



Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter! We apologise that you have only received one newsletter this year, but we have been very busy with our project work. There is an article about our Village Education Project inside, along with exciting news of a prestigious international award won by an Auroville unit working in the field of Sustainable Energy.

Human Unity

...while it is possible to construct a precarious and quite mechanical unity by political and administrative means, the unity of the human race, even if achieved, can only be secured and can only be made real if the religion of humanity, which is at present the highest active ideal of mankind, spiritualises itself and becomes the general inner law of human life.

A spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future. By this is not meant what is ordinarily called a universal religion, a system, a thing of creed and intellectual belief and dogma and outward rite.

Mankind has tried unity by that means; it has failed and deserved to fail, because there can be no universal religious system, one in mental creed and vital form. The inner spirit is indeed one, but more than any other the spiritual life insists on freedom and variation in its self-expression and means of development. A religion of humanity means the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one, that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth, that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here. It implies a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about a kingdom of this divine Spirit upon earth. By its growth within us, oneness with our fellow-men will become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of cooperation but a deeper brotherhood, a real and an inner sense of unity and equality and a common life. There must be the realisation by the individual that only in the life of his fellow-men is his own life complete. There must be the realisation by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded.

There must be too a discipline and a way of salvation, in accordance with this religion, that is to say, a means by which it can be developed by each man within himself, so that it may be developed in the life of the race. To go into all that this implies would be too large a subject to be entered upon here; it is enough to point out that in this direction lies the eventual road. No doubt, if this is only an idea like the rest, it will go the way of all ideas. But if it is at all a truth of our being, then it must be the truth to which all is moving and in it must be found the means of a fundamental, an inner, a complete, a real human unity which would be the one secure base of a unification of human life. A spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity and compel a oneness of life not bound up with its mechanical means of unification, but ready always to enrich its secure unity by a free inner variation and a freely varied outer self-expression, this would be the basis for a higher type of human existence.

Could such a realisation develop rapidly in mankind, we might then solve the problem of unification in a deeper and truer way from the inner truth to the outer forms. Until then, the attempt to bring it about by mechanical means must

proceed. But the higher hope of humanity lies in the growing number of men who will realise this truth and seek to develop it in themselves, so that when the mind of man is ready to escape from its mechanical bent, — perhaps when it finds that its mechanical solutions are all temporary and disappointing, — the truth of the Spirit may step in and lead humanity to the path of its highest possible happiness and perfection.

Sri Aurobindo: from The Ideal of Human Unity

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AVI UK needs your support!

AVI UK needs its friends' support to continue its work, and invite anyone interested to contribute to our work by paying a subscription. 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. Many projects in Auroville, particularly those concerned with work in the villages, rely heavily on the work of the AVI centres to raise funds, working in collaboration with agencies such as the European Commission (see article on page 5), so please contribute if you can.

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.

If you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, please tick the box on the form and return it to us just the same, so we know that you are no longer interested.

Please let us know if you have any questions or would like to offer your help with our work. The suggested subscriptions are below. **We expect to have a facility for paying subscriptions and making donations via our web site soon. If you are interested, please go to www.aviuk.org.**

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

Auroville International Meeting Belo Horizonte, Brazil June 2004

Theme: Sri Aurobindo's Ideal of Human Unity – Aurovilian Ways towards it

This year, our annual international meeting was held in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, in June. The country was chosen both as a location for our own international gathering and as an opportunity to present Auroville to the South American continent. The meetings were at two locations in the Belo Horizonte region, one for Auroville International's own meetings at Retiro das Rosas, and the other for public presentations at Minas Gerais University. The meetings were attended by



Participants at the Auroville International Meeting in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

around 28 people from countries around the world and from Auroville, and were again an opportunity for those interested in and working for Auroville to exchange ideas and to work together. At the meeting it was announced that a new Auroville International Brazil would be founded soon, to join the other eight centres around the world.

Next International Meeting

The next meeting of Auroville International is to be held in Auroville from the 14th to the 18th January 2005 at the Tibetan Pavillion. Anyone who is expecting to be in Auroville at that time is welcome to attend. It will be an opportunity to meet people interested in Auroville from around the world. The focus of the meeting will be *Auroville's Connection with the World* and will also be an opportunity to meet those involved in the various working groups of the community.

