



In 2002, AVI UK received funding for its second project from the European Commission, it was for the regeneration of a type of forest known as Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF), native to the Auroville region. This type of forest is in danger of extinction – and many valuable indigenous species of trees with it – and the project aimed to regenerate this forest, both inside Auroville and in the surrounding region, and to educate people about the forest. The Auroville Botanical Gardens are an important offshoot of this project, and are managed by British forestry expert, Paul Blanchflower.

Making nature fun!

Exploring Auroville's Botanical Gardens

"That's a wild orange. And this one, *Buchanania Axillaris*, has an edible fruit. We're lucky. It's rare and difficult to germinate but this one came from rootstock. Now over there, the small tree with the beautiful white flowers, is one of my favourites, *Cerbera Odollam*. It never needs watering."

Paul is leading a small group of us on a tour of Auroville's Botanical Gardens. Work began on the Gardens in August, 2000, and today is an open day to let people see what's been achieved so far. It's quietly impressive. The basic infrastructure includes two wells and an extensive irrigation system, a seed room, two houses under construction, keet huts for volunteer workers, as well as a beautiful thatched education pavilion. Then there is the tree nursery, neat beds of 'heritage' vegetables and, the core of the Gardens, a 30 acre arboretum and a Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF) reserve.

"Most of the basic planting is almost finished," explains Paul. "We planted the TDEF reserve in the first year and we already have about 260 trees in the arboretum, one of each species. It's not ideal – we should have at least two of each in case one dies or is blown over, but we don't have enough space to do that." In fact, the original plan was for 100 acres, but only 50 acres have been acquired so far. Paul points to a forbidding grey wall which runs along the northern perimeter. "Behind that are the other 50 acres. We hope Auroville will purchase them soon."

The idea is that the flowering trees in the arboretum will form a circular walk. Inside them will come smaller specialist gardens of cactus, orchid etc. "Now that the basic infrastructure is there, the specialists are coming in. AuroNevi, who was one of the initiators of the project, moved the orchid nursery here 6 months ago. We'd also like to involve

sculptors, painters, to make the gardens lively. Now here, for example...."

We're standing in front of concentric rings of TDEF hedges in which gaps interconnect pathways. "It's a maze. I've been fascinated by mazes since I was a child and I always wanted to make one in Auroville."



Paul Blanchflower

It's a clue to what Paul and the other 'botanicals' are trying to do here: to make nature fun, accessible for the young. "The whole gardens are designed for education: they won't ever be public gardens for tourists. So every garden has to tell a story that will help kids understand nature better. The orchid garden, for example, will be all about how plants and insects evolve together."

The educational programme has already started. Twice a week students come from New Creation, once a week from Udavi School. The resident teacher is Kundavi who used to teach environmental studies at the Crocodile Farm up the East Coast Road.

"It's a perfect environment for learning," says Paul. "The kids ask 'What is this TDEF?' We explain. 'But what does it look like?' We take them to the arboretum to show them specimen trees, then into the TDEF reserve

so they can experience what it's like to be in that unique environment. Alternatively we take them to the maze. Inside are paintings of animals, so we can talk about the wildlife of the TDEF. We already have porcupines in the Botanical Gardens!"

The next step, says Paul, is to build an educational centre for exhibitions and showing nature videos. "We see ourselves serving a catchment area of 30 kilometres radius – about 40 schools – so we'll also need a bus. Within 5 years I expect that we'll have 2-3 different groups of schoolchildren visiting the

In this issue:

- ✧ **Financially Speaking**
- ✧ **AVI UK Projects**
- ✧ **Auroville Meets Africa**
- ✧ **The Origin of Auroville**
- ✧ **New Creation School Newsletter**
- ✧ **A New Creation Experience**
- ✧ **Matrimandir News**
- ✧ **Other News**



Garden daily. For the really keen ones, we'll start up eco-clubs. We'll take them up the canyons on full moon nights.

“Kids don't get taught much about the environment at present. And if they do, it's usually classic clichés about planting more trees because it's good for the planet. Without context, that's just a slogan. Yet you see some kids come here with an incredible interest in nature. So it's all about drawing them out, giving them a place to express that...”

But surely all these plans will cost a rupee or two? “I've written a five year education project for £240,000 which includes an education building and a support staff of seven. At present it costs £3000 a year to run this place. The nursery almost pays for itself and we get financial help from the Forest Group, but we still have to find £1800 annually.”

Paul hopes they will get contracts to landscape hotel gardens with drought-resistant TDEF plants and trees. “Then the nursery would start making a profit and contribute to the upkeep of the Gardens. But so far I've found that whenever you really need the money for development and you're ready for it, it comes.”

So what, ultimately, is his motivation? To change the world through making as many children as possible environmentally-conscious? “That's too big. All I'm trying, as an individual, is to make a valid contribution. That's a good enough target to head for. And, unlike changing the world or even Tamil Nadu, dealing with kids from forty schools is finite, that's doable.

