



One Family

Each year, members of Auroville International groups from all over the world, along with Aurovilians, get together to meet, to share experiences, to hear of developments in Auroville and to discuss plans for their work in the future. This February, for only the second time ever, an Auroville International meeting was held in Auroville – the last time was in 1988.

There continues to be widespread ignorance among Aurovilians concerning the purpose and work of the Auroville International Centres and their relationship to Auroville. One of the main purposes of holding the meeting here was to remedy this, which is why, on the first morning, the AVI members spoke about what made them take up this work. It was a profoundly moving session - as they talked of their 'love affair' with Auroville and of the challenges they faced in communicating its spirit in places like Russia, Kazakhstan and South Africa, the depth and quality of their contact was evident. Afterwards, one senior Aurovilian, who was attending such a meeting for the first time, said it had completely transformed her view of AVI: she understood now that we are really one.

Was this meeting a success? In many ways, yes. Veteran AVI meeting goers talked of experiencing a different community this time - quieter, more relaxed, but also more professional in its practical approach to the challenges of living here - and many were touched by how readily Aurovilians welcomed them as co-partners. To take but one example: at last summer's AVI meeting in the USA a proposal was made to include members of the Centres as full partners in the International Zone group based in Auroville. When the topic came up for discussion this time there was clearly trepidation among AVI members that the Aurovilians on the International Zone group would express reservations. In fact there was no opposition, and most of the discussion focused upon keeping the organization as fluid and open as possible.

There were still complaints from the Centres that they were sometimes left out of the loop, notably over the provision of information material like new brochures and videos, but these came across as niggles rather than

indications of major fault lines. Nevertheless such concerns touched once again upon the larger question of the *raison d'être* of the Centres and their relationship to Auroville. Over the course of the meeting various interpretations of this were offered: the AVI members should be 'watchdogs', ensuring that Auroville moves swiftly towards the ideal of a money-less economy, the AVIs are there to raise funds and disseminate information, the AVIs can keep Auroville in touch with a larger world, the AVIs can promote research into areas essential to Auroville's development etc. etc. There is some truth in all of these. However, they all imply an instrumental relationship - the AVIs are there merely to serve Auroville - whereas the profounder truth may be that members of AVI are carrying the ideals of Auroville out into a wider world, attempting to embody, practice and anchor them amongst lifestyles and in cultures which are frequently not sympathetic or supportive. This is truly the yoga of the market-place, one of the hardest of all, and it's high time Aurovilians treat AVI members with the respect and appreciation due rather than viewing them as Aurovilians *manqué* or mere support troops.

In fact, from an occult point of view it's likely that all those

connected to Sri Aurobindo and Mother have already been together many times through the ages. Thus any attempt to make distinctions between Aurovilians and members of AVI is ridiculous. We're family, one family, inspired and inextricably linked by a common ideal.

If this year's meeting has in any way illuminated this truth - and the evidence from some of the attendees is that it has - then it has more than fulfilled its purpose.

Alan, from an article published in Auroville Today.

See page 4 for a report on both meetings this year.

In this issue:

- ✓ **The Work of AVI UK**
- ✓ **International Meetings in Auroville and France**
- ✓ **Education – Bridging Worlds**
- ✓ **AVIUK's New Project with Village Action**
- ✓ **Land Fund News**
- ✓ **UNESCO Celebrates Auroville's 35th Anniversary**
- ✓ **Matrimandir Calendar for 2004**



THE WORK OF AVI UK

In this newsletter, we would like to give you some idea of the work that AVI UK does, and perhaps to encourage more of our readers to participate in that work.

Giving information about Auroville

One of our most important functions is to be a source in the UK of information about Auroville and its work. To do this we answer queries by phone, e mail, or (less often now) by post. We also have our own web site (www.aviuk.org). We are asked many different questions, from where to stay when visiting Auroville, to information about projects, advice about work in the community, and advice for people wishing to live in Auroville permanently.

We also give lectures and presentations about Auroville's work, and are often asked by groups, by universities and colleges to make presentations. When Aurovilians visit the UK we often organise for them to speak about their own special experiences in different venues. We have two regular public meetings each year, usually one is held in London and for the other we often take the opportunity of an invitation to a venue in another part of the country – this summer in Bristol.

Of course, we also have our newsletter, which is normally sent out twice each year, and will soon be available on our web site also.

Projects and Fundraising

AVI UK actively supports a number of projects in Auroville. Over the last few years we have been supporting work in the Auroville bioregion, in the fields of Education and Environment. We have successfully applied for grants from the European Commission for projects in these areas, and presently have two active projects funded by the EC: The first project, **Auroville Youth Education and Training Project** with a budget of around £180,000 provides education opportunities for village children, by supporting three Auroville run schools (an article later in this newsletter describes this project further). The second, **The Restoration Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF), Coromandel Coast, South India**, with a budget of around £360,000, seeks to regenerate the important indigenous forest in the Auroville region.

