Slide Talk on the Matrimandir and its Gardens' by Narad, and 'Auroville - City of New Life by Marguerite Smithwhite.

Support for Auroville received a new impetus when Tim Wrey returned from having been there and, in a letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> December 74, wrote: "This is to tell you that we have now established Auroville International here as a subsidiary of the Sri Aurobindo Society. As a beginning three

people have been appointed to help co-ordinate the work. They are: Dick Batstone (Convener), Pat Kaye (Secretary), and Tim Wrey (Secretary). At present we are concentrating our energies on making Auroville better known and raising funds... For our own members we are also planning a quarterly newsletter."

Tim Wrey began to build up an Auroville International Committee. The first members were J. W. N. Baldock, Kit Pedler, Michael Tollit and Yehudi Menuhin. The latter became an enthusiastic supporter of Auroville, supplying the names of many of his friends whom he believed would be interested. He himself hoped to visit Auroville and give a concert - a dream he was never to realise. In 1975 a slide presentation on Auroville was given at the Menuhin School in Surrey.

In spite of progress, however, the period that followed the death of the Mother in 1973 became a difficult one. Sri Navajata, whom the Mother had appointed as a fundraiser for Auroville, used his control of funds and fundraising to mould the development of the experiment, This he did in the light of his understanding of the nature of Mother's dream,



*Programme from concert given by Yehudi Menuhin and Ravi Shankar in 1972 in aid of Auroville*

In 1971 he was in England again, and we organised an Exhibition of 75 large photographs at the Government of India Tourist Office in New Bond Street. T M s Exhibition was opened by Sri Apa Pant, the Indian High Commissioner, and Jobst spoke about Auroville. Another guest speaker was Richard St. Barbe-Baker, 'the man of the trees', who had spent his life explaining the value of tree-planting and conservation. He too had visited Auroville. The exhibition was open for a week, and resulted in a number of useful contacts, It was followed up by an evening of Auroville colour-slides and music.

The next major event in connection with Auroville was the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Concert, on 15th August, 1972, held in Southwark Cathedral. On this occasion Yehudi Menuhin (violin), Ravi Shankar (sitar) and Alla Rakha, (tabla) improvised music together for a magical evening, Yehudi Nenuhin spoke briefly on the life of Sri Aurobindo and the adventure of Auroville. The profits from the concert were ear-marked for the development of Auroville. A symposium and various booklets and handouts were prepared for sale or free distribution in the Cathedral. The



and his misunderstanding of the strange lot of people who had been inspired to come and realise it. The story of what followed has been told many times. Eventually it involved violence and imprisonment, the withholding of food and visa-renewal and an unacceptable system of accounting.

Meanwhile, in June, 1976, representatives of Sri Aurobindo and Auroville groups from nine countries, including the U.K., met in Paris and composed an historic Declaration, in French and English, withdrawing their support, financial and otherwise, from the Sri Aurobindo Society. It was felt that this organisation, under the leadership of Sri Navajata, was not the right vehicle for collecting and distributing



*Edith and Joy*

contributions to Auroville. It was decided that in future money should be sent direct to specific groups and causes, or to the Auroville Pour Tous Fund.

Mention should be made of some of the areas of AVIUK activities in the 1970s and early 1980s:

Slide presentations of Auroville continued throughout the period, such as those which grew from invitations by Satish Kumar of the School of Non-Violence, Sir Paul Reilly of the Design Centre, and the Westminster Branch of the United Nations Association.

### **Lazy afternoon, by Lloyd**

Suspending belief  
my thoughts and deeds  
flutter out of me  
into a wider span  
of mind's migrations.

I watch the rising,  
vital hungers  
and their deadline,  
a cloudy turbulence  
free of being me.

Where wood resounds  
with hammer blows,  
offices hum  
and passing cars  
have destinations.

**Lloyd Hofman of the Netherlands came to live in Auroville in 1988, at the age of 36. In his first nine years in Auroville he was a forest watchman at Fertile, later combining forest attendance with library work while living at Gaya community, later moving to Creativity. Lloyd passed away in May this year at the age of 58. A book of his poetry is available from auroville.com: [www.auroville.com/avipro-between-seasons-p-1481.html](http://www.auroville.com/avipro-between-seasons-p-1481.html)**

There was also correspondence of some interest with Sir George Trevelyan, on 'conscious contact with the higher self'. The Soil Association was approached for its advice, at the request of Auroville, and Ernst Schumacher was sent information about an experiment that might interest him. OXFAM was informed of new Auroville products such as leather-work and hammocks. (They had already sold incense & bedspreads in a big way)

A concert by an Indian Flute-player, Tublu Bannerjee, was arranged at the Mahatma Gandhi Hall, to raise money for a Music School in Auroville, and a Cello recital by Myra Chahin was held at the British Institute of Recorded Sound. Another effort to make some funds was the hiring of a stall for the sale of secondhand goods in the Saturday Market in Bell Street, North London.

Festivals, which had become a feature of New Age England, were an opportunity for making Auroville known to a wider audience, and as places where books by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could be displayed and Auroville products could be sold. Such Festivals were attended at Bristol, Southampton and Leamington Spa.