Alan, from an article in Auroville Today.

FINANCIALLY SPEAKING ...

What has AVIUK been doing during the last 6 years?

For the relatively small charity we have successfully managed some major projects. For example: –

	Funds transferred to Auroville
EC Education (village education project)	£150,000
EC TDEF (tropical forest project)	£270,000
Gateway (Auroville development project)	£600,000

These projects have considerably benefited Auroville, the local environment and the surrounding villages. In addition, we have managed the donations for Matrimandir, Land, New Creation School and many other projects worth £200,000. So we have passed on to Auroville well over 1.2 million pounds.

How has this been achieved?

Some years ago we decided to invest in the resources needed for a more professional approach towards grant application and development and general running of the charity. In the past, all the work of our organisation was done by our members in their spare time, but more recently we decided to employ a part time Projects Coordinator and to take on a Development Consultant where needed. Without these people, none of this work could have been done.

Where does AVIUK want to go?

We want to do more of the same! We are currently in the early stages of applying for two major grants (one from the European Commission and one from the British Government). These grants will fund a new project providing livelihood skills training for local people in the area around Auroville - a need highlighted during the work done to support Tsunami victims. There was an article in our last newsletter about this new project.

We also want to continue to manage the regular donations for projects in Auroville, provide newsletters, organise meetings and talks and generally be an open communication and information channel.

Problems

A generous donor provided the funds to start our more professional and outgoing approach. Then once we were successful in our grant applications and we started to manage projects, there were specific management funds within these projects which covered our grant development and other related costs.

Unfortunately, the last major project came to an end recently and we now need funds to continue our grant application and development work.

How big is this problem?

At the moment AVIUK's operating costs exceeded our operating income by approximately £5000 and this was only after one consultant worked free of charge last year for 3 months. We have covered this shortfall from our reserves but the situation cannot continue for too long.

What is the way forward ?

We need donations for Grant Development to help AVIUK through this period to enable us to maintain our fund generation work otherwise this work may have to stop.

So if any one would like to support this work please send cheques payable to Auroville International UK with a note saying the donation is for Grant Development.

*John Mulrey,
Treasurer*

AVI UK Projects

Auroville Youth Education, Research and Training Project

This was our first project co-funded by the European Commission, starting in 2001, and supported work being carried out at Isai Ambalam School, Life Education Centre, Ilaignarkal School and New Creation School. These are all run by Auroville, providing education for village children, from pre-school age, up to 18 years old, and the project supported and enhanced the work of these facilities, enabling more village children to be better educated.



The Restoration of the Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest

In January 2002, the charity signed its second contract with the European Commission for a project in the field of the Environment, specifically Tropical Forests. This project worked to document and restore portions of the

tropical dry evergreen forest (TDEF) of the Coromandel Coast (an area which includes the Auroville bioregion) and develop a way to maintain them using Shared Forest Management, aiming to reverse the degradation of the forest in the region. This is a unique and vitally important forest type, found only in this part of India. It provides a rare biological richness due to its very high species abundance, but is now close to extinction, as only 0.01% still survives.

Gateway Project

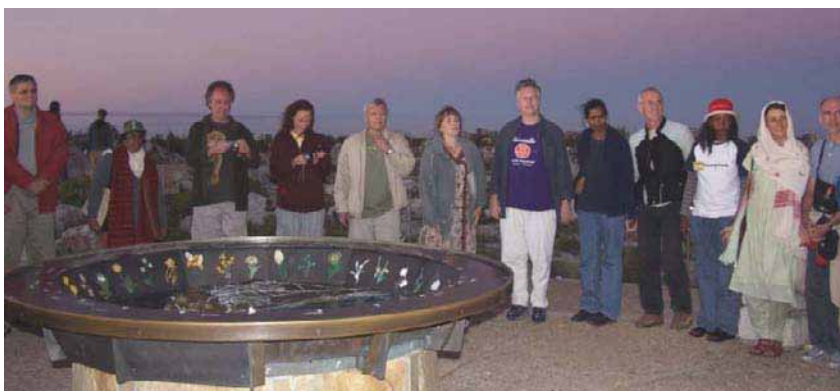
Through an Auroville project called "Gateway", AVI UK helped to support a number of different projects in the fields of Education, Communication and Community Development. The projects were funded by a substantial private donation to Auroville, channelled through AVI UK.

Auroville Meets Africa

In March 2006 we had our first Auroville International (AVI) meeting on African soil. No better place could have been chosen as a venue than Cape Town which is known as the Mother City of South Africa. Africa and Auroville are both places of a new beginning, Africa being the cradle of humanity and Auroville striving to become the cradle of a new society. We were reminded of the Mother's own physical connection with the African continent through her mother coming from Egypt. So there may be a deeper significance to our holding the meeting in South Africa at a time when Matrimandir, the House of the Mother and golden symbol of the highest consciousness, is approaching completion.