Both projects have a three year duration, the first is in its third year and the second in its second year of operation. Although these projects are largely managed from Auroville, AVI UK has overall responsibility to the EC, and has to monitor the work and submit detailed reports each year. Our consultant, Greta Jensen, not only helps us with this monitoring, but also advises the project holders, providing capacity and team building in Auroville.

We have recently applied to the EC for a third project, **Grassroots Development for Democracy, South India**,

which has a budget of around £700,000 and will support the work of Auroville Village Action in its important work with village development in the area surrounding Auroville for the next five years, with a special emphasis on improving the relationship between Auroville and the local indigenous people (see later article in this newsletter).

Although we are receiving funding for these projects from the EC, AVI UK is responsible for raising matching funding for all these funds received. For the **Education Project**, only 50% of the funds for the project come from the EC, the remainder must be found from other sources. For the **TDEF** project, 25% must come from other sources. Some of this money is found by Auroville from other funding sources, but much has to be raised by AVI UK from its

supporters. We are now looking urgently for matching funding for some remaining parts of the **Education Project** and for the new **Grassroots Democracy** project. Without this co-funding, the EC money cannot be spent.

AVI UK also supports other important projects, including the **Land Fund**, and **Matrimandir**. We actively support Auroville's fundraising efforts for this work, especially now when money for land is so urgently needed.

Another project, actively supported by AVI UK and many of its members, is **New Creation School**. The school forms part of the New Creation community, located close to the village of Kulapalayam, where the majority of the pupils live. The school today caters for 240 children, both boys and girls, between the ages of 3 and 15 years, and also includes a kindergarten/crèche. The school relies on support from individuals interested in its work, and many people help by giving a monthly donation.



Guy from Auroville, giving a talk at the Mother Sri Aurobindo Centre, London.

The AVI UK Committee

The work of AVI UK is largely done by a small committee of trustees and office holders, who meet every two months. The day to day administration work, and project coordination is done by Martin Littlewood, who works part time for the organisation. As mentioned before, we also employ a consultant, Greta Jensen to help us with our project work. The committee members are as follows:

Caroline Davies – Chairperson and Trustee
 Martin Littlewood - Secretary and Projects Coordinator
 Sonia Dyne – Vice Chairperson and Trustee
 John Mulrey – Financial Administrator
 David Widdicombe – Trustee and Legal advisor
 Shirishbhai Patel – Trustee and Financial Advisor
 Pat Kaye – Trustee
 Forrest Corkery
 Angiras Auro – Membership Secretary

We are always looking for new members of the committee. If anyone would like to help us with our work, please contact Martin.

Forrest Corkery has recently resigned from his position as Treasurer after 7 years of committed work in this job (although he still remains a committee

member). We owe much gratitude to Forrest, who has been a dedicated member of the team for so long, undertaking such a difficult job. John Mulrey, previously our treasurer, has agreed to take over some of the treasurer's work for the time being, but we are looking for a new treasurer. **Is anyone willing to offer his or her services for this important work?**



The AVI UK Committee meeting at the Oriental Club in London

AVI UK Membership

AVI UK needs its members' support to continue its work, and invite anyone interested to contribute to our work by becoming a member. Members can give their support in two ways, by paying a membership subscription, and/or by helping us with our work. We would like to stress the importance of your subscription, as this money helps support our activities, enabling us to continue our work for Auroville. In order to save administration, we ask for your subscription each year in the Summer/Autumn. This year we are a little late with this newsletter so we would appreciate if you could pay soon. If your subscription includes *Auroville Today*, this will continue to be sent for one year from the date of your last subscription. Please let Martin know if you have any questions or would like to offer your help with our work. The rates are as follows:

Basic membership	Newsletter only	£5 per annum
Contributing membership	Newsletter and contribution to the work of AVI UK	£20 per annum
Full membership	Newsletter, increased contribution to the work of AVI UK	£30 per annum or more – please help if you can!
Full Membership plus <i>Auroville Today</i> .	Membership plus <i>Auroville Today</i> subscription	£40 per annum

Please return the enclosed form to us with your subscription for 2003 - 04.

We can also guarantee that your subscription goes to a particular project in Auroville, if you wish. Please let us know if you have any particular project that you wish to support.

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Use Gift Aid and you can make your donation or subscription worth more. For every pound you give to us, we get an extra 28 pence from the Inland Revenue. So just tick the box. It's that simple.

Auroville International Meetings 2003

This year there have been two International meetings, one in Auroville and the second in France, near Paris. Each was a different experience.

