



Auroville International
UNITED KINGDOM



The Auroville Symbol in human form

Celebrating 50 Years of Auroville

Located in South India, the community at the last reported reckoning comprised about 2,700 residents from over 50 countries, supported by a global network of friends, the wider Auroville.

Can human nature really change? Auroville's unique response to the challenge of our world in transition is to say YES, for humankind is still an evolving species. Whilst there is an increasing worldwide awareness of the need for a transition towards a more sustainable use of our planetary resources, there has also to be a place on Earth where the necessary conditions can be created for this to happen. Auroville aspires to be that place.

That change, to have any relevance, needs to manifest itself in all the functions of life, in human relations, in governance, in education, in the relation to nature and the ecology, in business and financial exchanges, in food, in cultural expressions, in our bodies and more. Aurovilians can show the way forward, realising that to change the world, you first change yourself.

What kind of change is needed? Perhaps the only way that humankind can live in a true unity of spirit is by a change that acknowledges an essential oneness behind the separative ego of the individual. Aurovilians have been inspired by the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, the revolutionary and pioneer of the integral yoga, after whom Auroville has been named, and by the vision and guidance of his spiritual collaborator, known as The Mother, who founded Auroville on 28 February 1968.

Perhaps one day Auroville will become the envisioned city of 50,000 people. Meanwhile, as it reaches its 50th birthday, despite the many challenges and shortcomings from which we do not shrink, it can celebrate half a century of real progress in many fields of research, the greening of an arid, desert-like plateau with more than 2 million trees and the simple but profound achievement of still existing and growing, of still believing that this seemingly impossible dream can be realised despite all the opposition of ingrained human nature, so that life on earth can evolve into something more beautiful and true.

Vikas
November 2017



Auroville's 50th Anniversary

On February 28th 2018, Auroville will celebrate the anniversary of its 50th year. The occasion presents an unprecedented opportunity to honour the birth and vision of Auroville, to increase the recognition of its relevance for India and the world, to attract people of all ages from India and abroad to visit Auroville and participate in the events, and to document and share its journey of 50 years.

The Chairman of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation, Dr. Karan Singh, who once described Auroville in Parliament as an "arrow shot into the future", writes: "Auroville is poised for significant growth while moving towards its Golden Jubilee for which a broad array of projects has been planned."

In 2015, Auroville's 50th preparatory team was beginning to be deeply involved in envisioning what Auroville's 50th birthday could look and feel like. As the team collected and sorted through dozens and dozens of ideas and proposals from the Auroville community and from friends around the world, a visualization of how the celebration could take place came to them and this was entrusted to a newly constituted Envisioning Committee to take forward.

Not all Aurovilians rejoice at the prospect of this massive celebration, but when the 50th team organized a meeting at the Unity Pavilion on the 25th of September to provide updates and seek additional support and involvement from the community, people stepped forward with offers to carry and manifest our aspiration for a beautiful celebration. The calendar of tentative events is rapidly growing. When February's menu unrolls, there will be food for all palates; elaborate and grandiose, as well as quiet and refined.

Here is an update from the 50th team:

The 50th Anniversary events for the months of November and December have begun and some are still going on.

An exhibition in Paris which shows architectural images and highlights the history and significance of the building of Matrimandir in the context of global architecture continues until March 2018, at the Cite de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine.

The three celebratory events "Journey of Auroville, City of Human Unity" in Delhi have successfully taken place. In Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, a panel discussion took place on 22th November, and until the 25th an exhibition was organised where Auroville displayed stalls, books, movies, presentations; activities and food were also shared with some 500 people over these days.

The event at UNESCO on the 24th was a panel discussion on the topic of unending education, which was equally attended.

The exhibition which was tailor-made for the events in Delhi was moved to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi, until the 10th of December. After that, it returned to Auroville and will be shown here during the Birthday Week. It is envisaged to continue travelling around India during the 50th year.

From Auroville Today

A Few of the Planned Events

Savitri Around the World

A project of Auroville International to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Auroville and remembering the Mother's words:

"Savitri is a mantra for the transformation of the World"

The project was inspired by Evelyne Guinouard of AVI France in February 2017, who had a vision of a Savitri parayan – a complete reading of Sri Aurobindo's mantric epic by representatives of as many countries as possible around the world.