For information, please contact Martin - details on back page.

giftaid it

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Aurore takes home the prestigious Ashden Award for sustainable energy

London – 24 June 2004

The international winners of the prestigious Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy 2004 were announced at the Ashden annual awards ceremony in London. The Awards, hosted by John Humphrys, saw finalists gather at the Royal Geographical Society, London, with guest speakers Sir David Attenborough, Jonathon Porritt, chair of the UK



Hemant from Aurore, with Sir David Attenborough and John Humphrys at the award ceremony in London

government's Sustainable Development Commission, and Andrew Simms, Policy Director of the New Economics Foundation. Sir David Attenborough, who presented the prizes, commented: "I have found this evening both humbling and inspirational. We have much to learn from these remarkable award winners. I would like to thank the Ashden Awards for bringing our attention to this groundbreaking work."

The Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy, now in their fourth year, reward inspirational and innovative renewable energy projects which both provide social and economic benefits to local communities and contribute towards protecting the environment by curbing deforestation and reducing our dependence on fossil fuels – thereby helping tackle climate change.

Three Awards were given in recognition of the way in which renewable energy has been used to improve access to food and to light, and to promote enterprise. In addition, a Fourth Award, Climate Care, was given to a project with the potential to play a significant role in offsetting the carbon emissions which drive climate change.

The finalists were also personally congratulated by HRH The Prince of Wales at a separate ceremony.

Aurore

The typical electricity scenario in India is that of a deficient supply leading to frequent power-cuts. Those

who can afford to do so purchase diesel or petrol-powered generators to provide back-up power; the poor go for cheaper options (which are, relatively, still expensive: many poor families spend up to 30% of their gross income on energy) or simply endure the power cuts and the consequences they have in terms of reduced employment and educational opportunities.

Traditionally, poverty-alleviation has been linked to schemes offering food, clothing and shelter. There is a growing understanding, however, that poverty can also be alleviated or even eradicated by providing better and more dependable energy, specifically energy provided from renewable sources. Renewable energy (RE) systems in India tend to be expensive, not widely available and, where basic maintenance is neglected, often unreliable. Nevertheless, a growing number of people are convinced that renewable energy is the way not only for the future but also for the present: that not only is it by far the best option environmentally, but also that it can be a powerful tool for social uplift if creative ways can be found to provide it reliably and relatively cheaply to disadvantaged sectors of the population. As RE systems tend to be gender-friendly – as easy to operate by women as by men – they also contribute to female empowerment.

Aurore was founded in 1998. The promoters passionately believe that renewable energy represents the future. Over the years the team and its collaborators came to understand that one of the best ways of disseminating RE more widely was for them to become



Hemant being congratulated by Prince Charles

an Energy Service Provider which promotes and networks with locally-based RE enterprises. Some of the advantages of local energy production over traditional centralized power generation is that it provides employment to people from the local community while being sensitive to their specific needs for power.

Aurore sees itself as the hub of a networked organization with its various partners as the nodes. At present it has four partners and it has executed, or assisted in the execution of, RE projects in twelve Indian States. Specifically, Aurore has developed expertise in procuring RE systems and optimizing their integration, promoting and incubating new enterprises and obtaining subsidies, credit and soft loans for end-users at both micro-credit and institutional levels.

The projects it has been involved with, either directly or in a support capacity, include the installation of over 1,025 solar PV pumping systems in 11 states of India working with network partners Sahjeevan and SELCO and suppliers like Tata-BP Solar and BHEL; project coordination for installation of 8,700 solar home systems; the distribution of 6,000 solar lanterns in Ladakh for Tata-BP Solar, a leading solar company in India; and the hiring out of solar-powered lanterns to small trades people with SunMin, an enterprise promoted on Chennai beach. The latter is a good example of how an RE project can generate both profit and employment. The trades people benefit because they pay less for their power now, because it is more reliable and the better quality of light provided attracts more customers, while the hiring out and maintenance of the lanterns generates employment for five youngsters who are also stake-holders in the company.