The Auroville Meeting - February 2003

While during the previous twenty years, the AVI Association held its annual meetings in one of the member countries, this is now changing: the Centres have expressed their wish to have their meetings, at least every other year, take place in Auroville itself. Understandably, the contact between Centres and Auroville has grown more solid and close every year, and



A main meeting in Vérité Hall during the AVI Conference in Auroville

certainly its long-term members who often go and live in the community for some time, are considered to be as much "Aurovilian" as the residents on site. With both Auroville and Centres now maturing, a strong need for a closer working-together between AV and AVI emerges, and this new arrangement will surely be conducive for this.

In February, AVI members from various parts of the world, as well as Aurovilians and their guests met for five days in Vérité to discuss the relationship of Auroville International with Auroville and vice versa, and to be updated on developments in Auroville's International Zone.

The meeting was opened by Dr. Kireet Joshi, Chairman of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation, who spoke on the importance of finding solutions for the three main challenges facing Auroville today, namely economy, education, and organisation.

The main focus of the meeting was on Auroville's International Zone. The meeting worked on building up a close collaboration and well-functioning exchange mechanism between the various nations which are

ready to start building there and the International Zone team working here on site.

Dr. Ananda Reddy from SACAR (Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research) opened discussions on the International Zone, focusing on the 'nation's soul'. As a surprise and to the delight of everybody, Sri Nirodbaran of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, joined us one afternoon.

One morning, the group walked the entire International Zone and was later taken by bus around the Auroville area to see the land situation, showing the encroachment by new developments, and by land speculation. Participants also had a guided tour of Matrimandir and the Peace area, getting an idea of plans for the gardens and lake. They watched the latest Auroville video made by

Auroville Press, listened to Russian participant Ludmilla singing Russian romantic songs and Nadaka playing guitar and tabla in Pitanga, and saw the theatre play 'Sacrifice' by Tagore in Bharat Nivas' Auditorium, performed by the Auroville Theatre group.

The Paris Meeting – June 2003

The birth city of Mother was chosen for this year's second Auroville International meeting. AVI France hosted the meeting, which is the first one in France since 1997. Around 50 people from all over the world came together here for 4 days to discuss and explore the concept, and practice, of 'Human Unity', despite a general strike which was at the time paralysing parts of France, especially the public transport system.

Château Meridon

The choice of venue by AVI France this year was really beautiful: the meeting took place in a gorgeous chateau, 'MERIDON', 35 km from Paris, complete with gardens, marble statues, and a small lake. A dedicated organizing team took good care of us, food-wise and otherwise, which made our stay here a memorable experience.

An important topic was again the International Zone, and representatives from the IZ group in Auroville were present to report on the progress of the Zone, including the Unity Pavilion, part of which will soon become their offices, shared with the Auroville International representative, Tine.

Workshop on awareness of the cells

Long-time Aurovilian, Bhaga, researcher and founder of Auroville's 'Laboratory of Evolution' gave a workshop to the participants, creating awareness of the body's cells. Bhaga has been touring Europe giving workshops on this topic, and gave an introductory talk at our meeting in May this year at the Auromira Centre.

Visit to Versailles

The chance to experience something of the cultural heritage of the host country was given by a visit by the group to the gardens of Versailles. It was a beautiful warm day, and while some of the group took the opportunity to view the splendid rooms of the Trianon, others toured the gardens by bicycle. Songs and stories around a bonfire rounded off one evening, revealing unknown talents for musicianship and storytelling.

Presentation on UNESCO event

Yanne made an enthusiastic presentation on the recent Exhibition at UNESCO in Paris, which she helped to arrange, (see later in this newsletter) and displayed copies of the photographs seen at the event.

The final event:

The last day in Meridon was very beautiful, especially the sharing session organized by Satyakam and Devasmitha was something very special. In the big meeting room, there were more than 20 huge sheets of white paper arranged on the floor, the chairs in a circle around them. The sheets carried the year number from 1968, the year of the foundation of Auroville until 2003. A short description of the main world events in that particular year were listed on the sheets, as well as the main events in Auroville. Each participant was asked to write on the paper his/her name under that year, when s/he came first in contact with Mother / Sri Aurobindo /Auroville and tell us something about it,

and also give a feedback on the present meeting. This "game" was exciting, and each participant added a pinch of soul quality to it.



A meeting under the trees at "Chateau Meridon"

Next AVI Meeting

The next AVI International Meeting is to be held in Brazil. This will be the first time a meeting is to be held in South America, and we are looking forward to this. Brazil has an active liaison, led by Paulo, an ex-aurovilian. The meeting will be held in Belo Horizonte in June 2004. Anyone interested in attending please contact Martin soon, as we will be collecting names for the trip.