470 readers representing 101 countries registered to provide video or audio recordings of Savitri passages assigned to them. The recordings have been assembled at Savitri Bhavan in order to create a continuous reading, starting from the Ashram in Pondicherry and circling the earth following the sun from east to west, to arrive in Auroville, the City of the Dawn.

The final product will be shown on the big screen in the Sangam Hall of Savitri Bhavan during the Birthday Week celebrations in February 2018, and simultaneously released on YouTube so that it can be viewed from around the world.

The Water Ceremony

This will take place on February 28th 2018 in the Amphitheatre at Matrimandir, to symbolise the completion of 50 years of Auroville's growth.

"Water is the symbol of a state of consciousness or plane" – Sri Aurobindo (Letters on Yoga III)

The water from different bodies of the world, including the seven sacred rivers of India, is being collected and brought to Auroville. This bringing together of water from all over the world in a symbolic ceremony at the centre of Auroville will not only mean a prayer for unity, but also a prayer for this diminishing resource for the whole world.

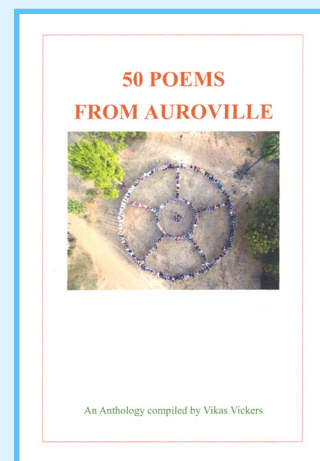
We need the collaboration of the peoples of the world to make this event come true. If you wish to participate, please contact us at: worldwater@aurville.org.in

The water may reach Matrimandir anytime between November 2017 and 27th February 2018.

50 Poems from Auroville

The compilation "50 Poems from Auroville" will be released on 27th February at 5pm at Savitri Bhavan. There will be a selection of readings from the book.

The book, which is a birthday gift to Auroville from AVI UK, will be on sale at Rs.300 and all proceeds from the sale will go to 'Acres for Auroville' land fundraising campaign.



The Tree

Always when I looked at a tree
There was an I who saw and the tree which was seen.
As a child, the tree was for climbing, to swing from,
A place to cull crows or pick peaches.
God was in Heaven
Or He did not exist at all
And yet when I cried from my very depths
He was always there to hear and answer me.

In spring time sometimes there was an effervescence
Flowers bursting from the tree
Like champagne bubbles from my heart.
The urge to be and the desperate need for light
After all the barren cold of winter's gloom.

And now sometimes the tree, the ground, the brick walls
And tarmac streets

And I
Are one single coagulation of fluid stardust
Moving through these momentary forms in a dance of time
To be unravelled and re-formed
In the relentless onward thrust

Vikas from "50 Poems from Auroville"

Reflections

Realising the Mother's Dream?

The Mother described her Dream and it became the inspiration behind Auroville's Charter, which she wrote herself. Her vision of Auroville developed over time and her comments, always clear and unambiguous, have been noted and published. Following the appearance in print of the Agenda, references to Auroville in recorded conversations were carefully collected into one volume.

It should be a simple matter to find out what the Mother wanted, and therefore to assess how close Auroville has come to fulfilling the Dream. In fact the reverse is true. Such a wide gulf exists between the Consciousness of the Mother herself and the all too human way in which we ordinarily respond to things – seeing them through a distorting prism of our own opinions and prejudices – that no two people will ever completely agree about what the Mother really meant.

It is likely that the Mother anticipated this possibility when she insisted: Do not take my words for a teaching and One day people will say 'Mother said this' or 'Mother said that' and it becomes dogma, alas..... Perhaps it was important for Aurovilians to feel free to make their own choices and find out for themselves how to live together in harmony and come together in pursuit of a shared ideal. In other words they were called upon to achieve something that the world outside has always failed to do so far.

And why not? The Mother's overriding objective was also the goal of her life-long sadhana in a physical body - to prepare the way for a new consciousness, a new creation, and new chapter in the story of the evolution of mankind.