Another project where an innovative approach has brought the benefits of RE systems to the disadvantaged is based in rural Gujarat . Here people living on scattered communities have to pay up to Rs150 a month just to obtain drinking water, while the local farmers are barely able to eke out a living. Working with a local NGO Sahjeevan, Aurore helped to provide technical and management support obtain the financing



A solar lamp being used on stall in Chennai.

to install solar PV street lights, home-lighting kits and pumps. The solar pumps were hired out to the farmers at less than 30% of the annual cost they incurred for running their diesel pump-sets. The result is that the community now has an assured supply of good drinking water, small farming has become viable again because of the saving in costs, and better home lighting has resulted in extended working hours leading to a richer cultural life and increased income opportunities.

“It’s clear that India and the world need to take big steps to effect a radical change in energy use,” remarks Hemant Lamba, the executive of Aurore. “Our way of contributing to this is by taking many small steps-like the setting up of local energy enterprises – which will increase the penetration of RE in India and prepare it for the big change. After only six years, we are already seeing the fruits of such an approach.”

Hemant moved to Auroville in 1991 from Delhi. He had completed graduate studies in Economics and Entrepreneurship and Small Business from Delhi University, but what drew him to the community was the wish to “participate in an adventure.” In those days

he knew little about renewable energy, but the first enterprise he worked with in the community was designing and assembling RE system components.

“The biggest motivation for me to get involved in promoting renewable energy is not only just good ecological and scientific reasons for doing so, but that there are deep spiritual reasons for changing our energy use. The Mother pointed out that the present form of energy, which is drawn from beneath the Earth, is not an elevated

form of energy, and that the future lies in drawing energy from above. This remains my guiding belief.”

Alan (From Auroville Today)

SEEDS

I planted flowers.
They germinated, grew,
Producing blossoms psychedelic-bright.
The glow and comfort of them Lasted for a time,
And then they drooped, died, decomposed.

The little plot lay fallow,
Drenched in rain and darkness,
For a time.

Then unexpectedly you came,
With your astringent grin,
And did a little planting of your own.
The seed, quickly sprouting, swiftly shooting up,
Evolved into a tree,
An unimagined glory of a tree,
Its base deep and un-uprootable in earth,
Its canopy communing with the sun,
Its wide, fruit-laden arms
Encompassing the world, not merely me,
A tree of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss,
A tree for eternity,
And not just for a time.

Pat Morgan

Standing tall and building bridges in the bioregion

AVI UK's first project co-funded by the European Commission has recently come to an end, and in March this year, a team of evaluators, lead by our consultant, Greta Jensen, set to work to evaluate the success of the work. This article first appeared in *Auroville Today*.

Towards the end of March there is a definite shift of mood throughout India, as students everywhere busy themselves in preparations for forthcoming examinations before being able to relax during the long, hot summer. This year, the project holders of the Auroville Youth Education and Training project were no exception, as we underwent a particularly intensive evaluation process to mark the end of our 3-year contract with our co-funders, the European Commission (EC).

Our project managers, Auroville International United Kingdom (Martin Littlewood) in England, again sent us the formidable Greta, a development consultant who has helped to support our work during the last 3 years. An 10 day action-packed schedule followed. The evaluation team consisted of Greta and myself, a guest, Naomi, who agreed to document the proceedings and our dear friend and Auroville resident Marijke, who has much knowledge and experience in the field of human resource development.

The aim of the project, which is essentially about human resource development, is to embed methods in all educational initiatives that build self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as improving the access, quality and effectiveness of educational opportunities across all age groups in the local villages.

On a Tuesday afternoon, after our evaluation process had come to its end, the project holders presented snapshots to the larger Auroville community of our last 3 years' work together as a first step in a dialogue about how we can better support one other.

Joy, self-confidence and a sense of pride in their accomplishments literally oozed out of the young village girls from the Life Education Centre (LEC) as they performed a simple Sanskrit sloka and then a circle dance. Indrani and Sivagami, senior assistants at LEC then shared some of their experiences at the school and the impact on their lives. Indrani aspires to set up her own centre one day and already has a satellite evening school in her home, in which she helps younger girls from her village to learn English.

The sheer dedication and commitment of Zerina, the overall co-ordinator at LEC, has been the key to providing a safe and trustworthy space for the girls, who are free to express and explore their innermost selves as well as having the opportunity to develop and learn vocational skills. Their achievement is all the more dramatic in the context of some of the daily adversities many face at home.

