



Welcome to the Winter newsletter. In this issue we give you an update on the Auroville Tsunami work, along with news from the recent Auroville International meeting in Spain and from Matrimandir. We also report on the passing of a very dear friend Margaret. We include a subscription form with the newsletter, and would welcome your contribution to our work.

Organisation of Auroville

The evolving organisational structure of Auroville is often a mystery to those of us who see it from the outside, and sometimes for those who live there too! One can see a fine balance being attempted between a rigid authoritarian structure which is often seen in ashrams and monasteries and anarchy. The Mother once described the ideal structure as one of "Divine Anarchy", but this would necessitate a level of consciousness, both individual and collective much beyond that which is yet evident. The fact that Auroville has survived for so long with the lack of a rigid hierarchical structure, and with so much apparent freedom of the individual, is a miracle in itself, and is a testament to the force and the ideal which invisibly bind those who have chosen to live there. But problems there are, and increasingly Auroville is forced to consider rules and regulations to provide a framework for living this dream. It is interesting however, to read Mother's views on how Auroville should be organised:

On the 7th February 1969 the Mother granted an interview to Roger Anger, the French architect to whom she had entrusted important commissions in Auroville. Roger put to the Mother many pertinent questions about the way in which the work in Auroville might be organized to bring about the best results:

To build Auroville, do we need a method of working, organization, coordination?

Discipline is necessary to live. To live, the body itself is subject in all its functions to a rigorous discipline. Any slackening of this discipline results in illness.

What should the nature of this organization be? In the Present and in the Future?

Organization is a discipline of action, but for Auroville we aspire to go beyond organizations, which are arbitrary and artificial. We want an organization that is the expression of a higher consciousness working for the manifestation of the Truth of the Future.

Until we have a common consciousness, and the true and correct way of working collectively is in operation, what should we do?

A hierarchical organization gathered round the most enlightened center, submitting itself to a collective discipline.

Should we use methods of organization of proven efficiency, but based on human logic and the use of machines?

This is a makeshift to which we should submit ourselves only very provisionally.

Should we let the individual initiative manifest freely, personal action be impelled by inspiration and intuition, and turn down any suggestion which the individual concerned does not feel to be good?

To be viable, this would demand that all Auroville workers should be yogis, conscious of the Divine Truth.

Has the time come to aspire to, set up or attempt a general organization, or should we wait for the correct attitude and people?

An organization is needed for the work to be done. But the organization itself should be supple and progressive.

In this issue:

- ∨ Margaret
- ∨ Tsunami Update
- ∨ A New Project
- ∨ New Auroville-Village Initiatives
- ∨ International Meeting in Spain
- ∨ Matrimandir News
- ∨ Appreciating Ann
- ∨ Auroville Calendars for 2006
- ∨ Other News

If the solution is to wait, is it nevertheless necessary to define principles of organization and to prevent the occurrence of an uncontrollable disorder?

All those who want to live and work in Auroville must have: An integral goodwill, a constant aspiration to know the Truth and submit oneself to it; A plasticity sufficient to face the demands of the work, and a ceaseless will for progress so as to progress forever towards the ultimate Truth.

Finally, a word of advice: Be more preoccupied with your own faults than with those of others. If everyone seriously worked to perfect himself, the perfection of the whole would automatically follow.



Margaret

Our dear friend Margaret Fletcher passed away peacefully in July at the age of 95. She will be remembered as a friend of many Aurovilians and members of Auroville International and staunch supporter of Auroville. For many years we held our spring meeting at her flat in South Kensington, and she welcomed so many of us when we happened to be passing. We will miss her greatly. The article below was written by Alan for *Auroville Today*:

It was with both sadness and relief that we heard of the passing of Margaret. Sadness because she had been such a dear and supportive friend, and because, for me, she represented the will and excitement of always exploring new fields, new experiences, even while she never neglected the niceties of life - she was a superb hostess and cook, among other things!

Although she was unique, she also belonged to a rare and particular type of Englishwoman - well-bred, yet always willing, in their eminently courteous way, to leap barriers and challenge convention. I think that was one of the reasons she loved - and somewhat idealised - Auroville: the fact that here lived a bunch of nonconformists who, in their messy way, were trying to realize something utterly different.



Margaret was very modest about her own abilities to do the Integral Yoga. She found books by Deepak Chopra and Eckhart Tolle (author of 'The Power of Now') more accessible than the works of Sri Aurobindo. Yet for me she was a fine example of a sadhaka because she was always clear that consciousness work, consciousness evolution was, ultimately, the only work worth doing, and she was always eager to talk about the latest developments in the field.