'There should be a place'....she said. That place was in rural India: an empty, dried out, treeless tract by the sea. She named it the City of Dawn and sketched its architecture on a plane of subtle mind as a guide for 'the willing servitors of the divine consciousness' who would surely come and take up the challenge. And come they did, from all over the world.

The enthusiasm of these pioneers was enough to ensure the collaboration of Nature to re - invigorate the land and build a firm foundation, but more was required of their successors if they were to finish the job and make Auroville the beacon of Light that it was destined to be, a place of spiritual vision where the future Consciousness would be able to touch down. A real Force is behind Auroville's creation but even the Spirit's flame burns low when there are few human hearts courageous, wide and loving enough to receive and hold it.

Now, after fifty years, Auroville's list of achievements in innovative technology, sustainable living and social outreach to the surrounding villages is impressive, a record of progress of which Aurovilians can be proud. Is this enough to fulfil the aspirations set out in the Charter?

Arguably it is not, because the Charter speaks of a different aim: the living embodiment of an actual human unity. The Mother was aware that the 'future realizations' mentioned

in the Charter depended on it. Such unity begins with the practical realisation in every aspect of community life that 'my neighbour is myself' and creates the essential condition of harmony.

In the end, Auroville's progress will only be measured, not by the number of new industries, homes or residents, or even by an outreach bringing hope and opportunities to an entire bio-region, wonderful as these things are, but by the quality of the reception given to the new world that is waiting to be born.

Sonia Dyne (member of AVIUK)

Would we dare to believe that, perhaps, some of us backward Aurovilians are somewhat maturing after all...!? And that they may not be very visible about it as they just silently go on with persistently confronting their own demons and building their inner solidity, no teaching, no preaching, but ever so quietly open for and working with Auroville's strong and pulsating force, daring, proceeding, - while simultaneously balancing and levelling the ever-growing influx of new folks, vibrations, turmoils, events, developments? There must be a sufficient amount of those because otherwise Auroville wouldn't be where it is now...: still very much alive and kicking...

Mauna, (Auroville 2017)

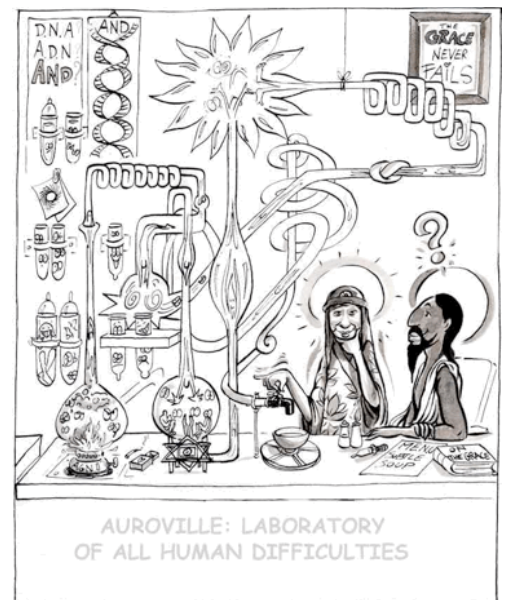
Auroville, a Place for Experiments

Auroville is for those who want to live a life essentially divine but who renounce all religions whether they be ancient, modern, new or future.

I want to insist on the fact that this will be an experiment; it is for making experiments - experiments, researches, studies.

Auroville wants to shelter people happy to be in Auroville. Those who are dissatisfied ought to return to the world where they can do what they want and where there is place for everybody.

The Mother, October 1972



Cartoon by Emanuele Scanziani



Humanscapes

Housing - Some Successful Projects

Humanscapes

For years Auroville has been concerned about his aging population and the fact that it is very difficult to find options for young adults willing to join Auroville. The price of construction has limited many to build houses or get apartments to settle in. Now, with the gracious help of Government funding, we are in the favourable position to offer youth housing for 65 young adults from age 20 to 40 in two different projects, one of them being Humanscapes. The first phase, which is approaching completion, will provide 36 beds in apartments varying from studio size to shared groupings and larger family apartments.

Auroville Today spoke to the architect, Suhasini, and to Sonja of the Housing Service, which is the project holder, to find out more.

