

# Auroville Today

MARCH 2005, No.194

## "I am happy to be back"

An interview with Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman of the Auroville Foundation.

The new Governing Board and the International Advisory Council of the Auroville Foundation held their first meetings on the 20th and 22nd February respectively, when also the Youth Conference on Human Unity for the SAARC region started. In the midst of a packed schedule, Dr. Karan Singh found time for a short interview.

*AVToday: You mentioned you never come back to any post twice, yet you agreed to once again be the Chairman of the Auroville Foundation.*

**Dr. Karan Singh:** (laughing) That is true, I have held many posts in my life, and I have never done the same one twice. But Auroville is something one cannot refuse. I have perhaps a psychic or spiritual link with the Sri Aurobindo and with The Mother, whom I met on several occasions. So when the Auroville Foundation chairmanship came up, I said yes. An additional reason was that I was getting reports from several quarters that Auroville was beginning to, let's say, 'implode'. So I felt it was the time for me to get once again involved. But when I learned about the tsunami work I realised that Auroville was rather 'exploding'. The tsunami has really been a help for Auroville to make many contacts with the outside world. And I am very happy about that, it is good for Auroville's image which is still dented due to its many past conflicts.

*In your address to the community at the Solar Kitchen you mentioned your concerns about the land situation, the visa and the issuing of tax exempt receipts. Land purchases have come to a virtual halt since a new Secretary took office about 1.5 years ago, as he wants to go for acquisition instead of purchase by negotiation. What is the position taken by the Board?*



Dr. Karan Singh

It bothers me that land purchase has stopped. The Secretary has his explanations for it, and I would not like to comment on that, but personally I am not happy with the fact that it has stopped. The Governing Board is seized of this matter; we are studying it and we hope that the process will start again soon. For it is unfortunate that when people come with offers of land, we are not buying it. That has to be sorted out very soon. I will give top priority to land acquisition for without land we cannot complete the city.

*The amount required today to acquire all lands in the city and greenbelt area is an estimated 80 crores, while we have raised so far only Rs 2.5 crores. Do you see any possibility to obtain additional funding?*

I am aware that since about 1980, all funds for land acquisition have been raised by Aurovilians. Never has any land been bought with grants from the Government of India. During my first tenure as Chairman of the Auroville Foundation I wrote to the Government asking for a one time grant of 40 crores, but that was sadly not agreed to.

Once the process of land acquisition has restarted, we will need to prioritise our land requirements and then we will have to start raising money again from the public. Then I will also see if we cannot get some grant from the Government of India. As the amount of money that is required is huge, we will have to go incrementally.

*One of the facts mentioned in the presentations to the Governing Board was the complete lack of any funds for infrastructure development.*

If there is no budget for infrastructure, I do not understand how we can build the town. The city needs roads, electricity, water supply systems and so on. So far, Auroville does not look like a city, it has no city-shape as yet, it is a series of detached habitations with cashew plots in between, and there is no real feel of a township. First of all we have to complete the acquisition of the lands for the city area. That will already cost a great deal of money. I do not know where we are going to raise the money for the infrastructure. This is something we have to consider, both the Aurovilians as well as the Governing Board. We have to pool our minds and thoughts and see what we can do.

*The second issue you mentioned is about the delay in extending residential permits.*

This is another very sensitive topic. I was astonished when we were told that there are more than 200 applications for visa extensions pending. I cannot understand why this should be. I will look into this and will write to the Home Minister to request him to solve the problems as quickly as possible. Here too, the process seems to have come to a halt for some unclear reason. My first task is to get the entire thing moving again. I am hopeful that this will get solved soon.

*Do you see a possibility for a long term solution such as a special visa for Aurovilians or a special status, such as the double citizenship which is now being offered to Indians who have left India after 1950 and who have accepted another nationality?*

I do not know, we have to study that. Several suggestions have been made. Aurovilians already have a special dispensation to allow them to get a five-year visa, but whether we can

move into something else is to be seen. Dual citizenship involves Indians who have settled in other countries, and who can now apply for Indian citizenship without losing their nationality. The logical extension of this would be that citizens of other countries who have settled in India could also qualify. But these are very complex issues.

*The experience with the Governing Board has been that it has its meetings each half year, but there has been little interaction with the community. It seems that the time has come for a closer cooperation.*

Yes, we need more interaction. I very much appreciated the informal interaction we had with the community on the roof of the Solar Kitchen. The community must feel that the Governing Board is not something that is being imposed on them, but is something which belongs to Auroville and that the Auroville Foundation gives Auroville the status and protection Auroville requires. The Governing Board must be looked upon as part of Auroville and that goes too for the individual members and the administrative set-up of the Foundation. The Act is flexible enough to allow, on the one hand, for an adequate direction by the Governing Board, and on the other hand, for autonomy for the community. Don't forget that the Act prescribes that the consolidated accounts and the annual report of the Auroville Foundation are placed before Parliament, and that the Board fulfils a certain constitutional responsibility. I would also like to repeat what I said to the community on the roof of the Solar Kitchen that I do not want to have Governing Board meetings outside Auroville. The Board will meet in Auroville twice a year, the International Advisory Council once every year.

We also realised that though we interact with many groups, the people we meet during these days hardly represent ten percent of the community. We want to know what the ideas and feelings of the silent majority are. We are interested in receiving feedback from the Aurovilians on what they really feel and expect. We haven't quite decided how this could take shape, perhaps by circulating some kind of questionnaire or asking a professional group to do a study.

*You also spoke about the need for Aurovilians to find more time for introspection....*

It is important that Aurovilians attempt to put into place the theory and philosophy of The Mother that whatever is being done in Auroville really belongs to the community. That's why I hinted yesterday in my talk to the community that perhaps the Aurovilians have become so engrossed and involved in their individual projects that they are not getting enough time to introspect.