Relief because, well, for several years now, she'd been telling us that she so longed to move on, that she couldn't understand why she was still with us. It wasn't simply tiredness- although since she could no longer get around her beloved London perhaps a little zest had gone out of her life - it was more her feeling that the next adventure for her lay beyond, so why couldn't the train just leave the station!

Dear Margaret, you welcomed and hosted so many Aurovilians, Ashramites and friends of the yoga over the years, you were the still, refined point of their whirling world. Now you're on your way and Mother is awaiting you at the next station.

Alan

Poem by Rabindranath Tagore read at Margaret's funeral ceremony

Our true life lies at a great depth within us.
Our restlessness and weaknesses
are merely stirrings of the surface.
We must daily retire in silence
far into the depths of our spirits
and experience the real life within us.
If we do this,
our words and actions will come to be real also.

Tsunami Update

The Auroville Tsunami Rehabilitation team has been active since the 26th of December, 2004, the day the tsunami hit the Asian coasts. During the last seven months a wide range of activities has taken place and many more are planned. The first three months were devoted to immediate emergency relief activities. Most of these activities, like the distribution of food, cooking materials and school materials, providing emergency psychological and physical healthcare, and the cleaning of affected villages have come to an end.

The following is a summary of all the projects and activities we are currently busy with and have planned for the next 24 months.

If you want to know the full story go to the Auroville web site (www.auroville.org) where there is a comprehensive and detailed report on all the activities .

Aim and target area of the Tsunami Team

We have made an overall program plan for the next 24 months. Our central aim was and still is to assist communities to quickly rebuild their lives to the level that existed previous to the disaster, or, preferably, to a higher level than that which existed before. To avoid creating imbalances between tsunami-affected villages and indirectly affected villages, we have decided that for selected projects, inland villages will be included in our program as well. *Concern*, who will fund a large portion of our program, has agreed to this. We are working now with 34 different hamlets or communities, all located along the coastline and in and around Auroville. Not all our projects necessarily cover our full target area.

Paalams : Village representation

In each of these 34 hamlets we will form a so called *Paalam*, meaning 'bridge' in Tamil. Each *Paalam* will consist of village representatives, appointed in consultation with the local Panchayat. To ensure full participation and a need-based approach, all our activities are first introduced and discussed in the monthly *Paalam* meeting in Auroville. Already in 17 villages the *Paalams* have been functioning very well for quite some time. The members have attended leadership training programs, information meetings about for example sanitation, legal issues, shelter construction, village infrastructure and many other issues. In 17 other villages *Paalams* are being organized right now. Additionally, each village will also have its own village-oriented development group, which will meet monthly to discuss development issue sand then carry out appropriate activities.

Currently, the Working Committee is motivating Aurovilians, and especially Tamil Aurovilians, based on the experience with the Kulapalayam Development Council, to form such a Council also in other neighbouring villages. To avoid duplication, wherever a Development Council is functioning, our team will fully cooperate with this Council.

Funding: donations and partnerships with other organizations

Our projects are partly funded by the generous donations we have received from Indian and foreign donors. We have formed a working partnership with *Concern*, a large Irish charity with an office in Chennai, who have been and will be financing considerable parts of our Livelihood and Eco-Restoration projects. For other components of our Program we are still negotiating with potential partners, such as United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

55 people working

Approximately 55 people, both volunteers and salaried, are directly involved in our activities. These include a dedicated group of rehabilitation workers, program and project coordinators, trainers, teachers, product designers, researchers, forest specialists, accountants and administrators. As more projects are being started, more people will be needed to make effective implementation possible.



Painting of the Tsunami by child from Transition School

PROJECTS

To reach our aim, we work in five separate but closely interlinked project fields:

• Community Strengthening

In order to strengthen the general community fabric and stimulate co-operation between villagers, a wide range of activities is being planned, such as: building up the *Paalams*, night schools, formation of youth groups and women groups and the organisation of twice yearly Bio Region Wide events, such as Women Day or Earth Day. In 11 villages Community Centres have been constructed.

• Livelihood

The Engine Repair Service has repaired almost 200 fishing boat engines and is still busy training a group of youths in engine repair and welding. Another group of students from tsunami-affected villages is receiving training in computer software and hardware. Our Educational Loan Scheme is enabling more than one hundred 10+2 standard students to pursue further practical studies. We have started an Enterprise Development program, with the basic aim to form new small sustainable businesses or improve existing ones. Training and production workshops for women, working with waste materials, such as cloth (Tsunamika!), plastics and paper are functioning.

• Ecological Restoration

Within two years a total of 100,000 trees will be planted along the coast in six villages. Three forest-dedicated Auroville nurseries are busy with taking care of the seedlings. This year approx. 15,000 seedlings will be planted, next year the remaining 85,000.