What need is Humanscapes fulfilling?

Suhasini: The idea is to use this project to test a new building code for this region of India. Secondly, we wanted to help meet Auroville's needs regarding housing. We saw the Humanscapes project as a means of bringing significant government funding for housing into Auroville.

Auroville doesn't support young people who want to create something, to give something to the community, but who need a certain amount of time to find out what they want

to do and if it is viable or not. Humanscapes is a kind of incubator that allows them time to focus on how they can positively participate in Auroville rather than on how they can survive here.

In Humanscapes we have various combinations. There are individual rooms which share a bathroom, kitchen and dining area, one bedroom units for couples, and two bedroom units for families. The shared kitchens are designed in such a way that six people can be cooked for. There is also a multipurpose space that includes a kitchen that can provide meals for forty-five people, a self-help laundry and a small amphitheatre with a screening wall where people can watch films. The multipurpose space will not be just for residents of Humanscapes, but for everybody, young interns, volunteers, Aurovilians etc.

What happens when residents get to the age of 40?

Sonja: They will have to vacate. But there is another phase planned in Humanscapes that will have family units for those who are older than 40.

The Terms of Reference for Humanscapes put a huge emphasis upon sustainability. It means that residents' consumption of energy and water must be fairly frugal. How will you achieve this?

Suhasini: In a number of ways. We will conserve water by extensive use of low-flow faucets and hand-held spray

faucets, and by recycling grey water. We use the same approach with garbage. We make the garbage collection point a little far from the apartments. People who live further away from garbage collection facilities do not want to carry their garbage there every day, so they tend to accumulate less. This is how it works in the community where I live.

Sonja: But residents of Humanscapes will need to make an effort to live differently. We have a selection committee who will meet everybody and explain this. The prospective residents will also get a one-day workshop where we will tell them that Humanscapes is not like a simple youth hostel. They will have to agree to living in a certain way and there will be a monitoring group to ensure that certain ground rules and guidelines are observed.

To what extent is noise pollution minimised in the design?

Suhasini: Between the floors we used Styrofoam, collected from Eco-Service, which we have shredded and mixed with cement. This reduces noise between the floors. We have also put the television outlets on walls that face internal walls rather than big windows.

Courage, Profile of a Community

While it is one of the youngest Auroville communities, Courage is one of the largest. It has 104 residents drawn from 16 different nationalities: 30 of the residents are under the age of 18.

What are the joys and challenges of living in such a large and diverse community? Can it be a model for elsewhere?

Auroville Today: Give me a brief history of the construction of Courage.

Swadha: Dominic was the architect for the first phase. Prospective residents started looking at drawings with him in mid-1999, construction started around July and it was completed by June 2001, when I moved in. There were two more phases completed in 2003 and 2017 respectively, making 11 blocks and a total of 48 apartments.

Most communities only expand with a few people at a time. In Courage, there has twice been a big increase in residents when phases two and three were completed. How did the existing residents cope with this?

Lalit: I think when an influx is happening in other communities the experience is not always being positive, but I've never felt that somebody in Courage opposed this idea of development, which is remarkable. We have always welcomed new people here, and it is a very diverse mix of incomers as we have single apartments, family apartments and apartments for Newcomers and Youth.

Ayesha: I joined after phase one and two were built. Actually, I didn't know phase three was coming when I purchased my apartment. When I found out, I was horrified because I didn't want more people. I felt we were such a dense community already and I didn't come from Bombay to live in a jammed space! But my fears were not fulfilled: the influx did not upset

Another benchmark that you are trying to achieve in this project is very low environmental impact. How do you achieve this?

Suhasini: First of all, we designed Humanscapes in such a way that we minimised the amount of cement and steel used. We also used a lot of recycled materials, like stone from the stone-cutting factories and Styrofoam waste from Eco-Service, and we tried to cut down on sand consumption. We employ energy-efficient appliances, we recycle water, hardly any toxic chemicals have been used on site, and there is near-zero water run-off and erosion.

How confident are you that Humanscapes can become a model for sustainable construction and living in India?