The next part of the presentation was from Ilaingnarkal. We watched a karate demonstration from the amazing Akila, who had been supported at the school to follow a path in karate and even received a black belt in

recognition of her tremendous talent; an undulating, rhythmic dance from Kavitha balancing all the while a traditional pot on her head; and listened to the poised and elegant poetry of the quietly powerful Amudha. With such enthusiastic and sincere support from Meenakshi, the overall co-ordinator of the school, it is clear to see how such talents are able to flourish.

The impact of these young people's achievements is not to be underestimated. Akila

has recently been asked to become a junior teacher in karate in a secondary school in nearby Kalapet, assisting the training of 100 young girls. It is precisely this type of affirmation and encouragement that helps local, young people take initiatives and to develop a real sense of responsibility and meaning about their place in the community.

Ilaingnarkal Tamil Cultural Heritage School has been around for nearly 30 years, although the co-funding monies from the EC project finally allowed the construction of new buildings on a new site, a model version of which (made out of mud bricks) was also on display.

Supported by the Pestalozzi Children's Village Trust in England, the AV/Pestalozzi Link is an Information Technology link enabling the sharing of a diverse range of activities across the curriculum between New Creation School, Auroville and Sedlescombe Primary School, England. A first year project on "Light" was presented by teachers Davaselvy, Mageshwari, and Siva, 2 children from the 6th standard, who were



A child from Isai Ambalam School learning reading using the Glen Doman method.

involved with the “Celebrations” project of the 2nd year. They proudly recited a poem they had learnt and shared some classwork which they had developed around the festival of Raksha Bhandan. This included pictures and drawings of “rakhis,” symbolic bracelets of friendship and brotherhood that had been sent to their English counterparts. In a poignant moment at the end of the evaluation process, these same 2 children had commented of their English friends, “Now they are our friends, they will be in our hearts until we die.”

Anbarasu (metal workshop), Thiagarajan (electrical workshop) Rajesh Kumar (carpentry) and Paneer Selvam (tailoring) each gave a brief description of the different trainings in vocational skills being provided at the New Creation Vocational Training Centre (NCVTC) in the areas of carpentry, tailoring, (currently only offered for the children of NC School,) electrical training and metal work. The beautiful displays of various wood-crafted toys, standing alongside the young girls who proudly wore clothing they had made themselves, again gave a glimpse into a typical day’s work at this centre. Ponnusamy (an old Ilaingnarkal graduate as Meenakshi proudly reminds us) from Auroville’s Electrical Service already provides some mentoring support for the electrical training work, and graduates from the first batch of training are working for this unit.

The NCVTC is the newest component of the overall project, and co-funding resources have enabled the construction of 4 well-designed and spacious workshops, serving a critical need to provide vocational opportunities for young people in order that they may improve their income-generating capacity and earn their livelihoods locally. Recent discussions with the project holders revealed there are opportunities for gifted administrators who may like to help shape the direction of this centre, as well as liaising more closely with Auroville businesses and units to see how more active support of this centre can be encouraged.

The final part of our formal presentation came from Subash and his dedicated staff at Isaiambalam who are



Evening class students in the newly built Ilaingnarkal School building.

working with a variety of different teaching methodologies. A 3-year-old, Deepaka, boldly stood in front of an audience of about 100 teachers, children and guests, calling out the words she recognised from a series of flash cards in English and Tamil, (the so-called Glen Doman method) as taught to her at home by her father. As a first generation learner, the impact on her, her father and indirectly the local village community is obviously huge. Developing teaching methodologies and crucially providing training to other teachers in the region has enabled Isaiambalam to touch 26,000 children during the course of co-funding from the EC.

During the evaluation, a visiting teacher from a primary school in Salem shared with us how she is adapting the child-centred Rishi Valley method to the demands of a government curriculum, making her own learning cards with diverse classroom activities. She had received her training from an earlier Isaiambalam workshop.

All in all, it is still hard to assess the total impact of the Auroville Youth Education and Training project. What is clear is that this project has enabled all the project’s beneficiaries to move to a new level of personal growth and professional development. Maybe what we’ve really been doing is building bridges, in communication, awareness and understanding, both inwardly and with all those with whom we are connected.

It has not always been easy, struggling with the demands of report writing or building and developing management capacities, but what our group has realized now, at the close of a particular chapter in our growth, is that greater participation from the larger community will be the key to realising all our dreams as we stride boldly towards our future goals. The education project holders are proud to stand together, a little bit taller than 3 years ago, and optimistic that others too will be encouraged and inspired to come and take a closer look and to offer us much-needed support.

