



Auroville International
UNITED KINGDOM

In This Issue

In this issue we are introducing a more youthful direction for AVI UK including a 'new look' for our Open Meetings with an emphasis on more involvement with our younger participants.

We feature some important developments in Auroville itself with a focus on sustainable living and livelihoods: the Sacred Groves project which is both an ecological and a social experiment in self-building and community creation; the new Sustainable Livelihoods Institute, a collaboration between the State government and Auroville, working together to foster rural development in Tamil Nadu; sustainable infrastructure developments which work towards implementing an in-kind economy.

See also Volunteering in Auroville - what you can do, what it's like, what it involves. Discover the story of the Russian singing bells, and many more features, articles and photographs that bring the Auroville experience to life in the Newsletter.

A New AVIUK Website

Auroville International UK has a new website www.aviuk.org which will carry the latest news and information, whereas this Newsletter will carry more in-depth articles, personal insights and accounts of new developments and projects within and around Auroville itself.



Why Auroville...?

"Auroville will be a self-supporting township. All who live there will participate in its life and development: this participation may be passive or active. There will be no taxes as such but each will contribute to the collective welfare in work, kind or money. Sections like industries that participate actively will contribute part of their income towards the development of the township – or if they produce something (like foodstuffs) useful for the citizens, they will contribute in kind to the township, which is responsible for feeding its citizens.

No rules or laws are being framed: things will get formulated as the underlying truth of the township emerges and takes shape progressively. We do not anticipate..."

"I want to insist on the fact that this will be an experiment, it is for making experiments, researches, studies. Auroville will be a city that will try to be, or will lean towards, or want to be 'self-supporting'..."

"...Men establish mental rules according to their conceptions and ideals, and then they apply them, and that is absolutely false, it is arbitrary, unreal, and the result is that things revolt or wither or disappear...it is the experience of LIFE ITSELF that should work out rules that are as supple and as wide as possible, in such a way as to be always progressive. Nothing should be fixed..."

"It must be Life itself, developing more and more in a progression towards the Light, the Knowledge, the Power that should, little by little, establish rules – as general as possible so that they are extremely flexible and amenable to change with the need as quickly as needs and habits change. The problem reduces itself to this: to replace the mental government of intelligence with the government of a spiritualized consciousness."

The Mother, Auroville's founder, describes her vision in The Agenda 30.12.67

AVI UK Meetings

Take a New Direction



Children performing water based yoga routine



Water meditation

The new AVIUK team recently hosted an Open Day with some 25 adults and 15 children attending. Several Auroville-born youngsters had taken an active part in the formulation and organisation of the event.... promising some innovative and exciting events in the future!

The Public Meeting, the first of two that take place each year, was held at the beautiful Manor House in Bygrave, Hertfordshire. There was a good mix of people with long standing connections to Auroville and others who were discovering it for the first time. The main theme of the day was Water, raising awareness of the difficult water situation currently facing Auroville and its bio-region. Participants expressed their ideas and concerns in a variety of formal presentations, discussions, sharing of personal stories and a walking meditation.

The day consisted of two morning and afternoon sessions, each lasting about two hours, with a shared potluck lunch in between. Auroville-born sisters Angiras and Aurama were in overall charge of the event and shared their hands-on knowledge of Auroville, while

long-term friends Vikas and Thakor Mistry regaled the audience with stories and memories of their relationship with the City of Dawn as well. During the morning session, presentations and a video on Auroville were shown and Renu's story *The Wave* was read out by Auromira, who also gave a detailed presentation on the current water situation, followed by an interesting water exercise and a meditation.

The afternoon session specifically focused on the work of AVI UK itself. Angiras, Secretary of the Centre, gave a short presentation and invited a discussion on how the Centre could become more instrumental and active. An intense exploration followed and it became evident that the Centre's first priority is to build up a database of interested people and to develop a strategy for actively engaging them – primarily through the use of social media. A very welcome and sympathetic feature of this event was the way the children were able to participate. Jane Opegaard, who organizes yoga sessions for children, had them all outside doing yoga, making hanging mobiles and having fun on the trampoline. In addition to these

activities she taught them a short water based yoga routine which the children presented to the adult participants at the end of the day. Undoubtedly a very fine conclusion to an enjoyable occasion!