Suhasini: It would be too much to claim it as a model because this is the first attempt. I'm not completely happy with everything we have done here because, for example, we had to use a certain amount of mechanisation in making the walls. But I think it is a good beginning. We have to move forward, step by step, but change always takes time. And it's not necessarily painless in the early stages.

From Auroville Today

the existing balance. The noise level didn't change and much needed improvements in our parking and wastewater infrastructure helped us absorb the new residents.

How are new residents of Courage chosen?

Lalit: When somebody moves into a new youth or newcomer place, we don't have any say in the process. However, when a new apartment becomes available or an existing apartment falls vacant we have a rather elaborate process to choose who comes in.

Swadha: Housing sends us a list of prospective people, the whole community votes on who they would like, and then the top three names are presented to the direct neighbours who are given the final choice.

How do you take other community decisions?

Ayesha: We have regular community meetings but they are not well attended. We are lucky if we get 14 from the 74 adults who live here.

Swadha: Fourteen is our quorum. We had been struggling with implementing a decision because sometimes people who were not at the meeting would object to any decision taken and then we would have to redo the whole process. So, in our last meeting we decided that if we had a quorum in the meeting and a decision was taken, there would have to be a quorum again to reverse it.

Ayesha: We send everyone a meeting agenda with a list of topics, so if something is going to impact someone, they need to make the effort to come.

Lalit: For me, Courage is a mixture of inspiration and organisation. A natural system of organisation has come



Courage community

up organically in which individuals take up different responsibilities. As of now, it more or less works.

What are the issues that keep coming up in your community meetings?

Ayesha: People driving right into the community rather than parking in the allocated area; wasting water. In some ways, we are spoiled here. We do not have to pay for our water or electricity and we have a very good wastewater system. But there are issues around our well drying up, and broken taps, broken pipes.

Mita: The other issue that was very challenging was that as families grow they needed more space and wanted to extend their apartments. We discussed this extensively but, in the end, we decided as a community against allowing extensions because it would bring up too many issues.

There are many types of community in Auroville, from virtual dormitories where people only come at night and live very individual lives to intentional communities where everybody is very involved in collective decision-making. What kind of community is Courage?

Swadha: We have such a mix of people, generations and lifestyles here that it's difficult to define us.

Lalit: We are not a super-intentional community like some other communities in Auroville. On the other hand, we do not live completely separate lives. I think one of the key characteristics of Courage is its friendly environment. And a possible reason for this could be the many children we

have here because we are all very concerned to make the children feel safe and secure.

If you were designing Courage from scratch with your experience today, would you do it differently? Would you try to define certain things from the beginning or let it evolve organically?

Swadha: As a general thing, and again it has something to do with the fact that we are still a young community, I think we are much more oriented towards an organic model, which is the way Courage evolved, rather than rigid planning. I wouldn't have changed the way it has happened.

Eugen: In my view, the people who come have first to feel good here and then they can start taking up community responsibilities. If they have something over them from the beginning, if they have to conform to some kind of rigid order, it won't work. People need a certain freedom. Many communities have failed because they ignored this.

One thing Courage doesn't have that was once considered essential to community is a common eating place. Was this a conscious decision?

Swadha: The original plan of Courage had a community kitchen but we never got it. The good news is that we have a new dedicated space for community meetings. Courage had a beautiful history of collective pot-lucks, movies etc. in the early days. Perhaps now we are ready for the next phase of collective living.

From Auroville Today



Matrimandir "Progress" garden

Matrimandir

On April 01 2009, John, Elumalai, Pierre and Srimoyi took charge as executives of the Matrimandir. On July 31st 2017, after more than 8 years of dedicated service, their term of office came to an end. Auroville Today asked them about their experience.

Did Roger (Roger Anger, Architect responsible for the design of Matrimandir) leave a sufficient number of instructions and details behind?

Pierre: The building was completed at that time; nothing was left, except the electronic device to move automatically the golden doors of the Matrimandir. The unfinished parts were the 12 gardens, the Garden of Unity, the oval road and the lake surrounding the oval.

For the Unity Garden, precise drawings were there. We executed them at the beginning of our mandate. Roger left precise guidelines for the gardens, which were followed by Marie, Marc and Maurizio. This allowed for the manifestation of the first three gardens. It went very smoothly, the atmosphere was very joyful. Afterward Meera and Marc made a proposition for the 9 remaining ones which was approved 2 years ago. We are working on their implementation.