Priya Mahtani (Project Co-ordinator)



New Creation School children with toys they have made in the new Vocational Training Centre.

'Quiet Experience'

Sun turned on full
Fishermen with patient nets
Bengal Bay roars shorebound
Smiling children calling
'Schoolpen, schoolpen'

Quiet
Turns out to be
Quiet
Yet energetically refreshing
With fishy smells
Earthy
Breathe deeply
Grounding, Holding

Palms fray
Hearts sway
Joy plays
Love stays



Quiet Healing Centre, Auroville.

Poles apart
Only continents divided
Separation to Polarity
Surges, Urges
Joining forces
Membrane
Cellular energy

Care, Love
ALL ONE Source

Gratitude for the
Quiet Experience

Jane Welfar 8/01/04

Sri Aurobindo's 'Adesh*' to go to Chandernagore

Some time in June 1975 there was an exhibition of Indian books, held in a Public Library in the Paddington area of London.

The Librarian had asked me to contribute some volumes of Sri Aurobindo's writings. I had done this, and had provided a note on his life, with a portrait photograph of Sri Aurobindo when a young man.

One day, while I was standing near this display, an old lady spoke to me, with a smile, saying, 'I knew Sri Aurobindo.' I was intrigued, and we talked for some time. She introduced herself as Mrs Aileen Winsloe, and told me that when she was a young woman she had worked for Sri Aurobindo in Calcutta at the Office of his paper 'The Karmayogin', which she had helped to distribute. She had been a keen radical, in reaction against the imperial establishment of the time, and Sri Aurobindo's freedom movement had very much appealed to her.

I prompted her to tell me about Sri Aurobindo's appearance when she had known him, which must have been around 1909-1910.

Commenting on the photograph, I said the distance between his eyes seemed unusual. 'Yes' she said, 'his eyes were certainly wide apart, but the remarkable thing about them was their light, as if there was some inner fire burning behind them - and another thing, they were completely without fear. I don't believe Sri Aurobindo knew what fear was. When he got that message to leave Calcutta and go to Chandernagore, he simply walked out, with not the slightest hesitation, regret, or anxiety. It was as if he had come to a cross-roads and had been shown which direction to take, and had gone on without the least disturbance.'

In later months I had several more conversations with Mrs Winsloe, when she told me of other great men she had known during her long life - Trotsky, Churchill, De Gaulle, Gandhi, and Tagore - but she spoke of none of them with the same respect as that which she showed for Sri Aurobindo.

Dick Batstone

* *Adesh* = Inner command



Sri Aurobindo in Baroda in 1907

New Creation Bi-Lingual School Annual Report: 2003-4

The school forms part of the New Creation community, located close to the village of Kuilapalayam, where the majority of the pupils live. The school today caters for 227 children, both boys and girls, between the ages of 3 and 15 years, and includes a kindergarten/crèche. This year 31 new students enrolled and 24 graduated. There are 22 full time teachers and 5 part time.

For 13 years, Roy Wicks, a retired policeman from Essex, was principal of the school. In 2002 he had to leave Auroville due to ill health. Mike and Sue Hawthorne from the UK, who are both teachers, had been working at the school, and took over the role. They have done some excellent work adding their professionalism to the school and improving standards. Earlier this year however, Mike and Sue had to leave, and a new principal was being sought. Fortunately, as you will see later in the report, a new person, Anna Bowers has come, again from England, to take up this important job.



Roy with some of "his" children in 2002

School Mission

The mission of New Creation Bi-Lingual School is to offer to children from poor backgrounds an opportunity to be educated in an environment which is secure, healthy, caring, liberating, ordered and stimulating. We enjoy many opportunities, living in Auroville, and we want to share as many of these as possible with the Tamil children in our care.

The challenge is to develop a school based upon the progressive educational principles espoused by Auroville, whilst also celebrating and showing respect for the rich culture which our students bring themselves. We are always conscious that most New Creation students will probably not become Aurovilians. Therefore we feel it is our duty to equip them for the real lives which they probably face locally in Tamil Nadu, as well as broadening their personal vision so that they can take any wider roads which life may offer.