This feeling of deep underlying importance was most tangible when we visited Table Mountain. With its incredibly strong physical presence it is regarded by many as the basic, Muladhara chakra of the world. Standing on top of Table Mountain at sunset, holding

Town. From the Ashram came Dr. Chamanlal Gupta, Dr. Alok Pandey and Sraddhalu Ranade, Auroville sent fourteen members, five of whom were of Indian and two of African origin, and AVI representatives came from nine different countries. Altogether people of 19 different nationalities joined the meeting, a beautiful assortment of colours and languages, out of which the local Xhosa language with its amazing click consonants attracted the greatest attention.



Nineteen nationalities joining together at the top of Table Mountain

hands in a big circle, chanting OM together, our African friends singing "Nkosi sikelel' iAfrica" (Lord, bless Africa), the South African anthem and our Indian friends answering with "Vande Mataram" - this aroused more than sentimental feelings!

For the first time at an AVI meeting the three bodies founded by the Mother - the Ashram, Auroville and Auroville International - were well represented in Cape

During the first three meeting days we stayed at Lynedoch Sustainability Institute and EcoVillage, just outside Cape Town. These days gave us an experience of the townships around Cape Town, with their activists and community projects. Some of us lodged in one of the townships, with warm-hearted black African families opening their homes to us. Our guided tours through the township revealed a lot of the social problems South Africa is still facing: the different populations still don't really mix, townships are still predominantly either "black" or "coloured", with the white population close to zero. The family structures are often shattered, with an overwhelming percentage of single mothers - the legacy

of AIDS but also at least partly a result of black labour policies of the Apartheid regime which systematically separated men from their families. There was also a high rate of alcoholism and related violence and a general lack of self confidence which results in inertia and fatalism. It was uplifting to meet wonderful, dedicated people working in the townships to encourage women's and youth groups and support other educational initiatives. Some seed money was collected at the meeting for a crèche in a township which will be called "Auroville".

A visit to Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela has spent most of his 27 years of imprisonment and many other freedom fighters were incarcerated, left another strong impression. Our tour guide brought us to the lime quarries where Nelson Mandela and his comrades were subject to hard labour, damaging their eyes in the burning sun reflected by the brilliant white lime. But instead of being physically and psychologically-broken, the political prisoners started in the quarries lessons in all kinds of subjects, thus laying the knowledge foundation for the society they were aspiring to build. What an incredibly strong example of the power and ultimate victory of human dream and vision over the most adverse conditions!



A typical view of a South African township

win lasting peace and happiness unless people are ready for a change of consciousness. The next presentation impressively showed how far South Africans are already prepared for this change. Ginn Fourie, a white mother whose daughter had been killed 1993 in a bomb attack, spoke together with Letlapa Mphahlele, a black member of the former militant wing of the Pan African Congress who had given the order for the attack. They met in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings and now work together to help heal the wounds of the past. As Ginn put it, "It is only at the moment when you can identify with the other person that you can be liberated yourself"

I don't have enough space in this article to mention all the extremely interesting presentations from Africa and Auroville. But I have to mention the wide variety of cultural performances we enjoyed, with classical Indian and modern African and Brazilian dance, singing, reciting poems - we had two young black African poet-rappers showing their great skills and Meenakshi answering with a poem dedicated to the youth of Africa - a one-woman play written in prison, a wide variety of films and videos and more.

A third part of the meeting was dedicated to the AVI Board meeting and General Assembly. The venue was the Temenos Retreat Center, which is dedicated to bringing world religions together. A Lakshmi statue was waiting to be consecrated there and the Temenos community was delighted to have Meenakshi, Sraddhalu and Venkat perform the consecration ceremony. There are major changes in AVI since our former chairman Sonia Dyne (AVI UK) resigned due to personal reasons. The new chairman is Julian Lines (AVI USA) and the vice-chairpersons are Sonia Dyne and Toby Neuman (AVI Netherlands). We also said farewell to our previous Auroville representative, Tine, thanking her for her many years of dedicated service and for helping our new representative, Kathy, familiarise herself with the work.

Finally we expressed our deep gratitude to Jasmin and Aravinda Maheshwari, our AVI South Africa liaisons, for their immense dedication and untiring efforts to make this meeting happen.



Jinn and Letlapa give their moving talk about reconciliation

The second part of our meeting was dedicated to presentations and exchange. Ms. Ruchira Kainboj, High Commissioner of India, gave the opening speech. She spoke of the bond that eternally connects South Africa's with India's freedom struggle, for Mahatma Gandhi organized his first Satyagraha campaign in South Africa. Alok and Sraddhalu started the presentations with talks on "The Ideal of Human Unity in the Light of Sri Aurobindo", reminding us that no outer system can ever

“Ubuntu”, the underlying spiritual principle of the South African Rainbow Nation, describes in one word the idea of equality and dignity of all people, the sisterhood and brotherhood of all mankind and the sacredness of life. It felt as if the ubuntu spirit touched us throughout the

meeting, evoking the impression of Auroville's soul meeting the soul of Africa.