Fishermen from a village affected by the tsunami.

• Knowledge Centre/NGO-Coordination

Auroville has been officially appointed as the central point for knowledge resources and NGO-coordination for Villupuram district. Regularly most of the NGO's active in our district meet for coordination of activities and discussion on tsunami-related issues. We are also coordinating our activities with the Tamil Nadu Government Office of the Relief Commissioner and other NGO Coordination Centres along the coast. These

include the NGO Coordination & Resource Centre (NCRC) in Nagapattinam, Bhoomika Trust and UNDP in Chennai and Kanniyakumari Rehabilitation Resource Centre in Kanniyakumari.

• Shelter and Infrastructure

More than 100 temporary shelters have been constructed.. Auroville based architects have created nine house designs, all fitting the dimensional and financial conditions for new homes. Many meetings have taken place to ensure maximum input and participation in plan making from the future residents. In coordination with the Villupuram District Collector, two villages, Chinnamudaliarchavady Kuppam and Bommaiypalayam Kuppam, have teamed up with us. Here a maximum of 350 homes, including infrastructure, will be constructed. However, the residents of both villages have expressed a strong preference to be relocated, whereas the availability of suitable lands to build on is very limited. Until a solution has been found, construction activities will be pending.

Summary

If you want more information, have questions or good advice, don't hesitate to call, come to our office or contact us otherwise. Our intention is to inform you regularly about our activities, and more in detail than possible in this summary. For the most comprehensive information, please visit the Auroville Tsunami website: www.auroville.org/tsunami.

Auroville Tsunami Team

New AVI UK Project

Auroville International UK is working with Auroville Village Action and the Tsunami Team on a new project to be submitted to the European Commission early next year, based on the needs of the larger area identified, both from its long term experience, and from its recent experience of helping Tsunami victims. The area of work identified as key to the future of the region is that of education, and the preliminary objectives are as follows:

- To address the root causes of poverty in our bio-region by providing focused educational opportunities for our youth
- Poverty reduction through support for disadvantaged people in Auroville - Kaliveli bio-region designed to meet the basic needs and improve the quality of people's lives and reinforcing their own development capacities through skills training and institutional capacity building.

This project has grown out of a collaboration between AVI UK and Auroville Village Action Trust (Tsunami Rehabilitation) to fill a gap which was noticed in the

tsunami rehabilitation activities. To Aurovilians working with the villagers, it was clear that:

- 1) the real needs of the tsunami affected included vocational training, and
- 2) given the overwhelming number of NGOs and money focussed on tsunami rehabilitation, the role of Auroville would be to take a broader view.

This broader view would be to take a real interest in the 15-25 year old age group in the villages, and their need for vocational training and character building. The ancient agricultural society is changing into a wage-based competitive economy at an accelerating rate. The young are in need of guidance and training in how to earn a livelihood, how to take part in democratic practices, how to maintain their physical and psychological health in the midst of dizzying socio-economic change and ecological degradation. Responding already to the obvious need, there are many Auroville groups working in this area, providing training possibilities in trades from computer software to tailoring to organic farming. Progressive participatory pedagogy, sportsmanship and coaching,

leadership and communication skills, civil society awareness, personal growth - means and methods for imparting all these important values and qualities are also available in Auroville. The aim is to work with the villagers themselves, to create a model organisation to provide for their young people a comprehensive, value-oriented, pragmatic programme for self-development and success in their lives.

New Auroville-Village Initiatives

Following the experiences of recent months with the tsunami relief work and with the need for closer cooperation for the purchase of land, some new initiatives have come about, in an attempt to put the villages surrounding Auroville closer to the centre of the community's awareness, and to facilitate a more harmonious relationship between Aurovilians and their closest neighbours.

Village Development Councils

The Auroville Working Committee (the community's central administrative group) has started a new initiative with the aim of improving the relations between Auroville and the nearby villages, as well as of facilitating the harmonious coordination of the development projects in those villages.

Various meetings have taken place with village Panchayats (village governments), Headmen, Councillors as well as with Aurovilians coming from those villages and the units and working groups of Auroville involved in the implementation of village-related projects. It became clear to all that it was necessary to channel efforts and funds through a more centralised and coordinated system and structure.

This is what has been agreed in principle, and is being put into motion already for the local village of **Edaiyanchavadi**, on an experimental basis:

1. There will be an **Advisory Board** composed of Aurovilians experienced in village relations and village-related projects to give advice on the needs, projects and work to be implemented in all the nearby villages. The Advisory Board will incorporate also village Headmen and Panchayat leaders from each of the villages where the projects are to be executed, when the discussions about those specific needs and projects take place.
2. There will be a **Financial Administration Group** for deciding and monitoring the funds allocation for all the nearby villages. It is planned that the group will be composed, on the side of Auroville, of representatives from Working Committee, Auroville Council, APDC, SAIER, Land Service, ABC, and the groups/units of Auroville

Greta Jensen, projects consultant to AVI UK, has just been in Auroville, working with the project team to put together the project proposal, and to help build the capacity of the team to do the work.