We are an outreach school and over the last twelve months we have tried to develop this idea. One established New Creation practice is that, as a topic is completed by a class, the group shares its work with other students. During 2003-4 we have broadened this by inviting the parents to come into school and learn about their children's work. This initiative has been a great success and very much appreciated by the parents as well as the children. The vast majority of New Creation parents have been into school at least once this year and so, we hope, the principles by which we learn are being gradually understood in the wider community.

We have worked hard at sharing our own ideas with other Auroville schools, through courses and meetings. For example, Mike and Sue have conducted workshops on phonics and on progressive assessment, to which all Auroville teachers were invited. Next month Pushpa, one of our teachers, is conducting similar workshops at Deepanam School. It was also good to invite two other Auroville schools to 1st standard's to 'The Gingerbread Man' puppet play.

Highlights of the last year

New Creation School is in a very public setting. People from all over the world walk through our school, sometimes just in passing, sometimes to stay and work with us for weeks or months. This international flavour is truly enriching: the children become very used to welcoming foreign visitors. This year we have appreciated contributions from (at least!) England, Scotland, the USA, Canada, France, Germany, Sweden, Israel, Australia, and Japan. The Japanese contact was exciting. Our 5th standard students have established a friendship with a class in Japan whose teacher visited us, and our 5th standard classroom is now alive with arts and crafts from far away. Quality work by our Tamil children is similarly displayed in a classroom in Japan.

However, perhaps our most distinguished visitor came from much closer to home. The Chief Minister of Pondicherry, Mr. Lakshminarayan is personally interested in alternative methods of education and, hearing about our school, decided to come and see for himself. This was a wonderful day for all of us, especially as Mr. Lakshminarayan declared himself very impressed with our work, as reported in the regional newspapers and on TV.

Last year, SAIER (Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research – the Auroville group coordinating Education) invited teachers to propose research projects involving particular interests. Three research projects were approved, led by New Creation teachers. All three are investigating effective ways to teach our curriculum through games, investigations and projects:

& **Science:** Perumal and his team are conducting a 2 year research project into effectively teaching Science from 3rd to 8th standard. He started by developing the

curriculum into projects and investigations. e.g. in 4th standard they will study mechanics through moving toys, and in 8th standard they will carry out real-life investigations whilst learning to handle science and measuring equipment.

& **Maths:** Murugan, Pugazhendi and Sue have been working on joyful methods of Maths teaching, through games and activities, with 2nd to 5th standards. The emphasis is on the children understanding and applying Mathematics. From our library of Maths teaching books the best activities have been selected to support numbers and numeration, operations, shape and geometry, measurement and recording data. Many teaching materials have been made and bought to use with the lessons. We feel that the children will be highly motivated and will be able to build mathematical concepts more easily.

& **The Bi-lingual Language Games project** is led by Vincent. We realised that Tamil teaching methods were tending to lag behind those applied in English and other English medium subjects. Vincent is exploring how far the language games introduced by Mike for English teaching can be applied to learning in Tamil.

These projects are still in progress but we feel sure that the teachers and students have already learned a great deal from work undertaken.

This year saw the conclusion of our project involving links with Seddlescombe School in Kent, England (part of AVI UK's "Youth Education and Training" project, co-funded by the European Commission). Co-ordinated by Priya, three New Creation classes studied *Celebrations*, a title chosen to bring out the characteristics of the cultures of the two schools. This international project has been a source of much delight as well as a lot of serious learning.

Kindergarten and 1st standard teachers have been producing materials to support the early years learning programme, combined with teaching through topics. We now have in place a full multi-sensory teaching scheme for English, using a combination of phonics, sight words and a bi-lingual vocabulary building programme. By the end of 1st standard all the children have reached an English reading level well ahead of where similar children were two years ago. In Tamil, many resources have been developed such as bingo games and large word cards with pictures. We feel that the children have a much better grasp of early Mathematics this year, since we have introduced the

maths teaching programme. It has also been good to see the children developing physical confidence and skills with the sport and body awareness equipment we acquired last year.

To end the year, New Creation School staged a full scale exhibition to which everyone was welcome and to which many visitors came. The exhibition began with a programme of dance and drama and guests were then invited to view displays of the children's work in art, claywork, tailoring, embroidery, computing, carpentry and other subjects. One highlight was the unveiling of our New Creation School website. In future you will be



Sue helping some children in an English lesson

able to learn about us at www.NCSchool.html.