But as I also said yesterday, I feel that Auroville is at a new beginning. There is a new Governing Board,

The Governing Board (GB) meeting was attended by Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman, and by its members Ms. Mallika Sarabhai, Ms. Malini Parthasarathy, Dr. Aster Patel, Dr. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Shri Ajoy Bagchi, Mr. Roger Anger, and Shri C. Balakrishnan. Shri S.K. Ray could not be present. The meeting of the International Advisory Council (IAC) was attended by Dr. Doudou Diène (Senegal), Dr. Mark Luyckx (Belgium), Sir Mark Tully (UK and India) and Dr A.T. Ariyaratne (Sri Lanka). Dr. Diana L. Eck (USA) was unable to attend.

On the morning of the 20th, the Board members were apprised of various developments and concerns of the community. Presentations were made by representatives of SAI-IER on education; by the Tsunami Relief Team on the past and ongoing relief efforts; by the Planning and Development Council on planning the township; by the Land Fund on the problems of acquiring the land; and the Bharat Nivas team on the development of Bharat Nivas, the Pavilion of India. Other issues raised were concerns about delays in the renewal of residential permits – more than 200 are pending – and about administrative delays in issuing tax exempt receipt to Indian donors. In the afternoon the Board held its own deliberations.

On February 21st, a few members of the Board and the IAC attended the opening session of the youth conference on Human Unity SAARC region. That evening Ms. Mallika Sarabhai talked about her experience of working with Peter Brook on the stage and the film productions of the Mahabharata. This was followed by a community dinner at the Solar Kitchen where Aurovilians could interact with GB and IAC members. The IAC met the following day and communicated with members of the community on February 23rd.

[more in our next issue]

there is a new International Advisory Council with many bright people, and there is a new Working Committee with young, dynamic Aurovilians. These are new beginnings and I feel there is a sense of buoyancy in the air. I am happy to be back, and my good wishes are with the community.

Interview by Carel

### Matrimandir's last major concreting



Aurovilians and guests were invited to join in the last large concreting at Matrimandir for the small 'petal' in the Garden of Perfection

•Tsunami relief work continues in the surrounding villages page 2

•Trauma therapy •Aquadyn provides bio-dynamised water page 3

•Youth Earth Summit •Students' impressions •Raising 11 lakhs for Mexico trip pages 4-5

•Savitra reflects •Rama Varma concert •Akademic Genius Brothers pages 6-7

•The Tempest •A Village environmental education project page 7-8



# From relief to rehabilitation

The work continues

It's been another busy month for the Auroville tsunami relief and rehabilitation team. New projects have begun, new contacts made, including the head of tsunami relief operations for the whole of Tamil Nadu who visited Auroville and praised the work being done here for the victims. The first phase – the relief phase – is now largely over. During this phase food and non-food items were distributed in 20 village communities to about 11,700 affected people. The non-food items included clothes, blankets, metal trunks and plastic buckets in addition to educational materials, like books, pens and school-bags, for the children. The main distribution is now over, although late-arriving items are distributed as they become available.

Two other aspects of the initial relief effort continue. The village clean-up teams, reinforced by new arrivals from abroad and India who have heard that here is an opportunity to make a difference, have been removing rubble, sand and badly-damaged structures in four hard-hit villages to the north. Now they are turning their attention to the neighbouring villages of Pillaichavady and Bommaiarpalayam. Meanwhile trauma counselling for the victims has been going on since the second week after the tsunami struck (see accompanying article).

In order to share information, expertise and ideas among the various organizations contributing to tsunami-related efforts in South India and to foster better coordination among NGOs, donor organizations, Government agencies, and volunteers, a 'Knowledge and Coordination Centre' has been established. This Centre, organized and implemented by Auroville, will function as an interactive information platform for the collecting and sharing of knowledge, spreading of best practices and development of consensus on rehabilitation strategies and implementation. The aim is to create a coordination and information-sharing model, useable in any future disaster emergency. The website is now up and running at tsunamiindia.org

As the relief phase of the tsunami operation ends and the long-term rehabilitation phase begins, there is a noticeable difference in the energy. As Dave Storey, one of the coordinators who has had long experience of this work puts it, "In relief you have a situation which is an emergency, so you drop whatever personal and political issues you have because people need help and you have to provide this as efficiently as possible. There's an adrenaline high and everybody's riding on that wave. But when you go into rehabilitation there's a sudden drop in the energy because it feels like business as usual. Everybody's feeling this now. The NGOs are no longer attending coordination meetings, many of our tsunami team members are stepping back, meaning that we have to find new people, and in the villages there's a lot of boredom and frustration, which is why we focus on providing things like sports equipment."

This is the time of the less visible but no less essential work of building trust and new relationships with vil-

lagers, government officers, NGOs and donors. "Ultimately," explains Dave, "we could not do these bridge-building activities in the villages without the assistance of the staff of Auroville Village Action. Their deep experience of village issues and their sensitivity of approach are crucial to the success of this initiative." "The government has also been very supportive," says Hemant, another of the Auroville tsunami rehabilitation coordinators, "but the top-down approach it embodies has prompted us to propose a few modifications. For example, the Collector has agreed to our proposal that a proportion of the money go to the families to provide their own labour rather than paying for labour from outside."

For the rehabilitation phase, the Auroville

be careful not to create expectations in the villagers which we are unable to fulfil." Dave estimates that to implement the eight planned rehabilitation projects a core team of about 30 would be needed. Another issue which must be clarified before construction can begin is exactly where the new houses can be built. At present there is a regulation which prevents any construction taking place within 500 metres of the shoreline.

Yet another rehabilitation project involves providing the affected villagers with new skills and means of livelihood. Many of the younger fishermen do not want to return to the sea – even before the tsunami it was becoming a precarious source of income – and now they and other villagers are being offered courses and training by Auroville units. "Various groups are getting together," explains Bhavana, who is coordinating these activities, "to offer short-term training

for up to 135 young people from the affected villages in English, metalwork, woodwork, computer skills, office management, marketing, tailoring, handicrafts etc., which are specifically what the panchayat leaders asked for. For longer-term training, which could include other villages as well, we would first have to conduct surveys of exactly what skills are needed and by whom."