Organisers of the event were happy with the outcome - participants who were new to Auroville now wanted to know more, and were keen to arrange a date to watch a full length video. They wanted to buy books and even had ideas for engaging with their children's school. Moreover, awareness of the water issues in Auroville had become more sharply outlined; and three of the first generation Aurovilian children (who are now adults) are happy to get more involved in the activities of AVI UK.

(For a full report and photo gallery, see <http://aviuk.org/news/aviuk-open-meeting-2014/>)

AVI UK still intends to have at least one meeting every year in London at the Auromira Centre at Greenford for the benefit of friends in London and the South of England.

Russian 'Singing Bells' and the 'Peace Bell' Project

If you have visited Auroville in the last seven years or so, you may well have discovered the Russian singing bells played by Vera, who is from Belarus. These flat plate brass bells can be played by almost anyone with or without musical experience, because due to their tuning they seem incapable of producing disharmony. I first heard them being played by about 30 people, each with a different bell, moving slowly into and around the Amphitheatre in a centripetal spiral. Although everyone was playing without any preconceived score or arrangement, the sound produced seemed as if orchestrated by the spontaneous movement of some ethereal force directing individuals who were attuned to each other and to that force. The effect was wondrous, as if the vibration of these sounds, in this place, had the power to bring down into our physical human realm, a new music, a new harmony. This kind of music, being non-verbal and beyond mental limitations, could allow a new consciousness, beauty and harmony to

manifest when the aspiration and the right conditions are there.

The Bells were created and donated to Auroville by the Russian bell-master Alexander Zhikharev, who has dedicated 40 years to research in sound as a means of connecting to a universal Consciousness and Beauty. His expertise in the field of resonance is acknowledged worldwide. Out of many natural sound-sources, his plate bells were chosen by scientists as the preferred instrument for conscious communication between man and dolphins. In Auroville, Vera actively explores the use of these sounds for non-verbal inter-cultural communication.

Speaking about her latest project, a 'Peace Bell', Vera says: 'The Peace Bell can become a living demonstration of the special power of harmonious Resonance to bring peace and a feeling of unity deep inside the being.' The big bell from the set of Russian singing bells participated in the opening ceremony of the Hall of Peace in the Unity Pavilion in

Auroville and many appreciated its deep and special resonance.

The beautiful and long resonating sounds of these bells make them quite unique in the world.

Now the bell-master has offered to create a big, human height, plate bell specially tuned for the International Zone of Auroville. It will have a uniquely resonating voice with a number of deep tones and overtones fused together into one sound as a symbol of our shared aspiration for Peace. The bell will need to be kept in a protected area, and there are two possible temporary locations: the garden adjacent to the Hall of Peace and the Tibetan Pavilion. When the Zone is more developed, the location will change to the most suitable place according to its function. Vera intends this project to be a contribution from Russia towards a common International Zone space and spirit. So perhaps this installation could even be part of the common European space.



Can You Help?

About one fifth of the funds are already available for the Peace Bell project, and for the rest a proposal to start fundraising via the Auroville Unity Fund 'Peace Bell' account is in place. The minimum amount required for the realization of this project is \$3,500 (215,000 IRps). If you resonate with the Peace Bell initiative, your support is welcome. To donate please specify the purpose of the transfer as: the Peace Bell project and send a written confirmation of the transfer to vera.auroville@gmail.com, and CC to avunityfund@auroville.org.in

The project was presented to and approved by the International Zone Coordination group meeting in November 2014.

Sacred Groves

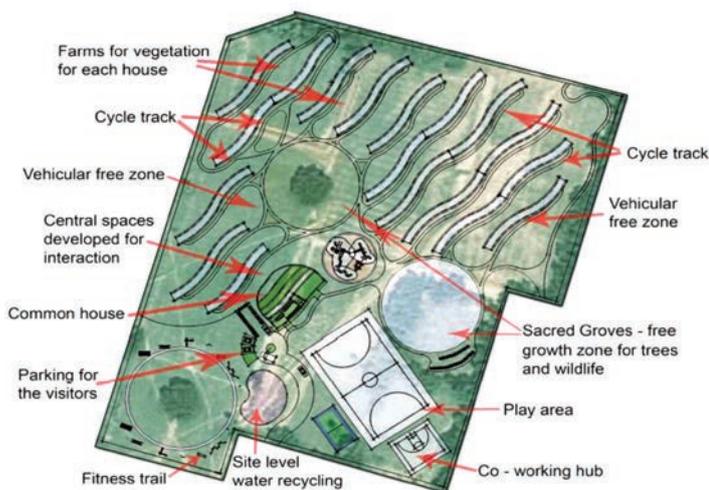
Ecological community living in Auroville