A group of young fishermen from a village affected by the tsunami, with AVI UK's Greta Jensen (centre front) and members of Village Action.

implementing village-related projects; in addition, for each of the villages, an architect, a work coordinator and a monitor whenever applicable. From the village side, this Financial Administration Group will include Panchayat leaders and Headmen from each village.

2. A **Development Council** will be constituted in each of the villages in order to coordinate the projects to be implemented.
3. Whenever necessary, because of the nature of the project to be implemented, responsible architects, work monitors and work coordinators will be appointed, both from Auroville as well as from the specific village.

The first material manifestation of this new effort was started on Wednesday, October 26th, with the celebration of a very beautiful pooja to inaugurate the beginning of the work for the repair of the pond in Edaiyanchavadi. Funds have been pooled from various sources, including village contributions.

Village Coordination Team

The Village Coordination Team has been meeting since 27th July 2005. The Group was formed as an extension of the Tsunami Relief Village Coordination Team when the activity area was enlarged to include local villages as well as those directly impacted by the tsunami, requiring the participation of a more diversified group of Aurovilians. It has also incorporated some of the members of the Auro-Village Platform. The development of the Village Coordination Team has paralleled the Working Committee's formation of "Village Development Councils", and there is on-going cooperation between the groups.

One of the principal purposes of the Village Coordination Team is to review applications for micro projects (small co-funded village projects) which come in from the local villages (both tsunami-affected, and those surrounding Auroville). There are funds for supporting micro projects coming both from the project funded by *Concern*, (an international NGO), as well as from the Tsunami Relief and rehabilitation Funds. Aurovilians working in construction, electricity, greenwork and finance provide valuable inputs in considering the projects. Criteria have been created for micro project grants, and 36 proposals have been considered, out of which 22 have been approved.

The Village Coordination Team also receives progress reports on programmes being implemented in local villages, such as the provision of Educational Loans to

students in need of assistance, and proposals from groups working with the villages, for instance for assistance in organising activities such as seminars or sports days.

Some Village Coordination Team members attend "Paalam Meetings" (see Tsunami Update above), gatherings of representatives of the target villages, to get to know the village reps and their ideas and to let them get to know Aurovilians. The Inland Paalam meeting is held the first Sunday morning of each month, and the Kuppam (fishing village) Paalam meeting is held every two weeks.

Some Village Coordination Team members join field trips which are organised every Wednesday morning, to take an on the spot look at micro projects, enterprise development projects, etc.

Auroville International Meeting - Spain, September/October 2005

Last month, representatives of Auroville International from around the world met in Spain in the small town of San Feliu de Guixols, in Catalonia. In this beautiful place, with its rugged coastline overlooking the Mediterranean, we were joined by many Aurovilians and members of other groups associated with our hosts, AVI Spain, in their work for the realisation of the Mother's dream in Auroville. As messages from the participants continue to come in, it is clear that a special grace presided over this meeting and touched the hearts of all present. For this, due credit must go to our hosts who created a beautiful atmosphere from the start.

Every morning, our session opened with a ceremony in which a vase of flowers was passed from hand to hand in silence as we meditated on the meaning the Mother had given to the flowers chosen by our hosts. On the first day, all present took part in a 'game of consciousness' in which we were invited to write down our memories of a particular moment:

'Meeting between you and Auroville. Remember the first call, the real touch, the pure moment-try to be there again and write from that space.' When we had done that, we were asked a second question: Today here, now, where are you in respect to the Charter and the Ideal?

After our answers had been collected, they were placed in the centre of our circle on a drawing of the Auroville symbol with its five divisions, and five answers to each question were selected at random and read out.

Listening to these answers, we began to understand how much more important were the deep aspirations that unite us, than the occasional differences of opinion that confuse and divide.

Before the discussions and presentations began, we were reminded of an important aspect of our work which is too easily overlooked. In the Mother's words: 'I perceived how the creation of Auroville has an action in the invisible, and what action. It's not a material, outward action: it's an action in the invisible. And since then, I have been trying to make countries understand it,

of course not outwardly because they all think they are much too clever to be taught anything, but inwardly, in the invisible.' As co-creators of Auroville, all those who have come forward for this work need to understand that the inner growth of a consciousness that fosters and provides the conditions favourable to human unity is at least as important as the

realisation of the 'city the earth needs' on the material plane.