Perhaps the most successful Festival in which we participated was that for Mind, Body & Spirit, held at Olympia in 1977, and in successive years. A description of this experience appears in 'The Golden Bridge' (Auropublications 1978).

The AV1 UK Newsletter was started by Tim Wrey in 1975. When Tim left, to live in Auroville, it was taken on by Dick Batstone, until he went on an extended visit to the Ashram and Auroville in 1980-81. Malcolm Richards edited the next few issues until, in 1983, it was produced by Edith Schnapper and Joy Calvert, who had, by then, bought the large and ancient house known as Boytons, in the Essex countryside, near Saffron Walden.

Edith and Joy intended Boytons to become an Auroville Centre, for holding weekend gatherings for the study of Sri Aurobindo's writings, for sharing news of Auroville, and for providing hospitality to visiting Aurovilians. They themselves kept up a lively connection with Auroville, supporting many of its projects, and visiting every year until they died.

The work then passed to a new team and a new generation, comprising Thakor Mistry, Martin Littlewood, and John Mulrey. Martin and John continue this work today.

*Dick Batstone.*

# Auroville International

## Report on the recent AVI meeting in Orissa

Every other year, Auroville International visits a different country around the world. We have visited many countries in the last years, including South Africa, Russia, Brazil, Canada, USA, as well as most countries in Europe. These meetings are an opportunity for those working for Auroville to meet and exchange information about their activities, and to present Auroville's work to the public in each country visited. In between these visits, we hold our meetings in Auroville. It has been decided recently that during each of these visits to India, we would visit a different Indian state, in order to make Auroville better known in India. The first of these states was Orissa. The visit was a great success. The report below was published in *Auroville Today*.

It was an extraordinary programme that Devasmita, Satyakam and our friends from Orissa had put together. At Bhubaneswar airport, the arriving AVI representatives from Germany, France, UK, USA, Holland and Sweden, along with friends from Auroville, were garlanded and greeted by dancers, accompanied by the blowing of conch shells and drums. In the afternoon we visited the Museum of Tribal Art and Artefacts, which celebrates the cultural diversity of Orissa and displays samples of tools, instruments and weaving. We also visited the Sri Aurobindo Centre in Bhubaneswar with its beautiful Samadhi, designed to the same dimensions as the one at the Ashram, with a single light overhead illuminating a series of vertical bouquets, creating a unique sense of powerful beauty.

That evening, we went to an exhibition with replicas of local tribal villages, showing native clothing and crafts, along with a live celebration of traditional dance, with performances by Adivasi artists among others. A meeting with the Chief Minister of Orissa, Shri Naveen Patnaik, took place the next day, followed by a four-and-a-half-hour public presentation on Auroville, in the large convention hall of the Mayfair Lagoon hotel, attended by approximately 500 people. The programme was held under the patronage of former Auroville Foundation Governing Board member Sri Dibyasingha Deb, Gajapati Maharaja of Puri, who, together with his wife and Mr. Debi Prasad Mishra, the state Minister of Tourism and Culture, attended the programme. Odissi dance and drumming provided cultural interludes to the presentations by Aurovilians Deepti, Luigi, Joss, Toine and Uma. Each presented their work and reflected their sincere commitment to Auroville's ideals. A number of questions were fielded from the audience, including from some younger members interested in urban planning and alternative energy.

In a closing ceremony, we honoured the team led by Satyakam and Devasmita and presented a shawl to Dominique Darr in appreciation of her unique contribution of documenting Auroville over the past forty years with her wonderful photographs, some of which were featured at the exhibition. The next day Deepti, Uma, Joss, Luigi and Toine led an afternoon presentation at KIIT University. We also visited a tribal orphan school that hosts and educates ten thousand tribal youth. In the evening, we were invited by Mr. Debasish Samantarai – MLA and former student of Hashi and Malika at SAICE – for a dinner party in his garden with performers and dancers.



*Odissi dance performance at the Auroville presentation in Bhubaneswar*

Bindu and Ram Narayan, who had participated in a press conference before the program, helped guide us during the next few days. The activities included a tour of a rural Sri Aurobindo Center in Dalijoda with a huge Botanical Garden, food gardens and a school in a forested tribal area.

We made field trips to the Mukteswari, Lingaraj, and Raja Rani temples in Bhubaneswar, to the 2nd century caves of Khandagiri and Udaygiri and to the famous Jagannath temple in Puri and the Konark Sun temple. The trips concluded with a visit to Raghurajpur, an artist's village with its tradition of painting, and to Konark Natya Mandap of Guru Gangadhar Pradhan, whose students gave a show of Gotipuas (young boys dressed in female garb) and Odissi dance.

While most of us were not allowed into the Jagannath temple, we did bathe in the ocean, to have the blessings of this auspicious place of pilgrimage. We also had the prasad of Lord Jaganath in the palace of the Maharaja. This was a significant privilege, especially for our guides. Indeed, for all of us, it was a truly remarkable experience.