Teaching materials were also on display at the exhibition so that visitors could understand a little more about our progressive teaching methods. One visitor commented:

"We are teachers from the USA and are excited to see such wonderful work in joyful learning. I get a really good feeling from this school, staff and students. Glad to see the students happy and full of life."

Difficulties

Only a short time ago, we were worried about the vacuum which would be left after the departure of Mike and Sue. We were delighted, therefore, when a highly experienced teacher and former head teacher from England visited New Creation. After much discussion and sharing with teachers, pupils, and others in Auroville, Anna has agreed to become the new Principal of New Creation School with effect from July. Anna is British and plans to make a long-term commitment to New Creation School and to Auroville.

An institution such as New Creation School can never afford to relax about money. Of course, we are supported by Auroville, but a lot of our work is also dependent upon sponsorship or donations from friends in the west. Earlier this year we hit problems as one large charity had to withdraw their support for our nutrition budget, leaving a shortfall of some Rs3,00,000 (around £4000). Our teachers immediately rallied round and formed a fund-raising group. I am happy to say that, at time of writing, our nutrition programme seems to be secure, at least for 2004-5. The long-term prosperity of the school will continue to depend upon the generosity of many friends.

Mike. Principal: New Creation School. April 2004

Matrimandir

Matrimandir Newsletter – August 2004

Digging for Perfection

During the last months we have been shifting the workshops on the eastern side of the Matrimandir out of the Oval area of the Inner Gardens.

Consequently, in June we were able to bring in an earthmover, a small excavator, to the cleared area to shape the last of the small petals that ring the Matrimandir. This small petal lies within the garden area named "Perfection" and is bordered by the gardens of "Harmony" on the south and "Existence" on the north.



In less than a week of intense work by the excavator, the shaping of this last low petal has been completed and now our gardens team has to give the final contouring to this wave-shape of earth. Once that is over, it will be the mason's turn to lay the concrete foundation on the sides and the crest of the petal that will finally be surfaced with red sandstone like all the other petals.

Getting ready for December

It is planned that in December, or soon thereafter, we will start work on the ceiling of the Inner Chamber to reduce the present nine openings there to a single central opening. To do this we will have to re-route the AC ducts towards the center; we will have to change the location (and type) of artificial light that now shines through the four openings in the ceiling; and lastly, provisions will have to be made for the installation of the new permanent heliostat that will bring the sun's ray into the Chamber.

To execute this work will take at least three months, during which time the Chamber will not be open for concentration. However, it is hoped that at least three

of the meditation rooms inside the petals will be ready by then so that people who want to meditate can sit there.

The three meditation rooms named "Equality", "Peace" and "Sincerity" are being readied to meet this deadline.

Granite, Granite, Granite!

For many of the early years the materials most commonly in use at Matrimandir were concrete and steel. Then came the years of working inside the Chamber, where marble, crystal and the pure white wool for the carpet were the chief ingredients. After that came period of disc making, and the new materials for us were glass and gold, in the form of the super thin sheets, that were used to make the two million tiles that cover the round discs mounted on the outside of the sphere.

And now? The material of the day is granite: granite in blocks, granite in slabs and even thin sheets of granite.

There are many quarries in our state Tamil Nadu which mine granite for local use and for export. From these not too distant quarries, we have been supplied with granite in several sizes according to the various needs. Here are some of the ways granite is being incorporated into the work:

- The flight of steps leading down from each of the four main entrances will be clad with thin sheets of "flamed- granite". This is the name given to a piece of granite whose surface has been treated by the application of heat, causing small flakes to pop off and yielding a uniformly rough, non-skid surface.
- To mark the foot of these steps the architect has designed a pair of sculptured granite blocks. Two of these blocks have so far been placed, and the others are being carefully crafted in a nearby workshop.

Then come the pathways; there are a few thousand meters of pathways in the Inner Gardens area, and a good portion of these are to be clad with a combination of granite and red sandstone slabs. The design for all these Oaths is still evolving, but one thing is sure: we are going to need a LOT of granite! This need has recently prompted several field trips to granite-cutting facilities nearby to bring ourselves up to date on how best to carry out the huge job of cutting. We have two big saws with set up for cutting stones on the site, but cutting slabs of granite, some of which are as much as

15 centimeters thick, is a tougher job by far. At the moment we are able to trim to size up to 30 slabs a day, but this is just a chip off the mountain when compared to the enormous requirement we have.