*Friederike
A VI Secretary
(For more details go to www.auroville-africa.org)*

Our Deepest Fear

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate,
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond
measure.

It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.
We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,
talented, famous?

Actually, who are we not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world
There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that
other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are born to manifest the glory of God that is within
us.

It is not just in some of us, it is in every one of us.
And as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give
other people permission to do the same.
As we are liberated from our own fear, presence
automatically liberates others.

*Attributed to a speech by Nelson Mandela
Written by Marianne Williamson
Found written on a wall of a house in the Khayelitsha
township near Cape Town.*

The Origin of Auroville

At our spring meeting at the Auromira Centre, Sonia Dyne gave a fascinating presentation about the Mother's vision for Auroville. She has written down her talk and we publish it here.

“Even if you don't believe it, even if all the circumstances seem quite unfavourable, I KNOW THAT AUROVILLE WILL BE. It may take a hundred years, it may take a thousand years, but Auroville will be because it is DECREED”. (The Mother's Agenda 21.9.1966)

Mother always spoke about Auroville as a place already existing, awaiting its time. She called it the 'city the earth needs' and it is true that from earliest times the imagination of mankind has been haunted by the fabled names of lost cities or continents below the sea, places of spiritual power and material wealth. Myth and legend bear witness to this need of the human psyche for a place of transformation, for a sacred space where, as Joseph Campbell wrote, at any time the temporal walls may dissolve to reveal a wonder....

How far back must we go to find the true origins of Auroville? How long did this 'dream' lie dormant in the consciousness of the Mother? There are indications that the origins of Auroville, as a concept of the Mother, can be traced back to a remote past. On several occasions the Mother herself spoke of earlier incarnations in ancient Egypt. It is not surprising then that comparisons have been made between Auroville and the 'city of the horizon' built by the Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) in Upper Egypt around 1369-75 BC. This city was remarkable in its conception and had a profound effect upon human consciousness in its place and time. The old

gods of Egypt and their elaborate rituals were abolished in favour of a form of worship of the sun's disk seen as the symbol of life-giving energies that, unlike the old gods, were never represented in any human or animal shape. Like Auroville, Akhenaten's new city was dedicated to the service of Eternal Truth (Ma' at).

Many people have been struck by the similarity between the beginning of the Auroville Charter:

Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole.

and an inscription discovered at Akhenaten's city

Here is the place that belongs to no prince, to no god. Nobody owns it. This is everybody's place. The earth will find joy in it. Hearts will be happy in it.



Akhenaten and his family worshipping the "One God" Aten

In his book 'The Mother' Georges Van Vrekhem quotes the words of a French teacher at the Ashram school: *In reply to this question (concerning Akhenaten) I had put to her, Mother let it clearly be understood that she had been Queen Tiy, the mother of Akhenaten.....she specified that Akhenaten's revolution was intended to reveal to the people of that time the unity of the Divine and his manifestation. This*

attempt, the Mother added, was premature, for the human mind was not yet ready for it. It had, however, to be undertaken in order to ensure the continuity of its existence on the mental plane.

If, as it seems, the idea of Auroville was latent in the Mother's consciousness even before her arrival in Pondicherry, it could not be realised concretely until two crucial events had taken place. The first was her meeting with Sri Aurobindo in March 1914, and the second the 'supramental descent' of February, 1956, which her collaboration with Sri Aurobindo had made possible. Sri Aurobindo had told her, *With the advent of the supramental force on earth, EVERYWHERE there will be a response.* A few years later she would issue her first public statement on Auroville:

Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.

Numerous references in the Agenda suggest that the vision of Auroville did not come all of a piece, but was revealed to the Mother over a period of time. Surendra Nath Jauhar describes a meeting with the Mother when she told him about 'a wonderful dream'. The dream was written down and became the document we all know:

There should be somewhere on earth a place that no nation could claim as its sole property; a place where all human beings of goodwill, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the Supreme Truth...

This is perhaps the first direct reference to the future Auroville, but the time for the realisation of the dream had not yet come. A still earlier document, dating from 1953, contains the Mother's vision of a future 'international zone'. It forms part of a detailed proposal for a new International University Centre, in which, the Mother said the cultures of the different regions of the earth will be represented here in such a way as to be accessible to all.

The Mother always made it very clear that her ideal of unity had nothing to do with a featureless uniformity. Her ideal was a harmony and balance in which all the great achievements and aspirations of diverse cultural traditions would find their destined place within the whole. The participation of the entire world in the new venture was especially important to her. From the beginning, this universality was symbolised by the inauguration ceremony on 28th February 1968, when young people from 121 nations and 23 Indian states placed a handful of earth from these countries in a lotus-shaped urn. Soil from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram was carried by Nolini, emphasising the indissoluble bond between these two foundations presided over by the Mother.