At the meeting in Spain, all the continents were represented: North and South America, Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe -an indication of the way in which Auroville International is expanding all over the world as more and more people are drawn to Auroville and the ideals of the Charter given by the Mother. When the time came to say goodbye, many of us wished to prolong the joyful sharing of the hopes and aspirations



begun during our few days together, and a number of emails were shared among the participants. Here is one of them:

‘This meeting was one of the wonderful ones, especially in the communication and understanding of human to human race. It was very tangible, the sense of the fraternity between the big family members of Auroville International, which grows deeper every year.

I feel always, there is only one earth and one humanity. So let's always work for the harmony, love and peace which can beautify this earth with human flowers. It did work out marvellously, in the soothing and wonderful place like San Feliu, of course with the sweetness of our

Spanish friends, their patience, understanding and love for us. Though there was a cyclone in the beginning, it glided by without making any havoc, through an inner work and effort, the view towards the calm sea in front of us, the magnificent and charming surroundings of the hotel and the splendid infinite blue sky’

Next year AVI will take the Auroville vision to South Africa; the following year to Canada; and in 2008 AVI wants to be part of Auroville's 40th Anniversary celebrations.
Sonia Dyne

Pictures of the meeting can be found on our web site at www.aviuk.org/spain2005pics.htm

Matrimandir

Matrimandir News.

Starting a New Phase Inside Matrimandir

One of the big news items this month is that the sand blasting of the ramp inside Matrimandir has been completed, in a preparation for its final painting. This marks a big step and a turning point in the task of completing the building's interior, for it is the end of the long and dusty phase of construction through which we have been passing.

Before the ramp work, there was the years-long job of finishing the marble work of the first and second level floors, the benches, the central staircase etc. During that phase everything inside the building was coated with a thick layer of white dust from the many polishing operations.

Now that it is over a big cleanup of the interior can begin. The entire structure, including the concrete pillars, the beams and ferrocement of the inner skin, and all the marble work will now be progressively brushed, vacuumed and washed so that the next phase of finishing can begin.

This will be the "painting phase", for not only will the ramp receive its final coats of corrosion resistant paint now, but the beams and ferrocement of the skin will be painted white as a first step towards installing the inner skin panels.

The ramp looks bare at present, with its railings and floor boards removed for the painting work. Access to the Chamber level and the roof of Matrimandir is provided, for the time being, by a long series of wooden steps which climb up to the Chamber door through the scaffolding that is being used to install the inner skin.

Chamber Ceiling Modification

Another step forward has been the completion of the construction at the top of the Chamber's sloped ceiling.

Work still continues up on the roof to prepare for the installation of the new AC ducts and the heliostat, but the Chamber itself has now been sealed off from that work so that the repainting of the ceiling can begin. Thus the two aspects of this work, inside the Chamber and on the roofs will now proceed simultaneously towards completion.

The new A/C system for the Chamber is also

well on its way to being installed and commissioned. With its new type of compressors this system is compact enough to fit into the restricted space within the double concrete pillars of Matrimandir, whereas the previous system had to be installed in the underground rooms at the edge of the Amphitheatre. This new system, somewhat more powerful than the old one, will not only cool the Chamber but will also provide some



cooler air to the levels beneath the Chamber which have so far had no cooling and have always been rather hot and stuffy.

Work on The Outer Surface of Matrimandir

The replacement of the waterproofing layer on the outer skin has proceeded rapidly during the last few months, and the entire North-West quadrant of the building has been completed. Though still not yet re-covered with discs, its white surface stands out in sharp contrast to the North-East quadrant which is now golden from top to bottom. If the pace of work can be maintained, we can hope to see the entire waterproofing work completed by next April or so.

In early September we received from Pune the three remaining sets of the large four petaled stainless steel discs measuring, 3.9 meters in diameter. One of these discs will be mounted over each of the four main entrances to the sphere. Soon the process of covering them with golden tiles will start so that they can be mounted on the Matrimandir in the coming months.

Concreting the Garden Pathways

The last two months have seen a lot of activity along the radial paths dividing the twelve garden areas. Teams are working to establish the concrete gutters which will serve as drains to channel heavy rainfall away from the Matrimandir. This will also protect the white marble lotus pond beneath so that it does not get flooded during the monsoon! These drains at the edge of each pathway slope down 30cm. as they reach the Oval road encircling the gardens, thus



Lotus pond below Matrimandir

providing drainage for the entire gardens area. Once again we see loads of cement arriving and concrete mixers working throughout the day to get the job done before the onset of the winter monsoon, likely to begin in mid October.