Man the Thinking Animal

A trifling unit in a boundless plan
Amidst the enormous insignificance
Of the unpeopled cosmos' fire-whirl dance,
Earth, as by accident engendered man.

A creature of his own grey ignorance,
A mind half-shadow and half-gleam, a breath
That wrestles, captive in a world of death,
To live some lame brief years. Yet his advance,

Attempt of a divinity within,
A consciousness in the inconscient Night,
To realise its own supernal Light
Confronts the ruthless forces of the Unseen.

Aspiring to godhead from insensible clay
He travels slow-footed towards the eternal day.

Evolution:

I passed into a still abode
And saw as in a mirror crystalline
An ancient Force ascending serpentine
Of the ascending spirals of the aeonic road.
Earth was a cradle for the arriving God
And man but a half-dark half-luminous sign
Of the transition of the veiled Divine
From Matter's sleep and the tormented load
Of ignorant life and death to the Spirit's light.
Mind liberated spam Light's ocean-vast,
And life escaped from its grey tortured line
I saw Matter illumining its parent Night.
The soul could feel into infinity cast,
Timeless God-bliss the heart incarnadine.

Sri Aurobindo – Last Poems

Education: Bridging worlds

by Priya Mahtani

From an article published in Auroville Today

The Auroville Youth Education and Training project, funded by the European Commission, benefits four Auroville schools that provide education to children and young adults from the nearby villages.

In February 2001, a strangely synchronised moment brought Greta Jensen, a development consultant to Auroville International UK, across my path. We discovered we had a common friend - a wonderfully inspirational art teacher in the same Waldorf School where I had recently completed my teacher training. From this meeting, an opportunity arose to coordinate an IT link between New Creation School and Sedlescombe Primary - a school in a village in the UK. Promoting global awareness and celebrating diversity in education through a sharing of various classroom activities between school children in England and India - it was a perfect match for my own skills and interests, and just what I had been looking for. The Development



Working with new education methods at Isai Ambalam School

Awareness component of a much larger partially funded European Commission (EC) project, it was to be my first initiation into Auroville.

Auroville had been something of a surprise - not exactly like the India I knew and cherished, but not exactly like England, where I had been brought up. Auroville intuitively felt like a bridge between both worlds and cultures, located deep in the south of India, yet receptive and open to an emerging consciousness, where new ideas can unfold and bear fruit and the right people always seem to miraculously appear at just the right moment.

A few months later, having returned to the UK, I again met Greta and also Martin Littlewood of AVI-UK (the Project Managers). As we enjoyed a morning coffee by the Thames, Martin asked me if I was interested in supporting all the E.C. project holders by writing reports and doing some coordination. It seemed a good

opportunity to deepen my connection to different people and ideas within Auroville, so I agreed.

Now in its second year, the Auroville Youth Education and Training project has gone from strength to strength. With in-depth workshops given by Greta on various aspects of project management, from log-frames to report writing, all the project holders have learnt not only how to communicate more effectively, but also how to truly appreciate and reflect on their determined efforts.

Drawing together four different educational establishments from within Auroville, it is essentially a human resource development project, building on the combined experiences and knowledge of some truly amazing individuals. Visiting Isaiambalam School, for example, and meeting Subash and his team of teachers, is clear proof of the benefits of value-oriented education. The 'Rishi Valley method' is only one example of many innovative teaching methodologies employed there, with children following an individual progress system, with an in-built assessment process, as they work through various learning cards for different activities. These include a variety of creative pursuits - for example performing small plays/songs, games, story-telling, collage-work, puppetry for language learning - as well as the regular study of subjects like maths and environmental science.

Subash commented that a noticeable benefit of this project was that it had enabled all those involved to work in a really focused manner in a daily context where everybody is co-operating and growing together.

Work at the Life Education Centre (LEC) is again different, providing a supportive and therapeutic community environment for abused young women to learn life and vocational skills. Recent input from professional educators like Hannah (UK), who initiated a self-awareness photography project, and Desarea (Sweden), who facilitated group discussions exploring the role of women in

society through the use of evocative games, songs and exercises, helped to deepen self-confidence and understanding amongst the young girls.

Zerina, the overall coordinator, expressed appreciation of two aspects of the project. Firstly she had learned to compose succinct reports with relevant supportive data (Greta's voluminous guidance must be acknowledged here) and secondly, and perhaps most importantly, she now felt truly connected to the other schools involved with the project.

The work done at Ilaignarkal Tamil Heritage School is somewhat different again. The project funding enabled the construction of a new and much needed school building, substantially enhancing regular school activities. This is a school where great emphasis and pride in Tamil culture is expressed through the development of innovative educational materials. Overall coordinator and

youth counsellor Meenakshi emphasises that much of the work being done at Ilaingnarkal is to encourage youth to strengthen self-esteem and manage economic/lifestyle affairs independently.