"At the moment, livelihood training is the tsunami project which involves the most Aurovilians," says Dave. "It suits Auroville down to the

ground because we have so many people with practical skills living here."

Other planned Auroville initiatives in the villages themselves include helping the fishermen repair the engines of their boats (to date 25 motors have been repaired by Auroville mechanics), and setting up some kind of local warning system which would alert the villagers in the event of an emergency. "At present," one of the villagers explained, "we're exhausted. Even though we arrange that at least one man in each village now is always watching the sea, we don't sleep well. So any kind of warning system would help."

tsunami team is putting together eight projects, each of which will run for approximately 18 months – 2 years. One of the most important of these involves providing permanent housing for some of those affected by the tsunami. "We've had a meeting with three panchayat groups from the closest villages," explains Dave. "They were shown models of five climatologically and environmentally-sustainable houses, each of 20 square metres, designed by different Auroville architects. They were very interested and proposed some modifications. Now the leaders have gone back to the villages to talk to the women. Then, hopefully, we will build prototypes somewhere on the beach. At present we're looking at constructing 900-1000 houses, which would cost approximately \$4 million. We don't have that kind of money now, but we'll use the core funds we've already collected to leverage for more, possibly in partnership with an international NGO like Save the Children Fund (UK), Concern, the French Red Cross or Borda.

"But the real issue now is not money: it's whether we have the human resources to carry through such a project. Of course, much of the construction work would be done by local contractors, but it's important that Auroville provides the supervision and quality control. It's a great opportunity for Auroville to forge a completely new relationship with the villages, but it seems there are not enough Aurovilians who can stop what they're doing and switch to tsunami rehabilitation for the next two years or so. Another possibility we are investigating is bringing in experts from outside to help us. The Auroville International organization, which has just held a meeting in Auroville, is proving very helpful in making contacts here. However, the bottom line is we must



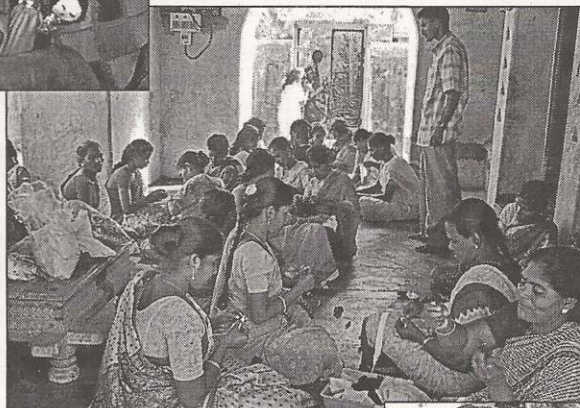
The fishermen are going to at sea again

the coast. The plantation at Eternity was the first Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF) area planted by Auroville to be affected by the impact of a tsunami and many foresters are studying it closely to ascertain which TDEF species can survive so that they can be planted elsewhere. In coastal areas where there is clay, mangrove forests offer another effective means of protecting the shoreline. Ways of preventing coastal erosion are also being studied by a team led by an Aurovilian and based in Pondicherry which specialises in water management schemes. The Auroville Geographical Information Systems unit is playing a key role in identifying which areas of the coastline are most sensitive to inundation. They have recently met twice with Mr. Shankar, who is in charge of tsunami relief for the whole of Tamil Nadu, to share their information and help draw up a response plan for possible future disasters. Two hundred test results from wells in 20 villages studied by Water Harvest show that after the tsunami the level of salinity in the water is between 10-12 times higher than permitted. The health of the villagers may also be impacted by the sudden elimination of fish from their diets: the fishing families, in particular, which before were one of the best nourished sectors of the population are now in danger of suffering from protein-deficiency. Moreover, farmland inundated by the tsunami is also heavily salinated and may take years to recover.

The Auroville beach communities were also impacted, to a greater or lesser extent, by the tsunami. Here the rehabilitation work has concentrated upon repairing damaged buildings, ensuring a clean water supply, restoring electrical connections and erecting fences. Trauma counselling has also been made available to the residents of these communities. Some Aurovilians from these communities no longer wish to live by the sea and alternative accommodation is being found for them. Personal emergency maintenances have also been disbursed to affected individuals to enable them to

been disbursed, the vast majority for village relief and rehabilitation work). "While what we have received is insufficient to cover the full costs of the planned rehousing project for the villagers – it gives us the flexibility to fill the gaps and adjust to changing circumstances without being dictated to by a major donor," says Dave. "Actually, the support we have received from all over the world for our efforts is truly amazing." "Creative fund-raising activities for Auroville tsunami relief and rehabilitation are happening all over Europe and North America," explains Auralee from the Auroville Tsunami office, "and we are very grateful for everybody's efforts."

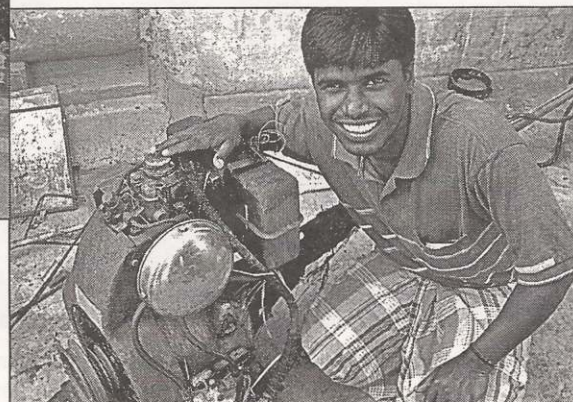
Perhaps the most important stories, however, are the less visible ones. Of how Aurovilians who had not worked together for years dropped everything to collaborate in the relief effort and so recaptured something of the spontaneous joy and fraternity of the early years of Auroville; of how a new generation of tech and relief-savvy Aurovilians seamlessly assumed control of a vast and complex organization; of how some of the much-criticized youth of Kulapalayam came forward to help with the clean-up in the coastal villages; of the young people who came all the way from the U.K. to offer their help as they had heard that Auroville was really making a difference. And perhaps this is the real story: that after all these years of developing expertise in fields like village development, water recycling and purification, computer systems and computer-generated technology, alternative building methods etc. Auroville could at last bring them all together and do something that really made a difference to the local villagers. At the same time, the professionalism of Auroville's relief and rehabilitation effort has enabled it to play a key role in assisting operations not only in the bioregion but in Tamil Nadu as a whole, forging important new relationships at the highest levels with the local and State governments as well as with international and national NGOs. As a consequence of its tsunami efforts, Auroville has received in the past two months more positive media coverage, both national and international, than it