What were the main works you have been involved with?

Elumalai: We have also planned and started the job of completing the two large rooms beneath the Amphitheatre. Another main activity, all along, has been taking care of the maintenance of the building and its surroundings.

Are the present works progressing as planned?

John: We are changing the former underground air-conditioning room into a Green Room and opening a direct access to the amphitheatre. This work proceeds smoothly, along with its companion space on the other side of the amphitheatre which is being developed as a gardening tools centre for the future. Also, we are in the process of developing the design of the new Matrimandir Service Facility. The new building will be located at the end of the line of administrative buildings. This line now consists of the Town Hall, the Multimedia Centre, the Auroville Foundation Bhavan, SAILER, the Archives, and then there is space for one more building. As per Roger's indication, next to that will be a support facility for Matrimandir.

But there are also areas where we haven't been able to progress as we would have liked. For example, we couldn't start building the new Matrimandir Reception Centre as Auroville doesn't own the land where it is planned.

Some people feel that there is a pretty relaxed atmosphere amongst the workers at the Matrimandir. Do you feel that there is an urgency to finish something? Did you push to get things done?

Srimoyi: There is very much an urgency and yes, we did push for the completion of the gardens as far as possible. I would have loved it if we had managed to manifest all the gardens by Auroville's 50th anniversary on February 28th

next year, but that seems like an unlikely dream. I would also have liked to have the lake in place, and the oval road. But all these are very complicated.

Where are the executives in the development of the Matrimandir Lake?

Pierre: We are not directly involved; none of us have real qualifications for this task although we have participated in several meetings on this topic.

John: It's interesting to see that the moods have swung around over the last ten years. Initially, the question was if we should have a lake or not. That question seems to have settled to a 'yes', and has been replaced now by 'how big is the lake?'

What is the progress with the four entrances to the Matrimandir? They all have double doors: the 'spaceship' outer door that slides underneath the Matrimandir following its curve, and the double glass doors inside. Why has so little manifested over the years?

Pierre: The first 'spaceship door', as you call it, is installed and functions every day now. Still a few improvements have to be done to fine-tune its functioning.

John: We have the push going to have the glass doors in all the four entrances installed before next February.

Access is one of the main challenges and in this area you have done a remarkable work by being able to maintain the atmosphere.

Srimoyi: I would call it the major challenge, for we are under pressure to allow ever more people in. We are extremely concerned that we keep the atmosphere as pure as possible, that those who visit the Chamber experience what Mother has put there.

Have you reached a limit in the number of people you can receive?

Srimoyi: The pressure comes up during certain seasons, such as Christmas and New Year, when there are huge numbers of people visiting the Matrimandir. We have started building up a database of all names and addresses of visitors who have come for concentration, so that we can recognise them for subsequent visits. We also started a booking link on AuroNet for Aurovilians who want to bring their personal visitors in the morning hour reserved for that.

Do you have any financial pressures?

John: The money comes in as and when needed, the same miraculous inflow of funds that has sustained Matrimandir for decades.

Have you been supported by the community or did you feel there was

a separation?

John: There are different levels to that. There are probably 200 Aurovilians working here during the month, and on a daily basis 50 to 60. The larger group takes care of the 'presence' in the Chamber, in the petals, and does the evening and night watches. Some hang on rock-climbing ropes to clean the discs on the outside of the Matrimandir. That's a large crowd and at that level, there is a huge and enthusiastic support. People are really giving their service to Matrimandir.

For the garden development, to complete the twelve gardens, we would like a big flow of creative energy coming in. Even though we have a design concept that has been approved by the community two years ago, we do not have the sense of community enthusiasm and support for it.

Looking back at eight years of being Matrimandir's executive, what was your main experience?

Elumalai: I experienced joy, and I believe that was there because I felt guided.

Pierre: I am very grateful to have had this experience of responsibility, it helped me to grow. Being executive has been very challenging at times. You have to focus on any problem right at the beginning if you want to avoid more serious ones. In a way, this permanent attention is the guide. But in many situations, I experienced a very clear 'guidance'.

Srimoyi: The guidance has been given to us all along. Personally, I am grateful for the opportunity it gave me to learn and move forward. I hope I have been useful.

John: Gratitude definitely, to be here, at the centre of Auroville.

From Auroville Today



The retiring Matrimandir executives

Other News from Auroville

Inauguration of the Temporary European House Site

On the afternoon of the 16th August 2017 many friends gathered in the International Zone, on the site of what will be the European House. Prasad (the contractor) had marked the site on the ground. Denis (the project manager) made the introductory speech (see below), and a beautiful cake, with the colours of the European flag, was cut. We even had an impromptu performance from the "Auroville Sisters", who burst into song. This was greatly appreciated, and closed the little ceremony beautifully.

Dear Friends,

I am very happy to be here, with you.

On behalf of Auroville International, I would like to thank you all, for your presence and your support. I would especially like to thank Dr Nirima Oza, member of the Governing Board, who has accepted to honour the ceremony with her presence. Further, I would like to thank our friends of the International House, for their help and goodwill.

Let's remind ourselves of this auspicious day which is the day of Sri Aurobindo's Birthday, the 15th of August, and the Independence Day of India.

2½ years ago, on the 21st February 2015, in the International Zone, the forthcoming "European Plaza" was inaugurated, by planting a tree whose roots grow on soil brought from all countries of Europe. This very particular day was under the sign and the energy of the Mother.

Today, on 15th of August 2017, we are attending to the foundation laying ceremony, of the Temporary European House. This very particular day is under the sign and the energy of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo was convinced that the collective yoga needs integral leaders and a critical mass of transforming members for a collective development. Let's hope that Europe, thanks to its multi-nationalities, and being on the ground of India, will give birth to potential leaders already on the way of transformation, to drive enough people to the goal assigned to us: the manifestation of the supramental on Earth.

May the two energies and strengths of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother combined, help us to reach this aim.

Thank you for being here.

Denis



Inauguration of Temporary European House site



Temporary European House nearing completion

Create Auroville Together

Let us meet where we are in touch with our inspiration and feel the resonance of unity in diversity in action.

"Create Auroville Together" (CAT) aspires to be a springboard towards the future. It is a space which unleashes our creative energies in the spirit of collaboration. All sessions are offered by individuals or groups from their deep inspirational space in the light of the manifestation of "The Dream" and "The Auroville Charter".

Since November 2016 we had sessions of inspirational talks on various topics :

The Auroville Charter, Town Planning, Education, Integral Economy, Exploring Prosperity, Progressive Integral Economy, The Auroville Foundation Act, Journey through Volunteerland, The Universal Mother according to Sri Aurobindo, Restorative circles etc

Some of the CATs can be viewed in the following link: <https://vimeo.com/album/4616008>

CAT's inspirational talks are building connections and joining energies. They are catalysts for transformational actions in many areas.

It is a joy for us to invoke more actions in the spirit of 'Creating Auroville Together' and some are on the way of getting manifested. Also more 'Inspirational Talks' are envisioned for the future.

With joy and gratitude
the "CAT" team

Inge, Mita & Sandhya



"CAT" talk in progress

Hot Topic - Water

After the failed winter monsoon of last year, Auroville and Tamil Nadu in general suffered a period of very severe drought which lasted well into July 2017. The rains came at last and we had a good summer monsoon. The average rainfall for January 1 to August 20 over the last 40 years is 233 mm, while in the same period in 2017, 463 mm fell. This was followed almost immediately by an average winter monsoon. We are still hoping that January will bring some more rain.

The Magic of Monsoon Storms

The thunder growled in the distance, its baritone rumble breaking through the dance music. We looked at each other in alarm. "Oh, it may just blow away," said the teacher airily. For, as had been the experience this summer, there were so many times, when we thought it would pour down, but the clouds would just blow. So we continued with our routine, but the teacher did let us off a few minutes early so that we could reach home before the storm broke.

The thunder, the flashes of lightning that ripped open the skies, the clouds dark and pregnant with vapour chased me down the road as I sped away home on my bike. My electric scooter was no match for the storm. Urgent, fat raindrops pelted down on me, stinging my face and arms. Many other commuters had pulled to the sides of the road and were huddled under whatever little shelter they could find. But the rain breathed to life that primal instinct in me, that innate longing for water, without which we surely cannot survive.