The Agenda provides us with a fascinating insight into the Mother's vision of Auroville as it developed over time and reveals how closely it was linked with events in the world outside India. It should be remembered that at the time of Auroville's foundation, the 'Cold War'

between Russia and the United States was at its height, and the threat of a nuclear catastrophe seemed ever present. On 21 September, 1966, the Mother voiced her concern about the world situation and the future role of Auroville. She spoke of her *clear vision that Auroville was a centre of force and creation with, one could say, a grain of truth, and if it could expand and develop, the very movement of its growth would be a reaction against the catastrophic consequences of the arms race. It is interesting that there was no premeditation behind the birth of Auroville; it was simply, as it is always, a Force that acts, a kind of absolute that manifests, and it was so powerful.....I obeyed an order, without thinking about it.....* At that moment she saw clearly that the creation of Auroville would have an effect on the whole world, 'an action in the invisible'.



Sonia Dyne

The mother's conception of Auroville was characterised by an inspired simplicity. The creation of the Auroville Charter, as related in the Agenda on 7.2.68, is a wonderful example of her practical insight into the needs of the moment, seen in the light of an eternal Truth. She takes a black felt-tip pen and spells out in large letters the four points of the charter; encompassing the aims and purpose of

Auroville in words so exact and comprehensive that nothing needs to be added and nothing can be taken away:

1. *Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.*
2. *Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress and a youth that never ages.*
3. *Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.*
4. *Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity.*

When it was done, she said, *It is not I who wrote that.... I noticed something so interesting: it comes as an imperative, there's no discussion; I write it down, I HAVE TO write, whatever I do. And then, when it's gone it's gone! Even if I try to remember, it's gone! So it is clear that it does not come from here: it comes from above.*

Auroville is much more than an experiment in community living. Its true origins are in the future as well as in the past, for it exists eternally in the Consciousness that embraces time and space. To this eternal dimension, to this vast potential for a transforming action 'in the invisible' we have as yet no access. Sometimes we catch a glimpse when a little effort appears to produce results out of all proportion,

just as Sri Aurobindo said that it would in the 'hour of God'. We see a small group of young people from opposing nations plant trees for peace in Auroville and the Berlin wall comes down. We are reluctant to believe there could be any connection – surely life is more complicated than that? But what if the 'complications' are a veil of falsehood, a fake 'reality' to which we all consent? What if a new light breaking upon the world is using us to build a new consciousness?

Auroville is a way of getting things done, a new way that has never been available before. So what does it mean to be an Aurovilian? What is it that the Mother saw so clearly in her vision and wanted people to discover for themselves? The guidance given by the Mother to those who wanted to be Aurovilians emphasised first of all the need for the inner discovery. *At the centre there is a being, free and vast and knowing,*

who awaits our discovery and who should become the active centre of our being and our life in Auroville. All other guidance given by the Mother centres about one crucial point: the fulfilment of one's desires bars the way to the inner discovery which can only be achieved in the peace and transparency of perfect disinterestedness.

Auroville is a mystery, and will remain so while our human mentality continues to prefer its endless debates, its preferred plans, its personal ambitions, to a simple action conceived in the mind's silence and carried out with perfect sincerity in a spirit of goodwill. As the Mother never tired of reminding us, *La vraie chose est tellement simple.*

Sonia Dyne (From a talk given at the Auromira Centre, London, on 23.4.2006).

New Creation Bilingual School Newsletter, June 2006

To all our friends. Welcome on board!

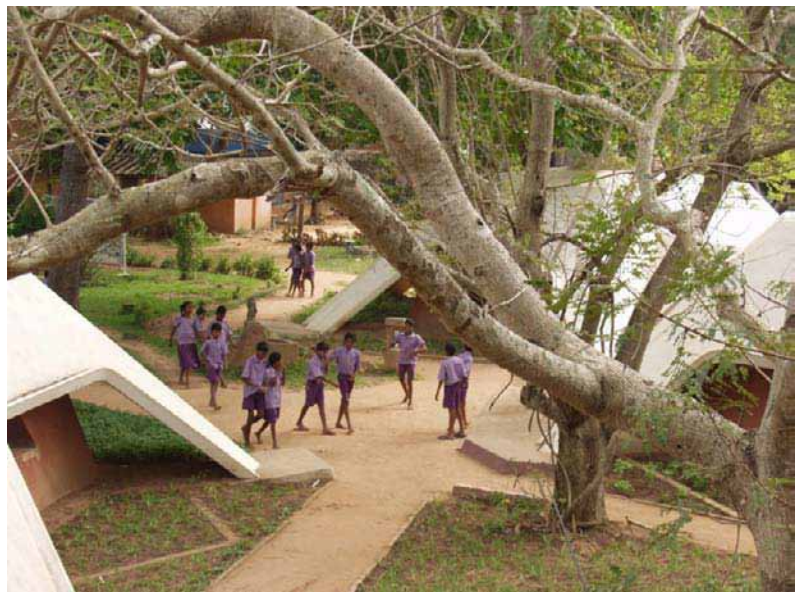
Once again we want to give you glimpses of the busy, buzzing life here on campus, of our achievements and the challenges we faced. Most of all, we wish to offer you the opportunity to participate in this demanding Auroville venture of direct involvement with youngsters from the villages nearby.