Women from the fishermen's village of Chinnamudaliyarkuppam learn doll making in a workshop organised by Upasana, one of Auroville's garment units.



The Auroville Tsunami Relief engine service workshop, which repairs the engines of the fishing boats  
Right: A young fisherman with his repaired engine



Looking to the longer-term, it's clear that environmental restoration is a crucial part of protecting the coastline. Pitchandikulam, Botanical Gardens, Shakti and Palmyra have offered their help in watershed planning and planting shelter belts along

replace items destroyed in the flood.

So far the total donations to the Auroville tsunami relief and rehabilitation programme have totalled almost US \$ 600,000 ( of which \$73,607 has

has received over many, many years. Who knows where all this may lead to in the future?

Alan



## Trauma therapy

The World Health Organization has said that nearly all the people affected by the tsunami that hit southern Asia last month will suffer some form of trauma

As many as nine out of ten survivors who have lived through the December 26 tsunamis are likely to suffer from some form of psychological trauma, experts have warned. The damage is not confined to various problems like acute shock and depression which need immediate attention, but extend to post-traumatic stress disorder which can last for years. To help tsunami victims combat the severe psychological trauma, as many as 26,000 volunteers in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Tamil Nadu are being trained by counsellors from the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences in Bangalore.

Since the second week after the tsunami struck, an Auroville Trauma Counselling team has been going out daily to listen, talk and provide a human touch to traumatized residents of the surrounding villages. The team is assisted by a child psychiatrist from Canada and Dr. Tara from Chennai; three people from each affected village are being trained as counsellors, backed up by an Auroville support team. The more serious and chronic cases will be referred to the nearby medical institute, PIMS, which has agreed to provide treatment free of cost. To empower a much larger trauma-relief effort, a group of 80 women, men and youth has been selected and offered an eight-day disaster and trauma counselling training. In order to give special attention to children, each school in the surrounding villages is encouraged to appoint one teacher who is offered an intensive four-day training in order to be able to identify affected children, offer counselling and pass on the acquired skills to other teachers. Auroville's Trauma Counselling team will keep on monitoring the situation, offer ongoing training and will establish a library of relevant disaster-trauma related materials.

In Auroville, a handful of people are helping tsunami victims. One of them is Ulrich Hartmann, a German Aurovilian who first was trained as a medical practitioner in Germany, then studied with Native American Navajo and Hopi shamans in Sedona, Arizona, and afterwards did four years' training as a healer from the International Network of Esoteric

Healing. His approach to healing, in consequence, is not traditional. Asked for a definition of 'trauma' he gives his own version. "Trauma is an emotional wound or shock whereby parts of a person's higher being or personality are shut off, leaving the body to continue with its basic functions, reactions, and instincts, but without giving access to the usual emotions. People report that at the moment of



Uli at work

the tragedy they had no feelings; they just knew what they had to do and did exactly that. The other parts of their personality were blocked out. This happens in order to protect the being, so that it is not emotionally or mentally damaged by the immense energy of the catastrophe. At that moment the person works on a hidden reservoir of energy inside the body, which enables them to do more than normal. People in stress situations have been known to lift 1 tonne! So the immediate reaction to a shock situation like this, where a wave of water is hitting your house and you are about to drown, is you lose all your connections and the basic survival instinct takes over. Many people report that at the event itself, they were pretty cool.

"But then comes the time, usually after a few weeks, where those other parts 'come back' to re-integrate into the being. That causes often a bigger shock than when the accident happened. People report about flashbacks, reliving the entire catastrophe but now with the emotional part of the personality. Then the full impact of the catastrophe hits. Many people

then have a breakdown. After that first flashback, others usually follow, but their impact might be less severe.

"The difficulty for many victims is that they do not understand what is happening. Not only are they struggling with flashbacks, but often their entire way of being is different from what they were before. Sometimes they behave like adolescents and are impulsive or unpredictable. Outbursts of happiness can alternate with bouts of crying or fits of anger, all in the span of a few hours. They are emotionally messed up, and one of my first tasks as a healer is to get them to accept that they are as they are. I tell them that whatever happens is appropriate, that nothing in the way of their functioning or non-functioning is inappropriate. The second thing that I

tell them is that they should not put more stress on themselves saying 'that this will go away soon' or things like that. It will take the time it needs.

"A main difficulty is in their relation to the outside world. For the victims, it is very hard if not impossible to explain that they are not what they were before the catastrophe. The outside world hardly ever understands the issue. They judge by the outer behaviour, and when they see the victim being happy, they think that everything is all right again. But that is most often not the case, and the victims, sensing this attitude, react by avoiding going in public. They need taken care of by professionals in a loving surrounding.

"Some Aurovilians, too, do not show understanding. The victims complain about people coming to them with unsolicited advice or offers, which put them under more stress than they are suffering already. Others project their own emotional problems on them, or even ask for help, which is equally inappropriate. Friends and relatives, in sympathy with the victims, experience their own

helplessness with the situation and have a tendency to forcefully express that frustration – but they do not realise that in doing so they are in fact offloading their stress onto the victim. The family and friends and well-wishers should understand that the most precious gift they can make to the victims is to give them space so that they can work out what they need to work out."

At present Uli is helping about eight people with their healing. Asked about his approach, he answers that he first calls on the divine presence. "I ask a few questions, and then I concentrate on the soul of the client and his or her higher programmes, on my own inner being and on the combination of these two entities. After that I go through the person's seven main chakras and some side chakras to feel for imbalances. If there is something, I concentrate and offer light and love. After a while there is usually some resonance, often reported as a big relief, and then something magical happens which I do not understand myself very well. It is as if a channel for a higher consciousness to act is being opened, which aids the healing process. That higher consciousness connects to the person's inner consciousness, and the knowledge of how to heal him or herself comes forward – even if the person is not able to express that properly."

Uli's way of healing does not concentrate on only asking a victim to talk about and revisit the catastrophe, which is the catharsis method used in some trauma therapies. "It is part of the process to look back, but I see the emotional pains as so many wounds that are bleeding and need treatment. They have to be acknowledged, but the victim has to learn not to see them as the dominant event of his or her life, but as only a part of the life. There should be no clinging to the disaster. The disaster has to be acknowledged, for if you do not acknowledge it, the person will always carry this wound along and it will drain his or her system. The acknowledgment itself creates the openness for healing, for the higher consciousness to descend and help."

Dealing with traumas is an in-depth process and often deeper and ancient traumas surface. Uli confirms that all his patients are reporting meaningful incidents which happened early in their life. "This one incident is helping to unravel others that helped form the personality. Seen from that perspective a trauma is a gift – for it allows the person to look at issues that remained hidden for years. Harsh as it may sound, it may be a help to move closer to one's soul."

*In conversation with Carel*

## Bio-dynamised water for tsunami-hit village

Providing clean drinking water is among the most important issues of tsunami rehabilitation work, as many wells in coastal villages have turned saline

AquaDyn, Auroville's water specialists, are involved in setting up bio-dynamised drinking water facilities in Bommaiypalayam, one of the affected villages in Auroville's bioregion. "We are in contact with the panchayats in Bommaiypalayam to place two installations," says Bhagwandas from AquaDyn. "The problem is where to put them, for there is a lot of caste tension. We want the guarantee that everybody in the village has access to the water. If there's agreement, two 5,000 litre tanks will be installed that will fill up automatically, so each installation has a capacity of 10,000 litres per day. It will be enough for three litres of drinking water per person per day." AquaDyn has been able to manufacture those big installations since very recently. "The first two were provided to the Tibetan Centres in Mysore and Bodh

Gaya, and we were thrilled to have our bio-dynamised water there." The machine from AquaDyn can filter out physical, chemical and bacterial impurities. The filter system removes all pesticides, heavy metals, chlorine, coliform and coli bacteria, as well as salts. On top of that the water is dynamised to give back its living qualities. AquaDyn had also started a project in the nearby village of Edaiyanchavadi.

In Auroville, AquaDyn's bio-dynamised water is well known and appreciated, for it is used in many households. Bhagwandas explains: "Natural well water and water in the Himalayas can improve our physical and mental condition, but because of the pollution nowadays, most drinking water does not have that recharging ability anymore. The water has become dead. But it is possible to make living water again by the

process of dynamisation. In the installations for Edyanchavadi and Bommaiypalayam we use an electronic device and also sound dynamisation. After dynamisation the water has a crystal-like structure, which was not there before. And we believe this is the cosmic energy that everybody needs to keep fit and stay healthy. French scientist Marcel Violette from the Science Academy of France has written a book on the subject."

To see if it really works a medical team, lead by Dr. Beena from the Health Centre, will monitor the health situation of the villagers before and after a period of time. The villagers will also be educated on hygiene, health and the value of the water. In addition, a committee will be formed to follow up the progress, dealing with problems. Speaking about the costs Bhagwandas says that the money is there, thanks to fundraising



AquaDyn's office in Aspiration

by Tapas and Mita, but still Rs 10 per family per month is being asked. Around 500 families should cover the costs of a building, a watchman and maintenance. The total costs of an installation are between Rs 0.75 lakhs for a simple unit and 7.5 lakhs for a big installation. The 7.5 lakhs machine also has a desalination capability. Bhagwandas hopes that the pilot projects in Edyanchavadi and Bommaiypalayam will lead to "positive contamination", so that more villages will seek the benefits of drinking "living water".

*Robert Hessing*

## In brief

### UNESCO Youth Conference

Approximately 70 delegates from Auroville and SAARC countries and many special invitees from India and around the world gathered for the UNESCO international youth conference Youth for Human Unity – Explorations for new values through inter cultural and inter religious dialogue. The conference began with an inauguration ceremony at the Bharat Nivas Auditorium on Monday 21st February and continued for one week with a full programme. It included plenary sessions with different speakers addressing the conference themes and group work among delegates to foster a sense of unity in diversity.

To coincide with this event and take advantage of the presence of many special visitors such as members of the Governing Board and International Advisory Council of the Auroville Foundation, UNESCO representatives and many more, a parallel program of interactive workshops open to Aurovilians and guests was organised. (more on this in our next issue)

### New Working Committee and Auroville Council

A selection process by which every Aurovilian was asked to select 10 Aurovilians to be part of a Selection Committee, which in turn would form the next Working Committee and Auroville Council, has been successful. The new Working Committee and Council have started to function.

### Flea market for the land

More than one lakh of rupees (US \$ 2,200) was raised on February 13 at the Eucalyptus Grove Flea Market to raise money for the Land, compared to Rs 57,000 and 60,000 at flea markets in March and August last year.

### Special audit on Village Action

A special audit ordered by the Working Committee to investigate allegations of financial misappropriation by Auroville's Village Action Group (AVAG), made by dismissed development workers, has cleared AVAG of all accusations.