The prototype of the garden of Bliss continues to unfold, while designs for some other gardens are being prepared.

A Colourful Sight

Three ladies, dressed in overalls streaked with vivid red-purple have emerged from the Meditation room named 'Goodness' where they have just applied a coat of paint to the domed ceiling. Showing big smiles, they have clearly enjoyed this latest colourful work session.

The ladies head off to our stock room to collect more coloured paint powders. There, a whole rainbow of coloured powder is stored, - the colours needed to mix the final shades for all the 12 meditation rooms: Vermillion, yellow, brilliant green, scarlet and crimson. These bags of coloured powder are a delight to see!

With the rooms of Sincerity, Peace, Equality and Generosity already finished, the present push is to complete the

next two-Goodness (reddish purple) and Courage (Red)-by the end of September. This will bring to life half of the twelve rainbow-coloured meditation rooms in the Matrimandir Petals. When all twelve rooms are done they will stand in wonderful contrast to the pure white and gold of the Inner Chamber above.

We invite you to participate by making a contribution.

Donations can be made via AVI UK. Please send your donation to the address shown at the back page of the newsletter, or make a donation online at www.aviuk.org/fundraising.htm.

Then like a thought fulfilled by some great word
That mightiness assumed a symbol form:
Her being's spaces quivered with its touch,
It covered her as with immortal wings;
On its lips the curve of the unuttered Truth,
A halo of Wisdom's lightnings for its crown,
It entered the mystic lotus in her head,

A thousand-petalled home of power and light.
Immortal leader of her mortality,
Doer of her works and fountain of her words,
Invulnerable by Time, omnipotent,
It stood above her calm, immobile, mute.

Sri Aurobindo: Savitri (Page 573)

“Bring me a kilo of consciousness!”

Appreciating Ann

At 11 o'clock in the evening, Kuilapalayam is something of a ghost town. But while everybody else would have shut shop and gone to bed, likely or not, one small figure would still be bustling around with a bucket full of bread scraps, a crowd of dogs at her heels. Until recently, that is. For Ann, 'Animal Care' Ann, passed away in June after a severe illness.

The spontaneous outpouring of affection and appreciation from Aurovilians and villagers alike at the news of her death was evidence, if any was needed, that Ann was a very special person. Born in New Zealand, she came to Auroville in the mid 1970s. Coming from a farming family, she loved animals and, from the first it seems, was always surrounded by them. As she had some basic veterinary knowledge, Aurovilian friends started asking her to treat their pets. Word got around, and soon her constituency had spread beyond Auroville to Kuilapalayam and other local villages, where the condition of many of the animals was dire: the countless abandoned, wounded or terribly suffering tiny pups and dogs were the silent victims of poverty and ignorance.

Ann set to work to remedy this. On her old moped she carried a large tub which she filled with food scraps from the bakery and community kitchens before redistributing them to her 'children', the hungry village dogs. Once the feeding was over, the medication would begin.

As rabies is endemic in India, Ann, assisted for many years by Kittu and, later, Radhakrishnan, initiated a programme of mass-vaccination in the villages. “We set up a system,” explains Kittu. “We picked a few individuals from each village, and told them to contact us if there was any sign of a rabid animal.” Once a sighting was made, Ann and Kittu would track the animal (once for a full day all the way to Pondicherry), capture it and then put it to sleep. “Even with a rabid dog, Ann always looked for the most humane way to put it to sleep,” says Kittu. “This in itself was an example to the villagers.”

Her rabies work was the most high-profile, and dangerous, aspect of her work and perhaps her greatest social service, but there were plenty of other diseases she had to deal with. For example, canine distemper – a highly infectious disease which can lead to an agonizing

death for an animal – took up more and more of her time. The distemper vaccine is expensive, but through her contacts with vets (who were always happy to help her, often free of charge) and animal workers, Ann discovered that the far cheaper human measles vaccine is just as effective. She also discovered that large doses of vitamin C worked too. “She made many small discoveries like this,” says Kittu. “That is why it's important that all her efforts don't go to waste.” You only have to see the healthy animals in Kuilapalayam today to realize how successful those efforts have been. “As a result of our work, pups are healthier and more attractive, and because of that, people want them more and there are less uncared for dogs wandering around,”



she once explained.

Ann was on call day and night: “She was the most dedicated to her work I have ever seen in Auroville,” says Turiya. “She was a workaholic,” says Kittu, “She never took a break and I don't think she ever slept more than 2 hours a night. She was treating animals in villages stretching from Marakkanam in the north to Pondicherry in the south, all on her old moped. She needed a jeep, a team, but she never considered herself: she was a giver, a complete giver, that's how she wore herself out. Even in hospital she kept getting out of bed to greet her friends. We had to tell her, 'Ann, you're here to rest.' Near the end, when she was very ill, a doctor came to examine her. She told him, 'Don't come too close, you may get infected.' He was very touched. He said, 'I've never seen such a noble lady. She's so sick but she's only thinking about me.' And immediately he went to the chapel to pray for her.”