Many of the problems of earth, soul and society are caused by the individualistic, high-earning, high-pressure, high-carbon urban lifestyle that so many people lead. The Sacred Groves project offers opportunity for a simpler, more self-sufficient yet inter-dependent and ecological way of living, allowing more time for family, community and nourishment of the soul. It aims to achieve this by providing low-cost, low-maintenance, off-grid ecological housing incorporating the following elements -

- Energy self-sufficiency using solar, wind, pumped storage and bio-mass systems.
- Water self-sufficiency from rainwater and grey-water harvesting.
- Some food self-sufficiency from organic vegetable gardens for each house.
- The preservation of forest areas – the ‘sacred groves’.
- The provision of thick walls and a passive cooling system to replace AC or even fans.
- Composting toilets.
- Shared spaces and utilities to encourage community activities and interdependence.

The construction industry in India is responsible for huge ecological problems. Illegal mining and quarrying are destroying vast areas of forests and hills. The indiscriminate dumping of construction and demolition (C&D) waste into wetland areas surrounding the cities results in the drying up of essential water bodies and aquifers. The dredging of sand from rivers alters their flow and adversely affects aquatic life. The Sacred Groves project offers an alternative model of construction by using the following procedures:

- Re-using waste building rubble (from other Auroville and Pondicherry sites including the Matrimandir) to construct houses made of earth concrete – a much less cement-intensive building material.
- Re-cycling wood from packing crates.
- Re-using discarded petrol pump pipes for shuttering.
- Re-using tetrapak cartons to make innovative furniture.
- Being mindful of any construction waste by re-using, re-cycling and composting as much as possible, and taking care in the use of scarce resources like energy and water.



Maintaining a Healthy Community Living



Involves Easy Construction Techniques

The Sacred Groves Experience: Personal Accounts

“I still sometimes crib about having to wake up at a definite time every morning, but waking up is not that big an issue anymore. And I feel the credit for this goes to the morning circle. For those who don't know, morning circle is when every member of the Sacred Groves family makes a big circle and all the things that need to be done that day are discussed. It sounds normal, doesn't it? Well, it is not. Not saying it's 'abnormal' either, but it is so much more than a mundane discussion about work.”



Morning Circle at Sacred Groves

“We start by reading a quote from Sri Aurobindo or the Mother, which is a simple but effective way to motivate ourselves. Then there is a much-needed session of morning exercise that sometimes gets to be really funny. And then we proceed to planning what is to be done and who will be doing it during the day, and it's amazing how everyone takes up the jobs themselves – within no time, the day is planned! If anyone has any ideas, suggestions, news or announcements, they are shared and discussed. And then comes the part I love the most – everyone joins hands in the circle and softly chants 'OM', and disperses to get on with the day.

When, as a student, I had considered working, it was definitely not the picture I had in mind. But I suppose it's not just the series of activities that make it exciting to me, but the way they take place, with the idea that all are equal and all participate in whichever way they can. When the day starts with this positivity that is so plainly evident, being a morning person is not hard at all!”

Meera

“Sacred Groves is a platform for research and development and now we are mainly working on Cob, building walls. Well, we dance to the music, make a mix and take it to the walls and start building! Between ourselves you will have a lot to expect from us!”

“Today as part of the pre-event preparations, we had a jamming session by our music maestros of the site, Solal: guitar, Tahir: percussion, Matthew & Ajay: flutes. Savithri showed us her Bharathanatyam dance skills. Amal and Enrico have started working on the initial sketches of the Sacred Groves logo to be painted on the common house container wall!”



Constructing cob walls

To get us all primed up for tomorrow's event we ended the circle with the circle dance, which turned out to be the most exciting part of the day!!”

Ram Mohan Shastry

A Dream Community - “I joined Sacred Groves in April 2014 to move away from the maddening cities and explore life in its basic form. As I got involved more and more, I began seeing the value of the work I was doing and the impact it was going to have on my life and the world.

Sacred Groves is not just a building project. It is a process of nurturing a community. While we continue to design, prototype and build, at every step we question the status quo of creating places and also our own approach and practice.

Though I had very little experience of building structures, nature taught me rather quickly and also taught me how to learn.”