The existence of the completely new New Creation Vocational Training Centre reflects the need to provide learning opportunities for non-academic children, enabling school-leavers and young adults to earn livelihoods locally. The completed woodwork and electrical workshops already benefit children attending New Creation School next door.

André, who has been responsible for holding the vision for this centre, stressed the crucial need for supporting the progress of the people surrounding Auroville in order that they may also participate properly in the development of the township. He also commented that this project is another reflection that there are many people throughout the world interested in Auroville's growth and all that emerges here. Without this support and commitment, Auroville would never have been able to flourish into the rich and diverse learning environment it is today.

Overall, the EC project has helped to facilitate a practical understanding of unity in diversity amongst

all those involved. Working with this project has been a true celebration of common purpose as we share a dream and an intention to serve our children through helping them to grow and develop with joy and self-confidence.



Girls at Life Education Centre learn vocational skills.

AVI UK's New Project with Village Action

Grassroots Democracy for Sustainable Development in Tamil Nadu, India

Background

Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG) started its work in the mid eighties, working with the poor people in the villages around Auroville. The area at that time was designated by the Government as "backward and in need of development" As in many parts of the country, the problems, beyond economic, ecological and cultural poverty were exacerbated by discrimination against the Dalits (formerly "untouchables"), and the oppression of women. Eighty percent of the local population are from "scheduled and most backward castes" and nearly fifty percent are still illiterate.

In the beginning, people were lacking confidence, and opportunities for self improvement were few. The lower classes were mainly illiterate, and lacked access to good education. The government was giving priority to building up cities resulting in a lack of services and infrastructure in the villages. Emigration of educated people to the cities, where they had better prospects, left the remaining lower caste people with little experience of self governance and poor management of local resources.

During the 1980's, AVAG identified the need to build up the villagers' own sense of capacity and responsibility to tackle their social, ecological and economic problems. There was also the need to build unity between villagers enabling them to act effectively, and give knowledge and confidence to provide

opportunities for the future. In response to this, AVAG set up a programme of work in the villages with women, Dalits, and with children and youth. Women's groups have been particularly successful, and as a result, women are becoming fully involved in the decision making processes of the villages, and their self confidence and status had improved. They are also leading the way in overcoming caste discrimination in their area-wide federation. In more recent times, attention has been turned also to forming men's groups, which are growing in success.

How it works

Intensive Training of Local people: Since its inception the AVAG team has chosen to train local young people from the target villages as development workers, rather than hire in social-work graduates from other areas. The result has been that a two-year on-the-job training in development work has been developed, which is unique in India for its length, comprehensiveness, and effectiveness. From experience, the training triggers a surge of self-growth in the trainees, who then carry their enthusiasm for self-development into the villages.

Participatory Learning, Participatory Development: The AVAG approach has been consistently to work with what exists, building upon successes and moving at the pace and in the directions that the people find compelling to them. This starts with the training of the development workers, which utilises participatory techniques of games, group discussions and exposure visits, building up their individual sense of self-worth in the context of

developing group communication skills and knowledge. It continues out into the villages, as groups are introduced to the same skills which are immediately applied to tackle problems in the village. Village Groups take up micro-projects and evaluate them, go to visit the local authorities to demand implementation of development programmes or pensions, have formed federations, and even compete in the local elections.

Community co-operation is nurtured as the men's and women's clubs - and sometimes the parent-teacher association of a village - begin to work together on common projects. Planning meetings among neighbouring villages introduce representative processes, and promote inter-village co-operation across caste barriers.

Gender balance: The importance of including the female half of the population is practised in recruitment - AVAG tries to recruit at least half women and half Dalits for each of its training batches. Gender equality is also introduced through experimental exercises in the training, and applied in the work with women's groups and in forming village councils. This gender balance is also demonstrated in the model of dual leadership of the married Tamil couple who co-ordinate all the field-work, and who can show through their actions that gender equality changes and improves the way men and women work together.



AVAG has developed out of its work with women a Women's Empowerment Programme (WEP) which is a model for other NGOs in the region. This programme is considered one of the most important components of AVAG's work, providing the space and opportunity for women to make improvements to their lives and challenge existing injustices and prejudices.

Overcoming Caste Discrimination: From its earliest years, AVAG made a policy decision to treat all the Dalit colonies it works with as separate entities, assisting them to organise their own women's clubs, men's clubs etc. - rather than insist that Dalit members be included in the caste village clubs. This has resulted in Dalits developing leadership skills and focussing on their own villages - in several cases, facilities such as water tanks have been secured for the Dalit colony, the first asset they have ever had as an independent community. At area meetings, the representatives of Dalit

clubs and caste clubs sit and discuss together, share meals, and take up common projects. In the Women's Federation, a Dalit woman was recently elected vice-president simply on the basis of her outstanding leadership qualities.