*Julian, AVI USA*

# Matrimandir

## Matrimandir Newsletter – April 2010

**February 28th 2010, was another of those very special days at Matrimandir, for on this day, Auroville's 42nd birthday, the planting of the gardens of Matrimandir took a great step forward. The first twelve hibiscus, plants which The Mother's named "Psychic Power in Existence", were planted in the first of the twelve gardens, the garden of Existence**

There had been that morning a dawn bonfire in the Amphitheatre, -- a collective concentration and celebration of Auroville's birthday. After that large crowd dispersed, a team of our gardeners and volunteers from the Ashram in Pondicherry gathered and, under Narad's guidance, began the first planting of this garden.

Preparation had been going on for weeks leading up to this moment. Dozens of pits had been dug in the red Auroville soil on the contoured slope encircling the central oval of the garden.

Each pit had been filled at the base with a generous mixture of charcoal, coconut fibre and dried leaves, a special mixture to allow for a deep water-holding organic base for each plant. Then the pits and the entire sloped surface were covered over with a 30 cm layer of rich composted soil produced by our highly active and mechanized compost section. A layer of fabric was spread over the soil to keep it in place on the slope and control weed growth while the stabilizing roots of the plants-to-come developed.

On February, 28th just 12 hibiscus shrubs were planted, - 12, the number of perfect manifestation, 12 for the 12 gardens, 12 the number of Mahashakti.

For Narad in particular, this day had been a long time coming, for it was he who in 1968 had been asked by The Mother to prepare himself to come and build the Gardens of the Matrimandir. And indeed, it has been a lifetime of preparation, for him and for so many others who have worked towards this day.

The Matrimandir Nursery, started by Narad and others in 1970 has been built up over the last four decades; the marvellous collections of Hibiscus, Plumeria, orchids, cacti, and many other types of flowers and flowering shrubs which

have been cultivated there will one day find their way into the gardens.

Those of you visiting the Matrimandir will notice that the area near the entrance gate has also been landscaped in a special way. Flowers whose spiritual significances were given by the Mother have been planted there so their vibrations may enter into all who aspire for a higher life and have come to the Matrimandir for that purpose. These are some of the flowers: Krishna's Ananda; Beauty of the New Creation; Miracle; Spiritual Speech; Un-ostentatious Certitude ; The Road to the Divine; Divine Presence; Works of Love; Balance; Power of Harmony; Prayer; Alchemy; and Light without Obscurity.

Several smaller tentative plantings have been made in various corners of the Matrimandir garden area over the years, but the planting in Existence garden on Auroville's birthday, and during the days that followed, marked the beginning of the gardens that will surround the Matrimandir in the years to come.

By the end of March, almost 1,000 flowering plants had been carefully planted in the composted soils of the Existence garden. The varieties include, in addition to the delicate pink Hibiscus mentioned above (Hibiscus rosa-sinensis - Psychic power in existence):

Lantana mauve - Emotional beauty in the cells; Asparagus - Spiritual speech; Pentas lanceolata -

Psychic light in the material movements; Ixora chinensis pink - Psychic aspiration; Ixora chinensis red - Aspiration in the physical; and Tabernamontana divaricata - Mental purity.

The atmosphere was always concentrated, handling as we were living plants which had to be loosened from their baked day pots and then set carefully in the pits prepared for them in the garden. The atmosphere too was always filled with great joy, the joy to be finally beginning, to be finally bringing green and the life and colour of flowers to this land that had waited so long for the moment to come.

We are grateful for your continuing offerings which enable us to maintain the Matrimandir and build the gardens. We would like to remind you that the Mother said that the gardens were as important as the Matrimandir itself.







## Other News

### Next Meeting

#### SUMMER AUROVILLE MEETING

The presentation will be held in August 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 haven't yet fixed a date for the meeting, and we will send out invitations a few weeks before. Details will also be given on our website, [www.aviuk.org](http://www.aviuk.org).

Anyone interested in Auroville is very welcome to come along. We look forward to seeing you there.

### London Meetings

Regular London meetings have been suspended for the time being. If anyone is interested in helping to re-start these meetings, or might be willing to host them, do contact Martin – details below.

### Next International Meeting

The next Auroville international meeting is planned to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in February 2011. It will be a chance for Aurovilians and members of AVI groups from around the world to meet, and to present Auroville to interested people there. If anyone wishes to come, or has connections in Ethiopia, please contact Martin at the address below.

### AVI UK Website

AVI UK has a website. It can be found at [www.aviuk.org](http://www.aviuk.org). Please take a look, 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](mailto: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](http://www.aviuk.org/fundraising.htm). Otherwise please send a cheque, payable to *Auroville International UK*. We are always grateful for your help.

### Subscriptions

We enclose a subscription form with this newsletter. Your subscription helps with our work to support Auroville. It helps cover the costs of our administration, fundraising for Auroville projects, and of course with publishing and distributing this newsletter. Please contribute if you can.

### 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.

### Newsletter by E-mail

If you would like to receive the next issue by e mail, please write to Martin at [info@aviuk.org](mailto:info@aviuk.org). This will save on paper and our postage.

### Address

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

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Norfolk, NR14 7AG Tel. 01508 538300, E mail: [info@aviuk.org](mailto:info@aviuk.org)

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