“To me, Sacred Groves is a blank canvas for people to walk into and co-create meaningful experiences and habitable places for themselves and others. With every new idea and experiment, we are excited about the possibilities that exist. And by creating working prototypes of these possibilities, we want to inspire people and make them believe that it is possible.

Sacred Groves might have an extensive architectural plan with all the technical details, but its real plan can be seen in the small circle where all volunteers and interns come together and share the most productive time of their lives in realizing a community. Apart from all the necessary technical skills that I have learnt at this place, I have learnt to dream and to believe. Working at Sacred Groves is like working at a garden. We work dedicatedly, nurture with love and observe, patiently, the plant grow.

Sacred Groves gave me the bliss of tiring myself out and sleeping with the setting sun, to wake up to birds calling out to each other, to feel the wind and lie under the night sky, watching the stars without thinking anything. This is happiness.”

Anshul Aggarwal

For more information see www.SacredGroves.in
Photos in this article © Karoki Lewis

The Sustainable Livelihood Institute (SLI)

Tamil Nadu is among India's top 'developed' states, and yet it has one of the highest levels of malnutrition, as well as high unemployment among its rural population. While the service sector has grown in the cities, and the State is a leader in health care and information technology, less and less land is available for agriculture, and farming is in decline. Rapidly shrinking natural resources, increasing dependence on global markets, climate change, and rising living costs are some of the factors that contribute to this situation. Organisations have to contend with all these phenomena, and need to adopt a new approach and new thinking for development. The Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, which funds large-scale government programmes, as well as NGOs operating in the same field, recognises the need for a sustainable livelihoods approach to provide solutions for the challenges facing rural Tamil Nadu in a rapidly changing world.

Auroville, being an international experimental township-in-the-making dedicated to the ideal of human unity, has since its foundation in 1968 worked to help neighbouring villages. It has initiated a multitude of philanthropic, health, social, educational and skill training projects. In spite of much goodwill, relationship with the villages remains a challenge in many respects. The outreach work of Auroville has led to regular collaboration, in particular with the State Rural Development Department and SEDAB (Sustainable Enterprise Development in the Auroville Bioregion) where various Auroville units came together to create a new synergy of efforts. In this way SLI was born out of a sustained dialogue between Auroville and the state government to work together towards shaping rural development in Tamil Nadu.

Workshops for government staff and community professionals provided scope for a continued engagement with government, and as this opened up further, several residents of Auroville were asked to be a part of the State Planning Commission.

What is the purpose of SLI?

To create a place that can humbly offer increasingly sustainable approaches to the government agency and the community in Tamil Nadu, in a consistent manner, through training programmes designed on the basis of local livelihood needs and in a framework of sustainability. Its activities will include aspects of outreach, research, innovation and communication.

Auroville and SLI

Deeply committed to human unity, Auroville reaches out to include people sharing its immediate environment (we all live mutually dependent, in a greater whole) and even further afield. A constructive engagement with government organisations and rural communities is crucial and mutually beneficial shaping a common future, and allows Auroville to share its visions, values and achievements, offering elements that may help to bring about the profound transformation which humanity is undergoing in our time.

Who will be involved, within Auroville and beyond?

Among the beneficiaries will be the most vulnerable people in rural and urban Communities and SLI will work primarily with government livelihood workers and community

representatives. During the first year, a series of workshops will serve district-level ambassadors for SLI, responsible for implementing the programmes of the State Rural Livelihood Mission. The emphasis will be on creative participation in developing sustainable quality of life for all. In Auroville, SLI is for all those who share a commitment to the purpose described, are keen to learn whatever is required as an on-going process, and are willing to work within a team.

When will it start?

SLI is presently in its preparatory phase, with the first activities planned to take off in November 2014. It will operate as an autonomous institution, its administration jointly held between Auroville and Tamilnadu Rural Development, and academically fully managed by

Auroville with association, assistance and affiliation from other institutions, agencies, and individuals from other parts of the region, the country and the world.

The state government is funding the creation of a facility to house SLI, located in the vicinity of Auroville. From this facility, which will showcase the best of Auroville architecture, design, technologies, and conservation practices, participants will be able to use the wider resources of Auroville with all its multiple projects and institutions, as a campus for examples of sustainability in action.