Whole Community Development: AVAG's approach has always been across all borders in the community, and is not identified with any one group in the villages. Men as well as women benefit from the programmes, although overcoming the oppression of women is a major policy. Caste as well as Dalit communities have equal attention for community projects, although the needier Dalit groups are more eager to participate. Traditional leaders as well as the elected leaders receive recognition, and the problems of the landed as well as landless labourers are appreciated. Hindu, Christian and Muslim youth make up the team. Therefore, AVAG has a reputation in the villages for integrity and fairness for all, and of not aligning itself with special interest groups.

The Future

AVAG's work grows and develops, and the new project takes into account the experiences of the last twenty years moving forward into a new phase of development, building sustainability for the future. The project sets out with these objectives:

- § To further build the skills of local people to take up roles of responsibility and leadership in their communities, through education, training and workshops that raise awareness of democratic and human rights principles and practices, so people can confront the obstacles preventing them from accessing their basic needs and rights.
- § To build on established groups (Dalits, women, men, youth) to create further equitable village councils and to extend group networks, and to encourage co-operation and tolerance between them. Also to link them to other villages and NGOs in the area, in order to develop a bio-regional context supportive of grassroots democracy as a basis for sustainable development.
- § To strengthen local democratic institutions of self-governance that support sustainable grassroots community development, as well as to establish inter-community representative bodies that can participate equitably with the Auroville International Township in planning democratically for the future development of the bio-regional area. Particularly to establish a truly representative Joint Bio-regional Development Council (JBDC) that will be the formal decision-making and planning forum for the area.

One of the most important new programmes proposed, is the development of improved communication and understanding between Auroville and the local villages. Whilst Auroville has done much work with the villages

over the last 30 years of its development, much still needs to be done to build and strengthen relationships between the emerging township and the inhabitants of the local area. The establishment of the JBDC will be an important step in moving this process forward, and workshops are planned for both Aurovilians and villagers to improve understanding.

The Project Application

AVI UK has now submitted the project proposal to the European Commission for funding, and we are waiting

to know if it has been accepted. The project, which will take place over five years, will cost around 1 million Euros (around £700,000) and 75% of that amount has been requested from the EC. The remainder has to be found from other sources, and we have already started looking for sources of funding for the money needed. A large portion of this must come from private sources within the EC, so private donations will be very important. If anyone has ideas for raising this money (around £175,000) please let us know. This money has to be raised. If we do not, even if we receive the EC grant we won't be able to spend it!

Auroville Land Fund News

Auroville urgently needs to raise funds for the land needed for its future. The needed land is being acquired by developers, seeking to profit from the work that Auroville has done. Everyone's help is needed. Many of our members will have received an appeal by post. Here is an update on the results so far.



\$1 million dollars campaign

Donations for the land are gaining momentum, as are creative ideas for raising money. Well over \$250,000 has been raised so far.

Some of the initiatives include:

- § A group of 25 people in Holland are committed to working one day a week to raise money for the land. In one week they raised €1200.
- § A land supporter from California is planning to raise \$1,000 by cooking meals for her friends and inviting them to pay \$25 a head.
- § A long-term friend of Auroville and former student of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education will run for 100 minutes and invites his friends to sponsor him by the minute. He has pledged to match whatever people sponsor him for and is hoping to raise \$10,000.
- § A member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, is selling wall hangings, of which the entire proceeds are offered to the land cause.
- § AVI Italy is holding flea markets and making T-shirts and other items to sell for the land.
- § € 3000 were raised during the German AVI meeting, while participants in the AVI meeting in Paris raised € 2000 after passing round a basket.

- § AVI USA has recently sent a 1000x \$1000 appeal to about 1500 friends of Auroville in the USA.

The Landi Campaign

- § the *Landi* campaign includes five easy things to do for the land—buy a lucky ticket and pledge half of any winnings to the Land Fund; buy a meal for *Landi* when you eat out; buy a dress or pair of jeans for *Landi* when you shop for clothes; organize a surprise party for *Landi* by telling all your friends who know about Auroville to send a small donation as a gift; go for a walk on the land and remember how much you appreciate it.
- § *Landi* posters are going up everywhere and *Landi* stickers will be given to people who donate for the land at Auroville restaurants. Eight stickers will qualify for a free ice cream!
- § A Sports Day was held at which the land situation was publicized. Special events included a celebrity obstacle race in which prominent members of the community were sponsored to participate. They could only back out if they paid the equivalent of the amount they had been sponsored for!
- § On August 15th a fair was held at the Visitors Centre which sold Auroville products for the land and gave information to visitors about the land situation.