So all options are being explored, whether it be purchasing a new and bigger saw to increase our

cutting capacity, or ordering ready-cut and finished slabs from local dealers, or sending our stocked rough slabs to nearby industrial units for processing. The months ahead are going to see a lot of action on the granite front!

An Appeal - To complete Matrimandir at the earliest

This year the team at Matrimandir has taken up with renewed energy and commitment, the project to complete the main building and the twelve meditation chambers in the petals as soon as possible.

To complete Matrimandir two things are required:

Firstly there needs to be a team of dedicated workers committed to do whatever is physically required. This is Auroville's participation.

Secondly, there needs to be the financial resources for the labour and material required for the work. For this we need the goodwill and funds from our donors and well-wishers.

The need to hasten the completion of Matrimandir has been felt by the Auroville community, and measures have been taken recently to this effect. A new management has been put in place to bring about a renewed dynamism and a greater collaboration between all parties involved. More people have been called to join the various teams on site and, as a result, there is a noticeable increase in activity and greater productivity,

The priority is to complete the inside of Matrimandir as soon as possible. This involves completing the marble work of the inner floors and stairs, cladding and finishing of the two chamber entrance ramps, modifying the chamber's air conditioning system,

carrying out modifications to the ceiling of the chamber, replacing the tracking device which focuses the light beam on the crystal, and creating the inner skin of pink-orange material to match the colour selected by the Mother.



At the same time the outer face of Matrimandir will be completed, mainly completing the installation of the gold disks, and installing four golden "shields" and four huge four-petalled golden disks above and around the four entrances, finishing the entrance path ways, steps and doors, and the marble lotus pond below the structure. The twelve "petals" will also be completed, with their

meditation rooms inside.

Finally, the twelve gardens are to be created. The Mother considered the gardens to be as important as Matrimandir itself. The infrastructure phase of the gardens has already started.

This call is to invite you to join this endeavour and to participate by contributing generously.

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

Matrimandir will be the Soul of Auroville. The sooner it is there, the better it will be for everybody and especially for the Aurovilians.

The Mother 15/11/70

We deeply regret the passing of Shri Madanlal Himatsingka on the 30th of July 2004 at Bangalore. Madanlalji's tireless efforts to raise funds for the construction of the Matrimandir will be remembered here with gratitude.

A silent gathering in his memory was held under the Banyan tree on 31st July.

Other News

AVI UK Website

AVI UK has a 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. If anyone has ideas for inclusion please contact Martin on martin@aviuk.org.

A new Trustee to AVI UK

After serving as trustee since its the beginning, Michael Tait, our Auroville resident trustee, decided to resign. We thank him for his support for our work over the years. We think it very important to have at least one trustee who is resident in Auroville, and Alan Herbert has offered to join us as Trustee. He was formally appointed at a committee meeting in July, which he attended. Alan has been one of the editors of *Auroville Today* since its inception and lives in the Auroville green belt.

We also welcome Roy Wicks, Dianne Bowler and Jane Welfar as new committee members.

Our present committee is as follows:

David Widdicombe –
Chairperson and trustee
Sonia Dyne – Trustee & Vice-
Chairperson.
Caroline Davies – Trustee
Alan Herbert – Trustee
(Auroville)
Martin Littlewood – Secretary
& Projects Coordinator
John Mulrey – Financial
Administrator
Shirishbhai Patel
Forrest Corkery
Angiras Auro
Pat Kaye
Roy Wicks
Dianne Bowler
Jane Welfar

We are always looking for people who are willing to come along and help us with our work. If you are interested, please contact Martin at the address below.

New Auroville Group in Bristol

Following a very successful AVI UK meeting in Bristol in August last 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@amservice.com. Anyone interested in Auroville is very welcome to come along.

Auroville Today

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

Auroville Today, 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: www.aviuk.org.

Next issue

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

Address

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

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

SILVANO

It is with much regret that we announce the death of a dear friend Silvano. He passed away on 15th August (Sri Aurobindo's birthday) after a short illness. Many people who have visited Auroville will know Silvano, as he and his partner Tineke ran Centre Guest House for more than twenty years. He will be greatly missed.