For further details contact sli@auroville.org.in

Auroville - I Cannot See It but I Can Still Feel It

Chennai airport and I am back in my beloved India after 22 years. Two hours later my family and I are driving past Certitude and I am in my even more beloved Auroville. But where has Auroville gone? I cannot see the windmills or even the Matrimandir. All these lovely, beautiful trees are in the way. A nice shock and a good start. I immediately feel happy and relaxed.

Centre Guest House - clean, tidy, friendly, simple but nutritious food and Wi-Fi for my daughter. The first day we go to the Visitors Centre. The whole place gives me a good feeling. We also change money quickly and efficiently at the Town Hall. I like this modern up to date Auroville.

In the following days, Nick from the Bamboo Centre kindly shows us all the usual products they make from Bamboo, chairs etc., but they also make soap and musical instruments from bamboo, the latter for use by local children. We also see another unit making products from re-cycled paper. We are starting to be impressed.

I look up Valerie Tait, a long time Aurovilian still making colourful products for children. We leave and she shouts after us "John - don't forget to raise money for Land".

It is 5 am and I am fully awake so I decide to go for a long walk. I meet a young Tamil Aurovilian who is picking up litter on the ring road. Clearly the passion is still there from every age group from the creative to the mundane.

Our visit is going so well, then Jeff kindly offers to give us a tour of Discipline Farm. Before I left I had seen emails about the water situation and heard people talk about it but that did not prepare me. We looked down a 17 meter virtually empty well! A real shock. Later, an Aurovilian told me she used to swim in that well. The farm itself was a fantastic place and we see a whole array of fruits and vegetables. We visit Aikiyam Primary School and New Era Secondary School. Both excellent schools run by passionate people.

Our last day and this was going to be the highlight - a visit to the Matrimandir.

We join a group of about 50 people going there on a tour. We are shown a short film about Auroville but the sound quality is poor and not synchronized with the film. The old out of touch Auroville is coming through. At the Matrimandir, the guide is talking about the integral yoga in the open to our big group, while cyclists are going past. Unsurprising that we can hardly hear him. My daughter says "Dad, I switched off" and I do not blame her. The Matrimandir itself is great but the build up to the visit inside was disappointing.

I leave impressed by the progress Auroville has made but most of all I am grateful for all the hospitality and all the wonderful people we met. I feel lucky that I knew people in Auroville so I could feel their energy which is something other visitors do not experience.

As I leave a little voice in my head says that Mother's dream cannot be realized without Land and Water.

John Mulrey, AVI UK Treasurer

Young Aurovilian secures a place at Cambridge

Chandra de Dionigi, 25, who grew up in Auroville and went to school there, has been offered a place to read Modern and Medieval Languages at Kings College, Cambridge. This was, of course, the college where Sri Aurobindo himself had been a student. After some years doing other things, including 3 years studying flute under Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, Chandra decided that studying languages was what she wanted to do, so with some learned help from neighbours Alan Herbert and Dany Littlewood, she taught herself all she needed to be able to complete the whole curriculum for her 'A' levels, which normally takes 2 years, in 4 ½ months, gaining top grades. Alan Herbert writes:

As her English tutor, I can testify to her love of reading good books and of exploring the nuances of language ... She approaches great works as a window into great minds, minds that provide profound insights into life and

its purpose. While her future career path is not set in stone, the fact that she has grown up in an international community which comprises more than 50 nationalities, and that she wishes to study modern languages at university, indicates her interest in pursuing a career that has a multicultural dimension. Temperamentally she would also be well suited to this, as her gift for languages is complemented by her ability to learn from and empathize with people from many different cultures. Also, the fact that her talents span many different areas – music, theatre, dance and academics – means that she is able to appreciate different cultures from a multidimensional perspective, from 'inside' as it were, rather than one that focuses simply upon the most superficial aspects.

Chandra's place is unconditional on educational grounds, but depends upon her being able to raise the necessary funds. She has applied for the 'overseas' scholarship and might get 8,000 pounds yearly. If there are any good people who would care to help her with the balance of the funding, about £15,000, please contact her directly by email at chandradedionigi@yahoo.fr or donations can be made here: mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/callforcambridge

In Loving Memory Muriel Ghose

Muriel, wife of Ashok Ghose, died on 2nd January aged 87, after a brief illness. They both regularly attended our London Open Meetings at Auromira. Martin Littlewood writes: "She was a sweet self-effacing person, always curious, and seemed totally devoted to Ashok. I am sure he will miss her." Ashok is a long-term devotee of Mother and Sri Aurobindo who, together with Muriel, made regular visits to the Ashram and Auroville. Ashok writes: "Muriel was deeply influenced by the new dynamism and vibrations experienced at the Matrimandir. After her upbringing in the war years in

surroundings of changing social and dire humanitarian conditions, she spent several years in the capacity of Governess with large families both in the UK and abroad. In the last eighteen years before retirement, Muriel was on the staff of the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. Muriel was greatly conscious of the message of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and our collective dreams of unity and the coming of a new life on earth."