Activities for the students

One of the special features of our school is special classroom project work. Special project money received via SAIER is divided among the 8 grades, and the teacher or teaching team of each class chooses a particular topic which is used for all subjects in varied and often playful ways. Project displays, exhibitions, paintings, songs or theatre plays are prepared, after which the class concerned gives separate presentations to both a lower and a higher class. The entire school and even Auroville may be invited. Also an exhibition will always take place for special achievements in the optional classes, such as wood and clay work, embroidery and tailoring.

This encourages and brings the children together, enabling them to learn to perform in public in both Tamil and English. The topics this year were wild and domestic animals; water; plants and vegetables; sun, earth and moon; creating story books; Tamil culture; and measurement. For this last project the children measured their classrooms and the entire school campus, and even went 40 kms by train to the town of Villapuram to get a sense of distance - many of them had never ventured further than Pondicherry before.

A group of older students also visited ancient Tamil sites in Kanchipuram, the Planetarium in Chennai and met with professional sculptors and potters in Mahabalipuram. The middle grades made field trips to Auroville's Botanical Gardens, Pitchandikulam Forest, Siddharta Farm and Brihaspati Farm. For the smaller kiddies, trips to Pondy's Botanical Garden and Ousteri



Lake were organised. We most sincerely thank all who helped us fund and organise these educational outings!

The teachers and children also organised a large exhibition of all their work and held it, for the first time, in the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture. The displays were enriched by small scientific experiments which the students proudly performed with new science materials they received via the Foundation of World Education in USA.

Neither the parents nor the school could afford to send the children for summer camps organised by Auroville in the mountains of Tamil Nadu, but after a plea for help in the Auroville news, plus some additional support from SAIER, we were able to organise a 10 days Summer Camp on campus. The children helped in the morning

with clean-up work, and in the afternoons did puppet-making, language and science sessions, theatre training,



embroidery etc, and made several excursions into Auroville, even a visit to a magician! It was great fun, and the campus is spic and span again. We warmly thank all who made this possible.

Activities for the teachers

Rod and Kirti, two Auroville-connected educators from USA, in collaboration with Françoise, an Aurovilian teacher-trainer, have been regularly working with the school's teachers on topics such as improving the curriculum, and designing useful lesson plans and assessment techniques. While this serious involvement with the 20 teachers will be continuing next year, it was also decided to encourage the teachers to interact regularly with teachers and students of other Auroville schools. A first such contact with Transition School opened up a world of possibilities, enriching teaching materials through the use of texts in the Transition School library.

For the teachers, two 1-day field trips through various Auroville settlements were organised and, a new feature, a 2-day 'personal development' course was offered by Aurovilian Sonja, a qualified Human Element trainer. The teachers, who are mostly from Auroville's local environment, had never been exposed to such a course before. They were drawn into an entirely different way of seeing themselves and each other, and began communicating in a completely new way. This is seen as a direct step towards enhanced self-knowledge in the light of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's teaching; arrangements have been made for follow-up courses in the coming school year. There is also contact with a teacher from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram School and collaboration is strong.

Teachers' residence

Next year the school will have an official teachers' residence. This is being constructed in 'Protection', an Auroville settlement within walking distance of the school. It's a modest two-floor building, built from a much-appreciated Indian government grant that may house two families and three bachelor teachers. A nearby house will be included in the complex and may serve as accommodation for professional educators who come

and assist the school. This will be a site for future exchange between educators from different cultures.

"Loving teaching and joyful learning"

In this issue, we introduce two of the individuals regularly working in the school. The subtitle comes from a seminar given by Thich Nhat Hanh and was pointed out by Simon, a German student and 'civil servant' who decided to do his social service by working in our school. During the past half year, Simon conducted non-violent communication workshops for our teachers and other Aurovilians, sharing his communication skills through role-plays and exercises. Simon assisted in English classes, in field trips, in shooting photographs and videos of dramas and plays, singing, and by creating games and songs. His research was "... about finding out what we enjoy doing, experiencing and hearing, and how we can make the lives of others and our own more wonderful by listening to what is in our heart, by listening to what is important to us." Simon's presence was very much appreciated by children and teachers alike, and he may come back to stay.