The birth of *Landi*, the land mascot.

Landi is, in so many ways, our aspiration to secure the land for the future of Auroville.

§ The Land Fund sent recently a personal appeal to a number of Aurovilians, who donated or pledged so far \$40,000 in total.

As Paul Blanchflower, one of the moving forces behind the Million Dollar Challenge, puts it, *“The idea behind all these initiatives is to get as many people as possible thinking about the land issue while trying to create simple ways in which they can raise the money we need. Rarely a day goes by without us hearing*

about another pledge of \$1,000. However, if the goal of raising \$1,000,000 by 15th August is to be reached it means \$20,000 a day has to be raised from now on!”

We hear from Auroville that by August 15th, the total had reached \$350,000. So the challenge continues...

Please help if you can. A donation form is included with this newsletter.

Editor

Any donation you can make, large or small, will help us to realize this challenge. Please join in, and let's make it happen! All together!

UNESCO Celebrates Auroville's 35th Birthday

“We have tried in UNESCO... we have tried every way... And so now we turn to Auroville... On behalf of UNESCO... I hail Auroville, its conception and realisation, as a hope for all of us and particularly for our children, for our youth who are disillusioned with the world that we have built for them and who will find in Auroville as they found at the time of its foundation ceremony, a living symbol, inspiring them to live the life to which they are called.”

These inspiring words spoken in March 1968 by Dr M.S. Adishesiah, former Deputy Director General of UNESCO, found a strong echo 35 years later during a 5-day event in April this year at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The occasion was the hosting of a major photo exhibition with slide show and series of presentations on Auroville by invitation of Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director General of UNESCO, and Mrs Neelam D.Subharwal, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of India to UNESCO, marking the 35th anniversary of the inauguration of the Auroville Universal Township.

While Auroville has always been seen by UNESCO as a globally important project, resulting in its General Assembly adopting unanimously 4 resolutions of support, in the past few years Auroville's relationship with UNESCO, both in Paris and Delhi, has been re-energised. Specific thanks for organising the event this year go to the Indian Delegation in UNESCO, and specially to the Ambassador of the Delegation, Mrs Neelam D. Sabharwal,

whose collaboration with the UNESCO Division of Culture, Politics and Inter-Religious Dialogue represented by Ms. Rosa Guerreiro was instrumental in bringing it about.

The main inaugural event this year was a ceremony on Thursday April 10th, with a slide show on Auroville and inaugural address by Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director General of UNESCO. In his speech Mr Matsuura stated that *“as an intellectual and ethical organization, UNESCO cannot fail to be fascinated by this experience”*.



The Auroville Exhibition at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris

Noting that UNESCO had supported the foundation of Auroville and, over the years, had continued to show interest in the unfolding development of the township, the Director General stressed the similarities between UNESCO's ideals, values and principles and those underpinning Auroville. He specifically pointed to the way in which key aspects of the Auroville experiment resonate strongly with some of UNESCO's own major priorities and concerns, such as dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions; cultural diversity and culture as a factor for development; poverty eradication; and quality education and lifelong learning.

Following Mr Matsuura's speech there was an address by Sri Kireet Joshi, Chairman of the Governing Board, Auroville Foundation. He briefly outlined the aims of Auroville, drawing a

parallel in his speech between those aims and the three principles of the French revolution, liberty, equality and fraternity. He ended by pointing out that 'fraternity' - the key to the union of the three principles - had yet to be

realised, and suggested that Auroville had an important role to play in achieving this.

Mr Matsuura officially inaugurated the 5-day photo exhibition on Auroville, which was running concurrently throughout the week, and hosted a reception for everyone attending, which included a Rajastani dance performance arranged by the Indian Delegation.

On the last day, Friday 11th April, there was a colloquium/seminar on "Evolution of Human Consciousness within society: Auroville, an example of cultural diversity" chaired by Sri Kireet Joshi, and attended by Mr Vincent Rotge, Director of the Asia Urbs Programme of the European Commission. After welcome addresses on the part of UNESCO by Mr Bouchenaki, Assistant Director-General for Culture, and Mme Francoise Riviere of the UNESCO Cabinet, Dr L.M. Singhvi then spoke on "Auroville and the Indian Government". He was followed by Mr S.K.Tripathy, Secretary of State for Education, Govt of India, who mentioned the large increase in financial support now being provided by the Govt of India through Auroville's Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research (SAIIR).