Ann's simplicity and humility caused many people to misjudge her. "When I came to Auroville and saw her for the first time," remembers Aryadeep, "she was radiating a pure and innocent simplicity, with the smile of a herdsman. I told myself, 'So in Auroville not all people are intellectuals or studying Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.' How wrong I was! She loved books: Sri Aurobindo's Life Divine was one of her favourites." Bhavana recalls that when Ann was living in Fertile she listened to tapes of Mother's Agenda all day long, learning French in the process. Aryadeep remembers asking her on one occasion if she would like him to bring her something from Pondicherry. "Yes, a kilo of consciousness," she replied. In hospital, near the very end, she asked a friend to put something on her behalf in the Auroville News and Notes. It was a quote from Mother: "Do not be sad – things happen because they have to happen and finally everything leads to the ultimate victory of the Supreme."

"I'm convinced," says Kittu, "that she was already transformed inwardly but many people didn't realize this because she neglected herself." In fact, Aurovilians were shocked to learn recently that for a long time she hadn't had a home but had been sleeping in a tiny room under the State Bank of India in Kuilapalayam. This led Amy and other friends to raise funds for a house and compound in which Ann could live and look after her needy animals. Unfortunately, it came too late.

"In many ways, she was not made for this world – she was too naïve, too trusting," says Kittu. "For example, she never wanted to ask anybody for money." "Sometimes," remembers Radhakrishnan, "she'd tell me she couldn't pay my wages. But then she'd go up the road and meet somebody who would spontaneously give her money – often exactly the amount that she needed!"

Despair on the Staircase

MUTE stands she, lonely on the topmost stair,
 An image of magnificent despair;
 The grandeur of a sorrowful surmise
 Wakes in the largeness of her glorious eyes.
 In her beauty's dumb significant pose I find
 The tragedy of her mysterious mind.
 Yet is she stately, grandiose, full of grace.
 A musing mask is her immobile face.

"Saint Ann. She always was," wrote her close friend, Bhavana, recently, "We loved to have her look after the rabid dogs, and she loved to do it. But she didn't inspire me to care for them, she 'overdid it' I felt. And yet, she was an exemplary woman – always striving to do her best, self-effacing, hard-working, caring."



Ann herself was anxious not to be portrayed as a latter-day saint. A few years ago, in the only interview with Auroville Today which, reluctantly, she agreed to, she told Jesse that "I'm often short-tempered and selfish." "Ann may not be perfect," observed Jesse after following her around for an exhausting day, "but the dogs of Kuilapalayam don't seem to mind. Although the small, skinny, sand-coloured almost-pup yelps and winces as she forces the distemper medicine down his throat, the moment she finishes the procedure and walks away, the animal rushes to her side with the air of a living being recognised for the first time in its life." Kireet sums it up for all of us: "You did a work none of us could. You were a beautiful woman."

(Ann Plummer, Aurovilian, 57 years. Died 25th June, 2005, cremated in Adventure.)

Her tail is up like an unconquered flag;
 Its dignity knows not the right to wag.
 An animal creature wonderfully human,
 A charm and miracle of fur-footed Brahman,
 Whether she is spirit, woman or a cat,
 Is now the problem I am wondering at.