Aurovilian Mala originally comes from a village nearby. She joined the school in 2003. Accompanying herself on a small harmonium, Mala teaches music and singing to groups of fifteen children at a time. Mala and the children sing whenever there is a special school occasion. They sing hymns, devotional songs, folk songs or sometimes, even, songs from popular cinema, but, says Mala "they must have a meaning!"

Future Plans

The school's support group, which dates from early 2005, keeps contemplating the betterment of the school on all possible levels and is making plans to significantly upgrade the entire school area. We dream of an attractive, welcoming, clearly defined and semi-enclosed campus with adequate facilities for about 250 children.



We want to provide a safe, healthy and joyful education



New Creation Principal, Shankar, with Mauna from the Support Group

Principal Shankar, Janet, Mauna, Suriyagandhi, Priya and Core Group members, along with all the school's children, teachers, other personnel and friends.

A New Creation Experience

Dianne and her husband Norman, originally from the UK settled in Auroville around two years ago. They live in the community of New Creation, right next door to the school. Dianne talks of her experiences of living in such a vibrant community. The article was first published in *Auroville Today*

When I think of New Creation I think of the entrance with the beautiful old tamarind trees and the taxi drivers in their white shirts playing cards or polishing their taxis or just sleeping in the shade. And Kumar's bike shop where he is always willing to fix a chain or put bits back on my moped, and the taxi office, a constant buzz of phones and important activity.

My husband and I were guests in New Creation, on and off for five years. Finally we just stayed on and didn't go home any more. New Creation is a unique community, sort of a Western one horse town with a metal workshop, a school and a crèche, a handicraft unit, a pottery, and guest

houses spread out on each side of the red earth road that runs through the centre.

All this sounds very hectic and noisy but somehow it isn't, as there is always just a calm buzz and a sense of purposeful activity. You'd think guests wandering around would be intrusive, but they seem to absorb the green calmness, and actually it's nice to have some new blood around the community, and some help in the school. We have made friends with many of them and

with high standards for children from Kuilapalayam and the surrounding area. Talks are being held with André, the overall supervisor of the New Creation settlement, as well as with Suhasini, one of Auroville's architects, but we realise that first and foremost attention has to be given to our immediate daily needs. These are to maintain and enhance the present educational and nutritional programmes, to increase the number and kinds of opportunities for teachers' development, and to offer extracurricular activities, such as summer camps for students.

Good cause

Knowing that you are interested in our school, we are sending you with this newsletter a write-up with a breakdown of these needs, and if there is any particular item or activity you wish to adopt or take up, please let us know. Ours is one of the few schools where all children are welcomed and where everything - education, food and books - is given for free. A good cause indeed!

Thanking you most warmly on behalf of the children for your support and friendship.



Dianne

they come over for Sunday breakfast. There are six family houses here, scattered around at the far end, half of them Tamil and the others the usual mixed bag of nationalities. We like it here, in fact we are very happy. Everyone says 'hello' or 'vanakkam' and it feels like a large, if rather bizarre, family with Tamil and French and English newcomers and Aurovilians and workers and guests and children all bumping along very nicely together.

The New Creation team of workers renovated our house when we moved in, so we know them well and it feels very comfortable seeing them around the place. If we need a plumber we just wander out and look for Raju, and Murugan the carpenter will drop by to fix a

broken shelf. The sports ground is two minutes walk away and we often stroll over in the evenings and watch the basketball games or the men sweating it out at tennis.

Not many people in the world have a gym or swimming pool in the backyard, not to mention a diverse selection of yoga, dance, pilates and aerobic classes. When I heard two years ago that they were going to construct a swimming pool, my instant reaction was shock, horror. In England an outdoor pool means shrieking children

and screams, as people jump in to splash their friends, and ladies in bitsy bikinis working on their tans. Of course, being Auroville it wasn't like that and everyone swam up and down the rows very seriously and silently, so yet another preconception bit the dust.

It's always a joy to see the village children come down the dusty road in the mornings to New Creation School, spotless and shining. I feel they are a big part of my life,

Matrimandir

Matrimandir News.

For those of you who have been reading the Matrimandir Newsletter for years, perhaps even for decades, it may seem a bit unbelievable that we are now declaring the imminent end of the construction of the main building and the infrastructure around it!

But this certainly seems to be the case. As 2006 progresses, all of the major aspects of the building construction are either well under way or poised for the final phase of execution. The areas that are ready for some new activity are:

- the installation of the translucent inner skin triangles;
- the ramp finishing, including top and bottom cladding and glass parapets; and
- the installation of the new sun-tracking mirror system on top of the building.