"Life is eternal, love is immortal and death is only a horizon; and a horizon is nothing except the limit of our sight"
- Rossiter W. Raymond



Muriel Ghose

In Loving Memory Kireetbhai (Kireet Joshi)

On Sunday 14 September, Auroville's highly esteemed friend, supporter, father and teacher Sri Kireet Joshi left his body at the age of 83 in the Ashram Nursing Home. His remains were cremated in the afternoon of the same day at Pondy's Lawspet Mandappam, with many Ashramites and Aurovilians attending.

We salute him with utmost gratitude for the role he has played in Auroville's unfolding. Among many tributes, Aurovilian old-timer 'B' (formerly known as Bill Sullivan) said:

"The Mother's Auroville may never have survived her physical passing if it were not for Kireet-bhai, who as her incredibly dedicated worker, assisted the Community to establish itself in so many ways. Alain Bernard called him a "miracle worker" and that is absolutely accurate, but some who did not know him may suspect some exaggeration and eulogizing that happens when a person passes. In the case of Kireet-bhai, enough will never be said. We are speaking about a Yogi with rare and extraordinary capacity.

If I had not personally witnessed a little of what he accomplished for Auroville, I too would be wondering about what is being said of him. Since I was privileged to help Sanjeev and Krishna Tewari with what we called the "Delhi work", and lived with Kireet-bhai in his house for extended periods, I was witness to the unbelievable side of his abilities. It may be hard for people to realize that Auroville once had no legal standing in a war with forces that had all the money, land and assets of Auroville in their possession, and all the legal standing to claim possession of Auroville. Against all that, a case had to be won in the Supreme Court, and an Act of Parliament passed for Auroville to be able to live its Charter. That certainly seemed an impossible challenge, and would have been without a true miracle worker.

Our debt of gratitude to Kireet-bhai is enormous, and we must uphold the trust he placed in us to bring Mother's Dream into reality. Now he continues to smile. Now his gracious laugh is eternal."



Kireetbhai

*Not soon is God's delight in us completed
Nor with one life we end.
Termless in us are our spirits seated
And termless joy intend.*

*Sri Aurobindo -
Record of Yoga, 21.5.1915*

Auroville Infrastructure

The Water Issue October 1st, 2014 - Pour Tous Water begins!

Pour Tous Water, (previously Water Maintenance Service, a unit), is now a “free” Service - under City-Service. This is the outcome of several General Meetings and a collective decision voted for in January 2014: a step towards responsible management of a precious (life giving) common resource and the provision of basic services to the residents of Auroville.

Pour Tous Water now offers all Auroville’s residents, communities, services, and commercial-units alike free access to its services, labour and equipment. Materials purchased will be charged for with an additional 10 % service charge. We do encourage contributions, from those who can afford it, to PT Water Collection #240023 which will go back the City Services Budget.

The work and objectives of PTW is essentially an Emergency 24/7 Repair and Maintenance Public Service; We are available for emergency situations such as: Pipe broken / Sludge crises / Pump problem / Water delivery / Fire / or other natural damage.

Wastewater

Regarding the wastewater treatment, a cluster development is being formulated in the Residential Zone in sectors 1 and 2 so as to connect the pipelines of all the new housing projects and set up a common Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP).

The main advantage is that it will require less space than numerous smaller individual plants. Furthermore, this project

will bring about economies of scale and reduced costs for housing projects. It is also likely to fully solve the current critical environmental issue regarding the sewage sludge treatment and the end-water quality, eventually allowing us to reuse the reclaimed water (treated wastewater) for gardening.

Electricity for Auroville and the in-kind Economy

A unit called Varuna-Auroville operates two wind generators (located outside Auroville) which are owned by the Auroville Foundation. Varuna will cover the electricity bills of all grid-connected residents receiving a City-Services maintenance (the monthly financial allowance of Aurovilians to meet their basic needs) and those who do not receive the maintenance but who pay the current full monthly contribution of Rs.2,850 for electricity to the Central Fund. Varuna has already been paying the electricity bills of all Auroville services, and more recently of Guest Houses and home-stay accommodation as well.