In his concluding remarks Mr Tripathy stated: "Auroville has already brought a transformation in the areas surrounding it by adopting people-friendly technologies, eco-friendly farms which do not destroy the Mother Earth, income generating industrial units which do not pollute the air, and many such innovations which point towards an India of the future which is prosperous, in tune with nature, does not sacrifice its collective goals and which acts as an inspiration for the new generation. Towards this aim, we are here to support Auroville as partners in progress, as facilitators rather than as mere administrators, and would like to contribute towards the progress of Auroville to serve as a beacon of hope, not only for the future of India, but also for humanity as a whole."

After an address by Mr Vincent Rotge, in which he conveyed why the EC has been supporting the Auroville experiment, towards the end of the seminar 4 long-term Aurovilians made interesting presentations: Mr Luigi Zanzi on city planning, architecture, urban development and culture; Mrs Meenakshi Ramachandran on relations with the surrounding villages, education and the role of women; Mr. Gilles Guigan on appropriate building technologies and alternative energy usage; and Mr. Joss Brooks on Auroville's environment, ecology, water, bio-region and bio-resources. All four presentations were very well received.

What was so important about the whole event was the special atmosphere that permeated it, and the spirit in which it was conducted - an inspiring atmosphere of real enthusiasm for Auroville and the work it is doing, of genuine brotherhood among those who participated, and of shared determination to move the project forward as fast as possible. While there can be no doubt that this April's happenings in Paris have further strengthened the ongoing Auroville-UNESCO relationship, what emerged so strongly during the event was the important role that participants felt Auroville has now to play as a valuable experiment for the planet.

When the Auroville project started in 1968 it was largely seen as a futuristic dream. Today it is very clear from the event and the speeches in Paris, which reaffirmed the ideals of Auroville as being those also upheld by UNESCO, that Auroville is now seen at United Nations level as an essential need - a place of vision, hope, research and experimentation for a better future for all humanity, to whom the township ultimately belongs as per its Charter.

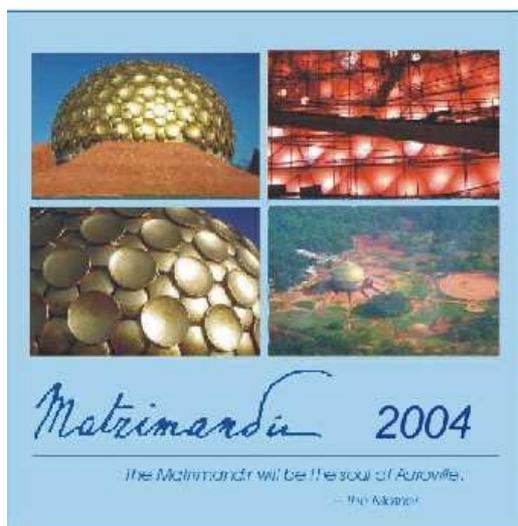
Article from Auroville Outreach, an Auroville newsletter

Calendars for 2004

This year, a calendar is being made in aid of Matrimandir. It is a hanging calendar 27 x 27 cm and has 12 full sized photographs of Matrimandir and the gardens. As soon as we have more details of the calendar, we will put it on our web site.

Proceeds from the sale of the calendar will go towards the construction of Matrimandir and the gardens.

The price of each calendar is £5.00 including postage. If you wish to purchase one, please fill in the order form attached.



Indicative Illustration only

Other Home News

AVI UK Website

AVI UK has a new website. It can be found on www.aviuk.org. Please take a look at the site, and find out more about what we do. There is more information about our projects, about making donations and how you can participate. The site is still in process of development, so if anyone has ideas for inclusion please contact Martin on martin@aviuk.org.

New Auroville Group in Bristol

Following a very successful AVI UK meeting in Bristol in August this year, a group of people from the South West area have decided to get together regularly for Auroville related discussions, videos and talks. If anyone is interested to participate, please contact Dianne Bowler on 0117 9260474, or e mail: dinormbo@amserve.com. Anyone interested in Auroville is very welcome to come along.

Visiting Auroville - A Service from AVI UK

AVI UK offers a service to members, to assist in booking guest accommodation. We have always been very happy to offer advice to those wishing to visit Auroville. However, we are becoming increasingly aware of the need to provide a reliable booking service. This service is provided free to all full members of the organisation and includes the following:

Advice on which guest house to stay in, with details given of facilities and rates

- Booking of accommodation with full confirmation of the details
- Booking of a taxi from the airport
- Advice on visas and supply of a visa form.

Members who wish to use this service should contact Martin.

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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 comes out 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, CSR Office, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, India

The yearly subscription is £25.00 and cheques in , can be sent payable to *Auroville Fund (Auroville Today)*, OR see above 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 Meeting

Our next meeting will be in London in April. We will announce this beforehand, and we will put a notice on our website.

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.

Addresses

For subscriptions or donations please write to our Treasurer, and for other information to our Secretary. Their addresses are below:

