

COLLABORATION for AUROVILLE AREA PROTECTION Newsletter

(In brief, this newsletter is called "COLAAP Newsletter")

September 2009 - February 2010

Issue No. 46

The Mother : "And the clear vision: the same thing which in the history of the universe made the earth the symbolic representation of the universe so as to concentrate the work on one point, the same phenomenon is now taking place: India is the representation of all human difficulties on earth, and it is in India that the Cure will be found. And then, that is why – THAT IS WHY I was made to start Auroville. (*Mother's Agenda* Vol. 9, Date 3rd February 1968)

"I tell people that the creation of a city such as Auroville has more weight in the history of the world than all the groupings in the world."
The Mother's Agenda Vol.6 (19 October 1967)

Mission Statement:

We seek to safeguard the territorial integrity of Auroville from the vagaries of the market forces, from the unplanned and incongruous developments so that Auroville could develop into mankind's first unique Universal Township – the Earth- Queen, the Rose flower of the Earth – which has the potentiality to emerge as a new kind of United Nations, become a major life-line of Tamil Nadu and render extremely significant service to the unity and integral progress of India and humanity.

Vision:

To create win-win situations for all the stake-holders, to secure the whole-hearted cooperation of all – the landowners, the neighboring population, the potential donors, the concerned administrative departments at the local, State and Central level – for protecting the lands for the appropriate and unified development of Auroville and the surrounding localities: an Auroville bio-region integrated development which ensures beautiful and harmonious growth of all the constituents of the bio-region.

Vision Kindler:

"I am drawn to the idea of a universal township, as I believe it to be in line with the Indian Constitution,...Auroville could be a possible microcosm of what India is meant to be."

Malini Parthasarathy

(Member of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation, and senior journalist and Executive Editor of *The Hindu*, a leading newspaper of India)

Report for the period (Sept. 2009 - Feb. 2010) :

During the period under review, 8.27 acres were secured in the planned township area. Of these, 2.07 acres were by way of land purchase while the remaining 6.20 acres were by way of land exchange. Also, .40 cents were purchased by way of access to Quiet – a beach community and major centre for health activities and projects. With this, the lands to be secured in the City (or Urban) area of Auroville are reduced to 212 acres or 17.5 percent of the total 1200 acres. For the cohesive development of the Green Belt - which allows for a multifarious projects and activities in agriculture, forestry, education, health, energy sources etc. - Auroville still need to secure significant area of land.

Yet another category of land that needs to be secured is by way of appropriate access roads to Auroville's four zones. This too needs to be studied and explored.

We sincerely thank all our friends and well-wishers who are contributing to this essential task for the cohesive and unified emergence of Auroville Universal Township.

Land Matters Task Force:

In 1998, Tim Wrey, a longtime Aurovilian from the UK had published in an Auroville weekly an article outlining the concept of an Outer Zone. His main point was that Auroville should engage herself in facilitating an appropriate development of the area immediately surrounding Auroville. One of the main reasons for his proposal was that there were (and still there are) a number of people who would like to reside in the vicinity of Auroville but without becoming officially part of Auroville. Such people are mostly devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, or they are interested in communities that offer alternative visions of the future, or are looking for a better ecological balance. They are prepared to meet the cost involved in

having their independent place and remain associated with Auroville in the spirit of friendship and collaboration. The proposal had a number of other good points too, such as making the land available or related to Auroville when they didn't need it or if they decided to join Auroville as Aurovillians. Thus, the concept of an Outer Zone had (and still has) the inherent potentiality for supporting the land exchange which offers a win-win solution. However, the idea did not take off due to several factors including lack of people who could focus their time and energy on it. In recent months, the outlying lands and area of Auroville have again come into focus, thanks to the increasing interest among landowners to exchange their lands within the planned Auroville Township area with the outlying lands, as the latter offer greater prospects.

However, the land exchange within the context of the developmental trajectory of Auroville and the wider bioregion is not as simple as it looks. First, long term interest of Auroville should be more important than short term solutions. According to certain studies, some of the outlying areas of Auroville such as beach land or the high quality water resource area, or areas having significant projects that benefit the local population or have strategic locations for developing worthwhile projects in education or health or industry, need to be retained. After all, to impact positively the lives of the population surrounding Auroville, to win their minds and hearts, to impart hope and vision is certainly part of Auroville's work and one of the best means to create her enhanced relevance locally, nationally and internationally. Considering all this, Auroville's Fund and Asset Management Committee (FAMC) had formed in April 2009 a six-member *Land Resources Development Task Force* (LRD Task Force) with the mandate to study and explore the possibilities and potentialities of Auroville lands outside the Master Plan area. Subsequently, in October 2009, the group's area of work has been enlarged with the addition of more Aurovillians. The section was renamed as "Land Matters Task Force" (LMTF). We quote from their introductory article:

"The Land Matters Task Force aims to unify Auroville's response to land-related challenges, work out solutions and be at the service of Auroville as a whole. The group's objectives are as follow:

- To facilitate consolidation of land in the Auroville Universal Township Master Plan area*
- To improve coordination and facilitate consensus-building between the various working groups dealing with land matters*
- To propose allocation of newly purchased land for farm and forest to dedicated, competent and accountable caretakers*
- To promote optimal use of land outside the Master Plan area*
- To deliver recommendations to the FAMC and L'Avenir d'Auroville on how to consolidate, allocate and manage farm and forest land in Auroville."*

The membership of LMTF has been drawn from the various working groups including Working Committee, L'avenir d'Auroville (Town Planning section), Green Group, Funds and Assets Management Committee (FAMC) and the existing land management and purchase related groups. LMTF has defined its methodologies for their work, and in December 2009 called a General Meeting of Auroville residents to inform and update about the ongoing activities.

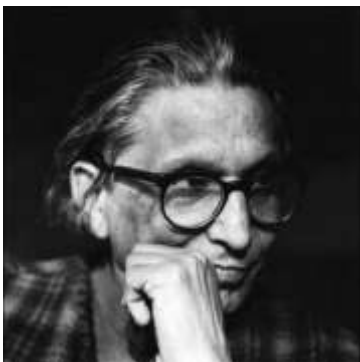
Visit of Chairman, Governing Board and International Advisory Council:

Chairman of the Auroville Foundation Dr. Karan Singh, members of the Governing Board and the International Advisory Council visited Auroville in the first week of January 2010. According to the report issued by Working Committee, one important point that the honourable members and chairman discussed and which directly relates to the subject of this newsletter was the building up of symbiotic relations with

the population immediately surrounding Auroville. This is important because in our quest for a unified development of Auroville, the path we have chosen to walk on is that of mutuality, integration, win-win strategies, in other words, co-evolution.

Auroville's village work started almost from day one in 1968. Several Aurovilians such as Andre of New Creation or Bhavana, Varadharajan, Moris and Ambu from Auroville Village Action Group or Jürgen of "Palmyra Centre for Ecological Land Use, Water Management and Rural Development" or Lavkamad of the Auroville Institute of Applied Technology and many others have made this work their life's mission. As a result, much has been accomplished in the bioregion over the years in the fields of education, vocational training, employment, women empowerment, health care and rural development or economic upliftment. Yet, what is called a model village or an ideal village which can stand up to various parameters of development is yet to see the light of day. In other words, the village population within the planned township area, or immediately surrounding Auroville needs a more deliberate and comprehensive approach. It is to this category of people the Mother often referred to in her conversations on Auroville – so much so that Aurovillian Gilles G. has compiled an extensive document on the subject.

In this backdrop, the concern expressed by the chairman and subsequently the proposals and offers made by Governing Board members Arch. Balkrishana V. Doshi and Dr. Malini Parthasarathy assume significance. Arch. Doshi suggested that one of the best ways to demonstrate Auroville's goodwill towards its immediately surrounding population is to build a cluster of model houses and to study its impact for further action. It may be noted here that some years ago, Joseba, a Spanish Aurovillian, worked on this line by



Arch. Balkrishana V. Doshi

building a cluster of 11 houses in a community called Sangamam with the help of funding from the Spanish Government. The houses were meant for long term Auroville workers from the surrounding population, and the entire project was based on the vision of The Mother, who foresaw the need for some sort of a housing colony for the long term employees and workers of Auroville. It would therefore be fitting if Arch. Doshi's suggestion were to pave the way for similar development, since Auroville employs several thousand manual or semi-skilled workers, most of whom come from the immediately surrounding population.

Carrying further the thread of the subject, GB member Malini Parthasarathy pointed out the need for an objective study of the "existing texture of relationship" between Auroville and its neighbouring population that has evolved over the last 4 decades, so as "to decide on a meaningful approach" and course of action. What was still most appreciable was her kind offer to personally engage herself in such a study and willingness to explore meaningful approaches. This is so because behind every work or activity or project in Auroville there is an individual or a group of individuals putting in their time and efforts, and when a specific worthwhile work or project goes unattended it simply means that a suitable individual or group to take it up is not there.



Malini Parthasarathy

It must be noted here that in 2006, Jukka Jouhki, a researcher from the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, has written a doctorate thesis on Auroville's relations with the surrounding villages, especially Kulapalayam, under the title: *Imagining the Other - Orientalism and Occidentalism in Tamil-European Relations in South India*. Here the author has extensively interviewed people from within and surrounding Auroville and has provided his interpretations and insights in the context of "Orientalism and Occidentalism based on ethnographic fieldwork" on the issue. Hopefully, this could serve as a reference point to begin the study and eventual emergence of the meaningful approaches that Malini Parthasarathy speaks of.

IAC Meeting:

Members of the International Advisory Council held their 18th meeting in January 2010. In their report, they



touched upon many important points and gave beneficial advice, such as on Auroville's engagement in the outside world: the best ways to receive the increasing number of students/volunteers/specific area researchers or learners and virtual visitors. IAC also welcomed the appointment of Dr. Karan Singh as India's representative at UNESCO's Executive Board and suggested that Auroville should initiate a comprehensive program of relationships highlighting Auroville's contribution to UNESCO's educational, scientific, environmental and cultural

activities and how Auroville contributes to UNESCO's convention on intangible heritage.

Perspective:

"The future has to be safeguarded; only then can present troubles and contradictions have a chance to be solved and eliminated..." - Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo wrote this in one of his World War II letters to a disciple. He was trying to emphasize the supreme importance of defeating the Axis powers led by the Nazis. He was unambiguous in his view that the victory of the Allies' forces led by England would mean safeguarding the future of humanity. Then the "troubles and contradictions" of humanity will have "a chance" to be resolved and "eliminated".

In the Auroville context, we can paraphrase this sentence and say: "The area of Auroville Universal Township has to be safeguarded; only then the potentialities of Auroville for Tamil Nadu, India and the world have a chance to materialise."

For example, the Green Belt of Auroville has immense possibilities to emerge as a national and even international asset by becoming a resource and research hub for sustainable agriculture, environmental education at all levels, alternative health and hygiene related projects, the saving of endangered plant and tree and bird species, worldwide distribution of seeds - including medicinal seeds, horticulture and floriculture, the use of alternative energy sources, and water catchment and land regeneration projects. It could provide a blueprint for an ideal ecology able to support and sustain a community of 50,000 people within the context of a unique township. As such, the Green Belt could become a role model for India. But this wonderful vision can enter into the realm of possibility only when the area is safeguarded and protected from incongruous developments. Drawing inspiration from Sri Aurobindo's words, we can say: "The Green Belt area has to be safeguarded, only then its wonderful potentialities will have a chance to manifest."

News in Brief:

(Due to paucity of space we publish only four major events of last 6 months in this issue)

Sri Aurobindo's statue at UNESCO



A larger-than-life size statue of Sri Aurobindo similar to one in the Parliament of India was unveiled at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 16th September 2009 by the then Director General Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura. The event, in a way, signifies the world-body's acknowledgment of the universality of Sri Aurobindo's message and vision. All who became instruments for this event – starting with Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman of the Auroville Foundation, Ms. Bhaswati Mukherjee, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to UNESCO, Lalit Verma, Director of Aurodhan Art Gallery in Puducherry who made the statue, and many others – including the Director General himself – deserve our sincere compliments for this landmark in the evolving future of humanity.

A long time resident of Auroville, Aryadeep, commented on the event as follow:

“To my knowledge, this is for the first time that a world-body is installing Sri Aurobindo's statue on its premises. It is, in a way, an acknowledgment that Sri Aurobindo transcends dogmas, that his vision is global, his relevance universal. This is a memorable and historical development in the blessed year of 2009!

That the Director-General referred to Sri Aurobindo in the context of Auroville and then moved on to highlight UNESCO's work in India is very suggestive: it brings out an important point that Auroville, if she develops fully into the unique universal township that the Mother dreamed of, could bring the world to Sri Aurobindo, and that could contribute tremendously to India's own progress, unity, evolution and international position.”

It may be noted that on the occasion of Auroville's 40th anniversary in 2008, UNESCO has passed its fifth resolution of support for Auroville, inviting the Director General to reinforce the association of UNESCO with Auroville, particularly her cultural sector.

UNESCO Director General visits Auroville



(photo) UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova (second from right) displays a copy of the Auroville Charter during her visit to Auroville. Also seen is Ms. Bhaswati Mukherjee, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of India to UNESCO (second from left), Dr. Aster Patel, resident of Auroville & member of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation, and Thiru M. Ramaswamy, IAS, Secretary to the Auroville Foundation.

Within three months of commencing her work as the tenth Director General of UNESCO, Mme. Irina Bokova visited Auroville in January while visiting India. The spirit that prevailed

throughout her visit was that of strong mutuality – the meeting of two sister organisations and a mutual acknowledgement that both UNESCO and Auroville stand for the same mission, same vision and work, namely the achievement of human unity. However, one significant idea that got strengthened during the Director General's visit was that of possible World Heritage Site status for Auroville. As an Auroville youth representative said in her address: we suggest to you, Madame Bokova, to consider an innovative concept: the concept of World Heritage of the Future in which Auroville could apply for “the tentative list of World Heritage as a living symbol of mankind's aspiration for Human Unity.”

One Asia 2010 - Auroville Asian Cultural Month



Under the above heading, a series of cultural programmes were held throughout the month of February by One Asia team headed by Jyoti, an Aurovillian from Japan. The programmes included Asian Tea Ceremonies with demonstrations and lectures by visiting experts on Japanese, Chinese and Taiwanese Tea ceremonies, an IKEBANA Exhibition, a Noh Theatre Masks and Calligraphy Exhibition, a photo exhibition on “The Mother in Japan” with a introductory exhibition of Hsu Fan Chen - A Chinese disciple of the Mother, a Tibetan Dance Performance, and a TaiChi Chuan Demonstration and Lecture on “Taoist's Tai-Chi” by visiting experts from Taiwan and many more. The One Asia 2010 was a new bright feather in the vortex of Auroville's cultural life.

Auroville International holds its Annual 2010 Meeting in Orissa and Auroville

During the first two weeks of February Auroville International held its annual meeting 2010, first in Orissa and then in Auroville. The visit to Orissa was planned to make Auroville better known in this

federal Indian state, which has strong and long-standing connections with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The Gajapati Maharaja Sri Dibyasingha Deb, former member of the Auroville Governing Board, had taken the patronage of the whole Orissa event, encouraging and supporting main organizers and members. The first of its kind event was largely thanks to the efforts of Devasmita Patnaik and Satyakam Karim of AVI France.

In Auroville, the AVI representatives looked into in a number of ongoing works and projects and also chose their new office bearers for the next two years.

“Collaboration for Auroville Area Protection”

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