The electricity-in-kind scheme intends to become an integral part of an overall in-kind economy for Auroville whereby Auroville residents give their time and energy to Auroville while Auroville provides for shelter, food, water, energy, education, health, clothing, mobility and other minimum needs.



Varuna wind turbine in Coimbatore

Poem by John O’Neil

*Will you take this little bit I have
It's not much.... but it's mine.*

*What is more precious than what we are
The gift of our selves is more precious by far
Than rings and things that money can buy.*

*I sigh, when I see, the agony
Of those who reach for a star.
Give what you are, what you are.
What you are is more precious by far
Than rings and things that money can buy.*

*Will you take this little bit I have
It's not much....but it's mine....It's yours.*

John O’Neil comes from Ireland and shared this simple, heartfelt, beautiful poem with us at our AVI Meeting in Cork in 2014.

Volunteering



Volunteers working at Buddha Garden

Every year Auroville receives a growing number of volunteers from India and abroad who are attracted by Auroville's efforts in alternative healthcare, ecological practices, renewable energy, primary and secondary education, village outreach, architecture, organic farming, etc. Many of these volunteers return and some stay on to join the experiment in human unity that Auroville represents. If you are interested in visiting Auroville as a volunteer for longer than 2 months, please contact

Savi - A service for volunteers & interns (study@auroville.org.in)

Short and medium-term volunteering opportunities are available in Auroville farms, forests and gardens, animal care, food handling, education, media communication, building maintenance, and more. Short term volunteers for less than 2 months, please contact the Guest Service www.auroville.org/contents/253 .

How to go about it and start your volunteering process

First explore the Auroville website and note down specific information regarding projects that interest you. Send a first mail to Savi, introduce yourself, explain your purpose and field of interest, your learning expectations, intended duration and dates of stay. An application form will be sent to you via email. Complete and return the application form. The information you provide is an important way for Auroville to know your focus and help you with relevant volunteer opportunities.

Informed by Savi, units/projects that are interested to have you volunteer with them, will contact you within 2 weeks and you will have the opportunity to discuss with them your future tasks. Once an agreement has been reached and your application accepted, Savi will send you further guidelines to prepare for your stay.

Don't forget to get a proper visa to Auroville well before departure.

If you are non-Indian, a visa is required. The visa request at the Indian Embassy, Consulate or High Commissioner in your country may take a long time, so prepare it carefully. You need to know that Auroville has a special Visa policy that make the Entry Visa the only allowed visa, which is arranged for mid- term and long term voluntary service or internship (4, 5, 6 months and over); for this you need an Recommendation letter issued by the Auroville Foundation. Once a volunteer is admitted, Savi will help provide you with the necessary documents and with the preparation of your mandatory visit to the Regional Registration Office (RRO) office in Pondicherry within 2 weeks of your arrival in Auroville. To cover the cost of this special visa procedure, an admin fee of 1500 Rs (16 GBP) will be required.

Latest news about visa: Foreigners

coming with a Tourist visa must know that they will be considered as simple visiting guests.

Formalities upon your arrival, and yes, those rupees...

When you arrive in Auroville, make an appointment with Savi at the Unity Pavilion (tel. 0413-262 2121 - study@auroville.org.in), located in Auroville's central area, next to Savitri Bhavan. One of the team members will meet you, register your stay and assist you in the first steps of your life in Auroville. You will be given an Aurocard, so that, after making a deposit into your account, you are plugged into Auroville's internal financial set-up and have access to the city's many services and amenities for which payment in cash is not accepted. With this card you can contribute for your meals and all your daily needs. At various places in Auroville you can exchange foreign currency into Indian Rupees.

The average budget of students for a basic living (2014) is around 15,000 to 25000 INR per month (approximately £160- 268). According to a recent policy of Auroville, all interns and volunteers are requested to pay a Volunteer contribution of 900 Rupees per month.

You can also find out more on www.auroville.org/contents/386

Our website Auroville-learning.net website is almost ready, and we should open very soon improved services of Opportunities publication and application on line for well-wishers.