### Kuilapalayam School Extension

On February 11, 2005, the three Kindergarten classrooms in Bommaiypalayam were extended by three more classrooms thanks to help from friends in Switzerland. Kuilapalayam School has now 860 children of which 250 are in the Bommaiypalayam Kindergarten. The older children can study up till the 12th standard in Kuilapalayam.

### Remembering Sydo

On January 31st the parents and friends of Sydo van Loo met at the 'sacred grove' in Aurogreen to remember Sydo, who was murdered that day one year ago. There was a short meditation, music, and light offering.

### Education and Auroville's future

An interactive research workshop by Helmut Ernst on the theme "Does education hold the key to Auroville's future?" was held at the Town Hall.



# The Global Earth Summit For Youth

Eight high school students from Future School participated in a Symposium on Biodiversity held in Cancun, Mexico, from January 22 - 29

A paperback sparked it. *The Passionate Teacher*, by Robert Fried, talked about new ways of learning and teaching, introducing teachers who were pioneering their way into the world of new education. One such inspiring figure was Dan Bisaccio, a high school biology teacher from USA, and we felt the need to speak more with him. The Internet provided his address, and a barrage of e-mail exchanges followed where we introduced Auroville and he shared about his latest project of HabitatNet, a global biodiversity monitoring project, supported by the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. HabitatNet was in the process of organizing an International conference for high school students

The offer was presented to the biology students of Future School of all levels and ages. Eight senior students jumped at the idea – literally. Though they appeared to be weighted down by their heavy academic load, they saw the invitation as a challenge and a welcome respite to the theoretical studies. "All they will need to do is to pick a plot of land, it can even be in the backyard of your school, 20 metres by 20 metres in size, where they will document the plant and animal life," wrote Dan. Little did he know that Auroville has vast areas of unexplored greenbelt, and that Future School was not just another school in a big city.

The students invited experts in different parts of Auroville to help them,

Aditi and Mukta selected the Botanical garden seeking guidance from Paul Blanchflower and Rauf Ali. They wrote, "Our plot in Auroville's Botanical garden was established in August 2000, prior to which the area was an agricultural cashew crop land. The area now is a conservation site that shelters a ten acre sanctuary planted with shrubs and trees of the TDEF variety. In our bio-plot, we will be monitoring the regeneration and re-establishment of both plant and animal species. We hope to observe the changing composition of species in a reforested area, and eventually to determine the species composition at the climax of the community."

The boys' team consisting of Kalrav, Virya, Philip and Kumaran choose a section of the Success canyon. They articulated, "The canyons on the periphery of the low lying laterite plateau of Auroville were formed due to deforestation of the land, which left it vulnerable to the tremendous erosional forces of the bi-annual monsoons. In this environment, reforestation efforts have taken place for 30 years. Erosion of the top-soil is now largely controlled by shrub growth, facilitating water infiltration of the sub-soil. This landscape offers an interesting range of habitats for

think we'd be selected," wrote one of the students. But less than a week after submitting the three proposals, the students learned to their amazement that they all had been selected. "Not only did that motivate us tremendously, but it also challenged us to face the issue of financing the trip. We were going to have to pay for our travel and lodging. Added up and multiplied by ten (eight students and two teachers) the amount was impressive. We discussed with our parents and teachers and expressed our decision that either all of us go, or else none, and that money or personal means would not be the factor that would determine which one of us would get this opportunity." Fund-raising became an issue. For the two Indian students, an additional difficulty was obtaining a passport, a visa for Mexico and a transit visa for the USA – difficulties which were so momentous that one student only arrived five days after the start of the conference.

## The work

In their bio-plots, the students began exploring various topics – water resources, medicinal plants, butterflies, bats, animal tracks and droppings, and specific species of plants and animals. The common thread that connected all their work was natural regeneration. "Auroville, some thirty years back, was nothing but dry and barren land," commented one student. "Looking at the green haven it is now, it does not take much to imagine just how much work and will had been dedicated into rendering the earth fertile again." Some of their parents were themselves tree planters, and were involved in this early work. In particular, one parent expressed to the group how strangely gratifying she felt seeing the youngsters, the next generation, continuing the work that they had started years ago.

The students had about five months to work on their plots before getting ready to attend the conference in Mexico. To everybody's amazement and excitement, the funding came unexpectedly together. The last weeks



The Mayan pyramid at Chichen Itza

before the trip was spent in developing Powerpoint presentations both on Auroville and the biodiversity work on the three plots. Former actor Croquette from Auroville International France coached the students on speech delivery and presentation style, while Rolf and Frederick primed them on Auroville and its philosophy.

## Hola Cancun!

The trip from Auroville to Cancun took almost 30 hours – and the first two days after arrival were spent in overcoming the jet lag and getting used to the 11½ hours time difference and the culture of Mexico. Soon it was time to head off from their hostel in downtown Cancun to the wilderness in El Eden bioreserve, about 37 kilometres west of Cancun, where the conference was to be held. Established in 1990, El Eden is the first privately own protected area dedicated to research in biological conservation in Mexico. The area was founded by a group of scientists and conservationists interested in the protection of the biodiversity. In contrast with most reserves that follow the "don't touch" approach, El Eden is a reserve in which managing by "touching" and "using" are principal objectives. It is an example, an alternative model of a protected area – small, non-governmental, research and education oriented, self-sustained, and low-maintenance.