Sri Aurobindo (Last Poems): October 1939

Calendars for 2006

Auroville Calendar

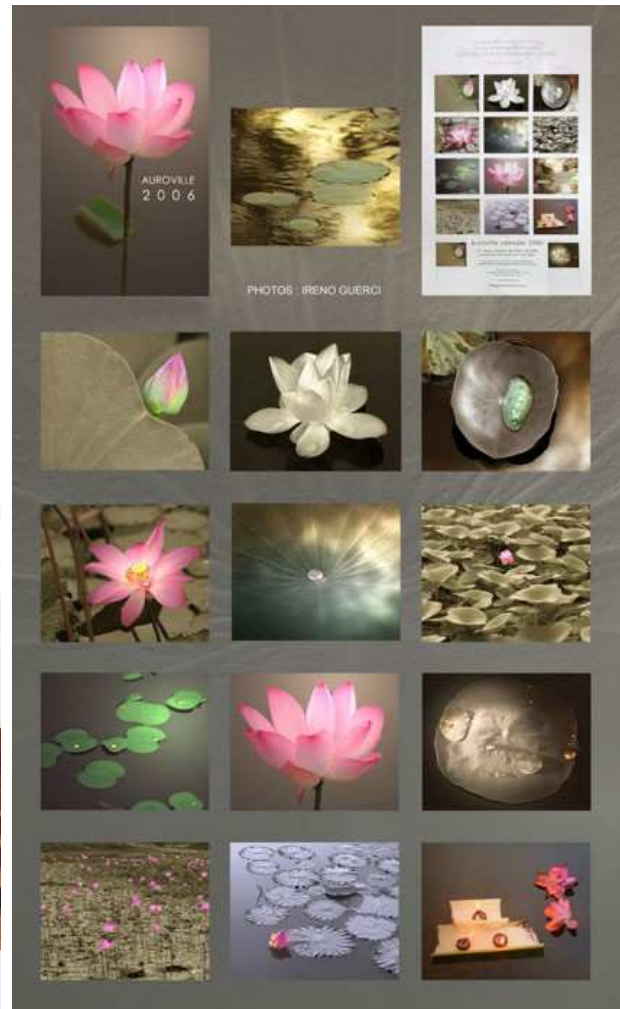
The 2006 calendar centres on the theme of the Lotus. It consists of 13 fine art photographs of lotuses by Ireno. Each month is illustrated with one photo. 50% of the profits will go towards supporting Future School, Auroville's High School, and The Royal Express, Auroville's alternative electric community transport.

Wall hanging type; spiral bound
Size 11 x 17.5 inches 27.9 x 44.5 cm



Photos by: Padmaja 10, Ganga 5.3, Inra 4.5, Iswari 5.15, Girard 6.7, Raju 8, Corinne 5.12, Ravi page 10/11

MATRIMANDIR - AUROVILLE 605101 - TAMIL NADU - INDIA
matrimandir@auroville.org.in - www.auroville.org/thecity/matrimandir/



Matrimandir Calendar 2006

The theme for the Matrimandir calendar 2006 is "Gold and the Supramental".

There are 12 photos, one for each month, with matching quotations from Savitri and one large photo on the back cover.

Wall hanging type; spiral bound
Size 12 x 17 inches 27.9 x 44.5 cm

Price £5.50 each, including postage.

Either send a cheque (payable to Auroville International UK) to the address on the back page or go to our online donations page (www.aviuk.org/fundraising.htm) and make your payment online. Please then send your order by e mail to info@aviuk.org. We are expecting the calendars soon, and hope to get them to you before Christmas.



Other News

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be in London in April. It will be held at the Auromira Centre:

126 Whitton Avenue East
Greenford
Essex, UB6 0PY

The date will be announced nearer the time and details will be given on our web site, along with a map.

Take a look at www.aviuk.org.

Regular London Meetings

We have started regular meetings in London, at David Widdicombe's house:

5 Albert Terrace
London NW1 7SU

They are held on a Sunday from 2:30 to around 5:30, and are a chance to explore the quieter and more spiritual side of the essence of Auroville, with readings from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and meditation.

Anyone is welcome to come. Please ring David on 0207 586 5209 if you are interested.

Next International Meeting

The next Auroville international meeting is to be held in Cape Town, South Africa in March 2006. It will be a chance for Aurovilians and members of AVI groups from around the world to meet and share with the people of South Africa. If anyone wishes to come, please contact Martin as soon as possible at the address below.

AVI UK Website

AVI UK has a website. It can be found at www.aviuk.org. Please take a look at the site, and find out more about what we do. There is more information about our projects, about making donations and how

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

We have a facility to make secure credit card donations online. These can be made for any purpose, either by choosing from a menu, or by sending an e-mail. Gift Aid tax relief can be arranged automatically, when a donation is made. If anyone has ideas for inclusion, please contact Martin on info@aviuk.org. We are always looking for new ideas for the site.

Auroville Today

For those who wish for a more detailed and up-to-date view of Auroville we would strongly recommend subscribing to *Auroville Today*. The magazine is produced in Auroville and is published monthly. It is an interesting and stimulating publication with news, comment and discussion about all aspects of Auroville life. Some of the articles we use in our Newsletter come from *Auroville Today*, so if they interest you, why not subscribe? If you are interested, please write to: *Auroville Today*, *Sincerity*, *Auroville 605101*, *Tamil Nadu, India*

The yearly subscription is £25.00 and cheques in £, can be sent payable to *Auroville Fund (Auroville Today)*, OR see enclosed form for our special membership offer with *Auroville Today* included.

NOTE: To save on our administration, would subscribers to *Auroville Today* who do not take advantage of our special membership scheme, please send their subscriptions direct to Auroville, to the address above and not to Auroville International UK.

Next issue

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

Address:

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

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