Some experiences from German volunteers

The German government funds a volunteer project for young people, called in German, Weltwärts. Within the framework of this program, AVI Germany sends volunteers to 18 Auroville projects. They engage in a work experience connected with village and rural development, alternative energy, etc. Below are some comments from volunteers:

“Such a varied, challenging year with many opportunities and so completely new. It is not possible to capture experiences in a report. The beautiful things, everyday experiences, even strange things, which are now normal; the friendships, the growing understanding of another culture, other ways of thinking, other ways of life and beliefs, all of this is too complex and multilayered, to be briefly described. And I think nobody would understand.

In addition to the village and the Indian workplace, Auroville as a place of discoveries on the doorstep gives a giant happiness. Workshops (from organic farming to spiritual writing), people and the experiences which they report, cultural programs from as many countries, the conflicts that arise but also the realisation of how much we have in common. Beautiful places (cafes, the library) and always new people who visit Auroville. Sometimes it was almost too much.”

Nora Klein

“I learned much: both the bare facts and social things, in dealing with work experience and the local Tamil culture, but also about myself and my responsibility as a human being on this earth. I learned to become conscious, to meet very many different personalities with interesting and controversial views, to question my own values. Auroville has offered me the space to try out a variety of activities and learn more about myself. Especially I have noticed a huge gratitude in myself, which I've developed basically for everything in my life.

However, I have to say I am relieved that my work here has come to an end. It is a project in which there are many problems within the team and the hierarchies. Although I now realize, that it was not the perfect project for me, I'm ending the year still full of gratitude and with a good feeling.”

Isabel Valentina Habermann

“Well, after almost 12 months in this fascinating country, and this unique future project of Auroville, I can say that I have learned much from the people I have met. I have established contacts with many people and have also received great invitations from New York, Madrid, Paris, Barcelona and many other great places in the world. I think the experience of one year in Auroville can be compared with ten years somewhere else in the world. Here you can encounter an incredible amount of knowledge from different areas.”

Dominik Blasé

Sri Aurobindo's Humour

“But is it true that even anger which is of the lower vital and therefore close to the body, invariably produces these effects (physical signs like ebullition in the chest, flushing of the face, etc.)? Of course the psychologist can't know that a man is angry unless he shows physical signs of it, but also he can't know what a man is thinking unless the man speaks or writes – does it follow that the state of thought can be “fancied” without its sign in speaking or writing? A Japanese who is accustomed to control all his “emotions” and give no sign (if he is angry the first sign you will have of it is a knife in your stomach from a calm or smiling assailant) will have none of these things when he is angry, - not even the “ebullition” in the chest, - in its place there will be a settled fire that will burn till his anger achieves itself in action.”

Sri Aurobindo

Letters on Yoga - Planes and Parts of the Being

“The consciousness from which these experiences come is always there pressing to bring them in. The reason why they do not come in freely or stay is the activity of the mind and vital always rushing about, thinking this, wanting that, trying to perform mountaineering feats on all the hillocks of the lower nature instead of nourishing a strong and simple aspiration and opening to the higher consciousness that it may come in and do its work....

If the habit of the ordinary nature is not an obstacle to the descent, then what is the need of sadhana? What prevents the whole higher consciousness from coming down and

changing you into a superman in one second? It is because the things of the lower nature offer an obstinate resistance that sadhana is necessary.

But there is no rule as to the time taken. In some it comes down like a flood, in others it goes through with a methodical and deliberate increase. I don't think the peace descent is in the habit of waiting for companions – more often it likes at first to be all by itself and then call down its friends with the message, “Come along, I have made the place all ready for you”.

Sri Aurobindo

Letters on Yoga - The Triple Transformation

Works Of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Readers may like to know that they can download Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's books at: www.sriarobindoashram.org/works/ and at www.auro-ebooks.com

Next AVIUK Open Meeting

Saturday 25th April 2015 at 11am

at The Manor House, Bygrave, Hertfordshire SG7 5EE.

Please go to AVI UK website for further details, including the theme of the meeting.

Live in and be the Truth you aspire to.

Editor: Vikas, 44 Leat Close, Sawbridgeworth CM21 9LZ
01279 723829 vikas@aviuk.org

For correspondence please write to our Secretary:

Angiras Auro, 65 Trinity Road, Stotfold, SG5 4EQ
01462 835131 angiras@aviuk.org

Editorial Advisor: Sonia Dyne **DTP:** Paul Littlewood



Auroville International
UNITED KINGDOM