The El Eden reserve has several major eco-systems. Most prominent is the medium semi-deciduous tropical forest. This is a biologically-rich tropical forest dominated by trees up to 15 metres in height, with many different species of shrubs, herbs, climbing plants or lianas and epiphytes like orchids and bromeliads. This forest is the habitat of the spider monkey, jaguar, and many other vertebrates. Another type of forest is the low deciduous secondary forests, representative

*continued on page 5*



The participants from left to right Hilde, Virya, Mukta, Aditi, Kumaran, Philipp, Suryamayi and Priya (teacher). Seated: Chali (teacher) Missing: Kalrav

called 'Global Earth Summit For Youth – A Symposium on Biodiversity' in a bioreserve in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico. The conference would be co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute, the Mexican Amigos de Sian Ka'an and the El Eden Ecological Reserve. Other participants would include students from the USA, Mexico, and the Caribbean islands of Saba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. And the question came: would Auroville students be interested to participate?

and decided on sites and areas of their specific interest. Hilde and Suryamayi picked a plot in an old forest in the Two Banyans community, under the stewardship of John and Colleen. In their research proposal, they wrote, "Our plot shelters TDEF indicator species notably *Diospyros ferria*, *Atalantia monophylla*, *Memecylon umbellatum* etc., and other local species which have rehabilitated the area by natural means. Our focus will centre on the comparison of planted versus naturally regenerated plant species."

both flora and fauna, in particular the canyon wall-dwellers like the Great Horned Owl, *Bubo virginianus*. Our focus will be to sample life forms in this habitat, understanding and appreciating their variety, function, and the role they play in the ecosystem." And so the project gained momentum.

## The Challenge

"We got involved in this work without considering the trip to Mexico as our goal – at that point, we didn't

# Raising 11 lakhs

Is it justifiable that funds are raised for special educational projects like attending the Biodiversity Summit in Mexico when there are other pressing needs in the community?

The Mexico three-week trip of eight students accompanied by two teachers has cost an approximate 11 lakhs (US \$ 25,500). Some Aurovilians were upset that so much money was spent on such 'a trivial event'. Even the teachers and students asked themselves if they should indulge in such a 'treat', when there are urgent needs in the community. But when the chairman of the main donor, the Dutch Stichting de Zaaier, wrote "The project you have submitted was a bull's eye – exactly fitting in our criteria and limited means: person-oriented, youth, innovative, and with a multiplier effect" and moreover made it clear that the money would not necessarily have been donated to another Auroville project if the Mexico project had not been submitted, the decision to go ahead was made. Other donors were approached, and many Aurovilians got involved.

One of the donors asked each of the participants for a half page essay on how money could be raised for such a project other than just through donations. And he explained: "When grow-

ing up in the Ashram, the Mother took care of all our students' needs so that each child focuses on his/her studies. This is very much in line with the ancient Indian tradition which continues today of supporting the children until they have completed their student days. In that light, it is unconditional that the Auroville community (along with Friends of Auroville) find the funds to support the proper education for the children and meet their needs as necessary. On the other hand, the West has the tradition to bring up the children to be independent actors in the drama of life and learn the techniques to become self sufficient from early years, as young as 13 to 14. I would like the students growing up in Auroville to take the various aspects of money into account as they are about to step into the world. I want them to think outside of the box in terms of acquiring, using and channelling the money power."

The students took up the challenge with gusto. "Dear Sir," wrote one of them, "I would like to bring to your attention the fact that when the issue of

raising money was brought up, we did all sit down and think of ways to make money and not ask for money. We came up with a few ideas, but the problem was that they were not to the scale of our potential expenditure." Ideas proffered ranged from creating T-shirts, cooking for the community, putting on a benefit concert, publishing artistic calendars, organising a lottery, renting out vehicles, opening a tea shop, designing clothes, selling homemade food products and holding a flea market, to finding part time jobs in different Auroville units. "However," wrote one student, "the profits would have been relatively insignificant in lakhs." Also the peculiar situation of Auroville was pointed out. "The thing with Auroville is that it is not an environment conducive to making money. One is not supposed to work in order to make/earn money. For this reason, in a case like this, a lot of ideas for making money may be inapplicable or disapproved." Another student opted for generating this money outside of Auroville, without asking for donations

from Auroville units. "We could all stop school and go to Bangalore for a couple of months to work at a call centre, but Bangalore is far away so we would have to abandon school and everything else, including the biodiversity project."

A few innovative ideas also came forth. One idea was investing money into the stock market. "The school recently set up the 'stock market game', where fictional money was invested into stocks by groups of students. Some groups earned over a lakh rupees, another group earned over 2 lakhs! I do not know the exact figures but I would expect that, if real money had been invested, all students combined would have earned about 5 lakhs. However, there is a definite risk factor with the stock market." Another idea was to start a student-run Ecological Tour Company in the canyon environment. Acknowledging that "this may not be a big money spinner," the idea was nevertheless promoted as "a great way to sensitively introduce the Auroville ecosystems to the visitors while at the same time bringing another dimension of relevance to the biodiversity work that the students have started."

One student approached the issue philosophically. "When a situation boils down to making a lot of money in a short time, there are several options:

these range from high risk-low energy to the low risk-high energy method. A high risk-low energy method of accruing money might include stealing, dealing with illegal substances or accepting bribes, all of which are morally and legally unacceptable. A high risk-high energy input method might be dealing in shares or investing in a business. A low risk-low energy method would include exploiting niches in the system or simply being a "parasite" of society. I believe that the best returns will come from a system of producing money in which lots of energy is invested in a focused and truly sincere manner." This point was underlined by another student. "As my mother keeps repeating," he wrote, "money is the power of the Divine Force so I'm sure there are many more ways of getting it if one's cause is right."

Judging by the results, the cause certainly was. Against all odds the total amount was collected, allowing eight students accompanied by two teachers to embark on a life-changing experience. In the words of one of them, "For many of us it is more than just a school project; it is an opportunity to widen our perspectives of how we, as humans, affect the environment we live in. We hope that this outing may create a multitude of opportunities for others."