The areas which are moving steadily forward on a course set in motion several years ago include:

- the renewal of the waterproofing layer of the outer skin, along with the final fixing of the 1,450 golden discs which cover the outer surface of the Matrimandir;
- the completion of the golden shields, featuring specially designed discs above each of the four main entrances;
- the finishing of the exteriors and interiors of the twelve large petals surrounding the Matrimandir that contain the individual coloured meditation rooms;



Frames which hold inner skin triangles

though I am on the periphery of theirs, but it is always nice when a little voice calls my name in Kuilapayalam. Sometimes I sit in on the school meetings and am amazed by the complexity of it all, the different cultures, languages, ideas and ideals and the complicated and precarious financial situation, yet there it is, a school of 150 happy children.

Dianna

- The completion of the pathways and water infrastructure in the gardens around the Matrimandir, inside the 22 acre known as 'The Oval'.

There are many other specialised areas of work to be completed, of course; some small, like the details of the

marble works on the first and second levels, and some large, like the installation of the stainless steel maintenance crane on top of the Matrimandir.

Inside the Matrimandir, the atmosphere is a bit like that in a theatre just before the curtain goes up and the play begins: there is a certain silence, a sense of hushed expectation. The white ramps spiral through the spherical space of the interior, glistening with their coats of fresh paint, and the whole

vast inner surface of the concrete and ferrocement skin has been brushed and sanded and is waiting to be painted and fitted with its translucent triangular panels.

High up on the inner skin, out of sight from all but the few who climb on top of the Inner Chamber, the choreographed movement to finalise the interior of the Matrimandir has just begun. Fixtures are being glued onto concrete beams, fixtures that will eventually hold the electric wiring for lighting the inner skin. Soon the painters will come, giving the whole surface a uniformly white finish. Then the safety nets will be fitted in the upper rows of the inner skin, where the building curves in on itself, making maintenance work a risky business.

Already a long row of assembled triangular panels for the inner skin are waiting backstage (in the inner skin workshop) for the moment when they will be brought out one by one and fixed onto the beams of the space-frame row by row starting from the very top of the building. Over the coming months that work will continue, and the finished surface of the inner skin will become more and more visible as it reaches downward towards the equator level of the sphere.

Soon, however, we will reach the level of the ramps leading from the second level up to the Inner Chamber, and remove the scaffolding pipes. Then we will have to take up the work of installing the glass panels for the ramp parapets. As some of you will recall, the process of fabricating and bending the glass panels was begun some years ago in a factory in Calcutta, but had to be suspended when the factory ran into labour difficulties and was forced to shut down - with our glass still inside! With the pressure on to finish this year, other avenues of fabricating new glass panels are already being explored with a glass factory in South India. Of course we will continue our efforts to get the Calcutta glass released and hope that it will reach here in time.

Up on the roof, a third new work area has just begun, the delicate job of installing the three-mirror sun tracking system that will guide the sunbeam down into the Inner Room. These mirrors have to be integrated into the spaces already created for them at the time the new A/C ducting system was built, at the end of last year.

This heliostat system is presently being assembled down in the workshop. Over the next month or so we will lift



the different components up onto the roof, bolt them in place and then begin the last phase, which is to link the sun-tracking mirror (the heliostat) to its computerised control system and fine-tune its orientation and tracking systems. More about that when we get to that last phase.

Thus the work proceeds, and as we head into the heat of the Indian summer, there is a steadiness in the pace of the work and a quiet determination as we move towards completion. It is like the movement of a marathon runner who, having crossed miles and miles of terrain, some of it rough, some of it uphill and some down, is now entering on the last laps of his long course.

We are approaching an end, an end which in turn will be a beginning of

another further movement, the building of the gardens and the lake beyond. But for today, our eyes are on the completion of the present course - the building itself and the infrastructure for the gardens. We put aside thoughts of the past and thoughts of the future as we move ahead with full energy and joy in these wonderful days.

We end with a little note to all our donors. We were happy to receive many of you over the February darshan period that ran right up to Auroville's birthday this year. We are appreciative of the extra efforts many of you have been, and are making in this final year of the construction, to help us complete the work on schedule. We hope you will continue to do whatever you can throughout the year, for we still need another £350,000 to finish, and we hope to raise it within this year!

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.

Words of the Mother on Matrimandir:

Let Matrimandir be the living symbol of Auroville's aspiration for the Divine.

21st February 1971

The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine's answer to man's aspiration for perfection. Union with the Divine manifesting in a progressive human unity.

14th August 1970

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

15th November 1970



Other News

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be near Birmingham on 13th August. It will be held at the home of Thakor and Betina Mistry. The address is:

36 Lickey Square
Barnt Green
B45 8HB

The meeting will start at around 11:30. Anyone who is interested in Auroville is very welcome to come. Please bring a contribution to a shared lunch.

Take a look at www.aviuk.org/meetings.htm where there is a link to a map and directions.

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 Formia, Italy in October 2006. It will be a chance for Aurovilians and members of AVI groups from around the world to meet. The host town of Formia is seeking links with Auroville. 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