How does one ever describe the magic of monsoon to someone who has not grown up in India? I grew up in north India, where this magic had even a stronger pull: As documented over centuries in epics, lyrics, popular songs, my heart would jump with inexplicable joy, just watching dark clouds gather over hot, dusty fields. I grew up thinking that that indescribable fragrance of freshness that the earth releases when the rain first kisses it as being the sweetest smell I have ever known. I grew up playing with my brothers and friends for endless hours in the rain—just happy to be running in the rain, splashing in the puddles, and screaming for the sheer joy of it all. Believe it or not, our favourite game was just to race through a rain puddle trailing a long stick. Ah! As a cherished ghazal goes, "Take away this wealth,

take away this acquired fame; snatch away from me even my youth, but give me back the monsoons of my childhood and the paper boats that I would float on rainy days."

My love for the monsoon persisted through my youth. As a student in USA, I remember being homesick and calling my mother to complain that the rain simply fell steadily from the sky. There was none of the drama of the monsoon storms that I grew up. And she in turn would invariably call me in excitement, whenever there was a good storm, for my mother, bless her heart, remains as joyful as a kid, and even though she is in her seventies, she still runs out to get wet in a rainstorm. As one grows older though, with the repetition of an experience, one starts to take things for granted. A predictable routine, from which the novelty of the experience has long been wrung dry, dogs the life of most adults. So is it with me, and with each passing year, I feel older and greyer.

But today's storm, coming as it did after a drought of 1.5 years, and catching me unaware as it did, rejuvenated me. Washing away the years and the responsibilities that I shoulder as an adult and filling me with the joy of the moment. I found myself singing in joy as I slipped and slid across mud roads back home. I laughed as a family of newcomers crossed me in their car, with the windows shut tight against the rain. I smiled at the developmental changes in Auroville, nostalgically remembering how in such heavy downpours, green-belters would walk through the plateau, observing the flow of the run-off, and mentally planning where to place the contour bunds and the catchment ponds. But above all, I was simply happy at being drenched by the rain, exulting in this unexpected change in the weather.

My mum and I would often quote to each other those lines of Wordsworth, substituting of course rain clouds for rainbows:

"My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!"

So be it. Let me always, till my dying breath, feel the magic of monsoon storms.

Bindu, from Auroville Today

Home News

European Meeting Auroville International

From 23 to 25th June 2017, the European AVI Meeting was held in England, at the Claret Centre, in the beautiful grounds of Buckden Towers (Cambridgeshire).

The countries represented were: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland. Vani who was already in Europe, and is our AVI coordinator, was also able to join us.

We had two days of very intense discussions, mainly centred on the forthcoming celebrations of Auroville's 50th birthday (February 2018), and the construction of the temporary European House in Auroville (see various articles in this issue of the newsletter).

Here is a very enthusiastic report coming straight from the heart, by Gwendoline, from Belgium, one of the newest members of AVI.

It was the first time I attended an AVI meeting, and I was very impressed by the intense work we carried out during these two days. The whole room was filled with light, created from an immense goodwill where a lot of ideas and enthusiasm were shared.

Over meals, we had the opportunity to become more fully acquainted with the other participants. We also took time to discover the peaceful and beautiful surroundings of Buckden Towers, with its profusion of flowers. During breaks, I heard beautiful people who talked about their links with the City of the Dawn, and how their journey guided them to Auroville.

When I think of all this beauty which I had the privilege to witness, I tell myself that indeed the world is saved! It's only a question of time, which no longer exists.

With love and gratitude.

Gwendoline



Buckden Towers



AVI Meeting at the Claret Centre

Auroville Exhibition in London

Auroville International UK will be presenting an exhibition on Auroville at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, part of the University of London) between 14th – 18th May 2018.

SOAS is located just off Russell Square close to the centre of London.

We hope to have an early evening event with a speaker and/or a panel answering questions on Auroville on Friday 18th May 2018. Please see aviuk.org for further details.

For more news and information visit our website:
aviuk.org

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