*Compiled by Carel*



continued from page 4

of the younger stages of succession of the forests of the region. Then there are swamp forests called 'tintales', forest of lesser height (up to 12 metres tall) dominated by the logwood known locally as 'tinto' (*Haematoxylon campechianum*). El Eden is also rich in savannas or grasslands with many small scattered trees and different kinds of wetlands. Most interesting is the geology of the area, dominated by limestone rocks in a very advanced degree of erosion as evidenced by the great amount of crevices, holes and caverns. Many of these cavities retain water all year, resulting in a vast underground water ecosystem that connects to the surface through small or large openings known as *microcenote* and *cenote* respectively. The biota of these ecosystems is not totally known and is composed of many species of algae, flowering plants, fish, crustaceans, insects, amphibians, and crocodiles.

### The Conference

It appeared that four school teams had made the trip to Mexico: two from the USA, one from Cancun, and the Aurovilians. The students were mixed into five international groups to promote greater interaction and mutual understanding. Dan Bisaccio guided the seven-day conference organizing a rich variety of activities for the students. Besides presentations of their



Philipp addresses the press at Cancun

work, the conference was packed with activities from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m., all related to the exploration of biodiversity and conservation. Morning hours saw the students working together in documenting two new bio-plots in the forests of El Eden, followed by 3-4 hour long forest hikes to various ecosystems. Afternoons found the students involved in creative interaction and play – making environmental sculptures, or engaging in reflective writing, theatre expression and games. A few nights also featured night-hikes to look for nocturnal creatures including

wolf spiders, snakes, and to listen to the sonar signatures of specific bat species.

The student presentations happened informally, always after lunch or dinner, with one team presenting per session. Contrary to the Aurovilians, the other participants presented one project per school. The American group from Nebraska presented work on a lake habitat, and the New Hampshire team spoke about a forest situated nearby their school. The Cancun team discussed the issue of pollution and garbage treatment. All presentations were varied and thought-provoking, but

it was the presentations by the Auroville students' teams that clinched maximum interest and discussion. With little influence of the teachers and adults showing up in their talks, the Aurovillian presentations carried a unique originality and energy that captivated the audience, leading to an extended question answer session both on their work, on Auroville and on the students themselves. Dan Bisaccio was particularly impressed with the quality of the work done by these students in the short span of five months, and immediately expressed his interest to visit Auroville. He also presented the students with a set of specialized scientific equipment for doing biodiversity field work in Auroville. On the last day of the biodiversity summit, a press conference was held in Cancun with two student representatives selected from each school articulating to the press the need for biodiversity and conservation.

The conference was a success. One of the teachers shared, "After seeing the way all of you work together I am not scared to leave the future in your hands," and Dan expressed "Each of these students are leaders, leaders for the future and the future of this planet. They have a special charge to return to their home sites and work with others as mentors. I am really looking at the seed that was planted in El Eden to foster and grow." The farewell from the newly made friends was emotional for all.

### The tour

No one can expect a group of eight students and two teachers to travel half way around the world from Auroville to Mexico without trying to experience as much as possible something from the incredible cultural past and present of the Yucatan peninsula. An ecological tour had been arranged to visit the other bio reserve, Sian Ka'an. The Sian Ka'an reserve ('gift from heaven' or 'horizon' in Mayan) was created in 1986 and incorporated into UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves. It is not completely open to the public. The only accessible area is a coastal strip inhabited by a few fishermen. Many species which have disappeared elsewhere in the world have survived in this environment where humans have not been allowed to encroach.

The Auroville team stayed at the Visitors' centre by the coast, engaging themselves in many activities. Besides excursions to nearby Mayan towns and archaeological ruins, snorkelling in the coral reefs, kayaking through the lagoons, or bicycling through the reserve, they also designed the exhibition hall of the centre, got involved in a beach clean-up, and valiantly learnt some Mayan from the young managers at the centre – "Bashkavaliik?" (Are you well?); "Maa'lo!" (Quite good!)

Priya Sundaravalli

## Student reflections

The twenty days spent in the Yucatan Peninsula seemed timeless – strangely fulfilling, rich, and other-worldly. Here are some selected reflections from the participants' feedback on the trip.

The greatest lesson was the enthusiasm of the group. Working together with complete strangers on the same interests was a great experience. Somehow everybody came together, overcoming differences to accomplish a goal.

When I left India, in many ways I was very insecure. About myself and my capabilities. Through the work at El Eden: the theatre, writing, sculpting and especially all the presentation work, I have gained a lot of confidence in myself and in the work I am doing. This is what really struck me the most, just how much I have managed to progress within myself by trying to benefit others around me.

I think and I hope that this trip is only the beginning of such opportunities for the rest of the school and the rest of Auroville. I really feel that it is important for Auroville to reach out to the rest of the world, and projects of this type are a very good way of expanding and growing.

There is one moment I particularly loved. We were in Sian Ka'an, and we had gotten up early in order to walk to the beach and watch the sunrise. Aditi and I were sitting on a log, when Priya came up to us with a small tortoise in her hand. She had found her stranded in some algae on the shore. We brought her to the edge of the water, and the little one slowly tried to struggle her way back in. But the waves were quiet rough, and she must have been exhausted. So we decided to bring her in ourselves, past the waves and the thick clumps of weeds. I offered to go, and swimming out in the freezing water, holding that small little tortoise, and then letting her go, and watching her paddle quickly out was one of the most beautiful moments ever. It represented for me the whole trip somehow. Being part of something so special, I felt as though I had been given an incredible gift. Which is what this trip, and all the different experiences has been. We named her Sibal: Gift in Maya.

The week at El Eden Ecological Reserve really made me realize that

there is so much we can do to make this world a better place, and that there are many, many people out there who are ready to do this work – ready to hold hands and do this work together. This journey was not, as some people may think, only about a small group of students participating in a global conference halfway around the world but about making these kinds of opportunities a reality for many, many more Aurovillian students in the future. It's been about opening doors and building bridges between Auroville and the world – bridges that will be there for any student ready to walk them.

I believe one of my dearest dreams is to be able to contribute with heart and soul to making this world a better place for generations to come by making sure we conserve and protect the earth beneath our feet and all it cradles. That work I definitely want to start doing in Auroville as soon as possible.

Suryamayi

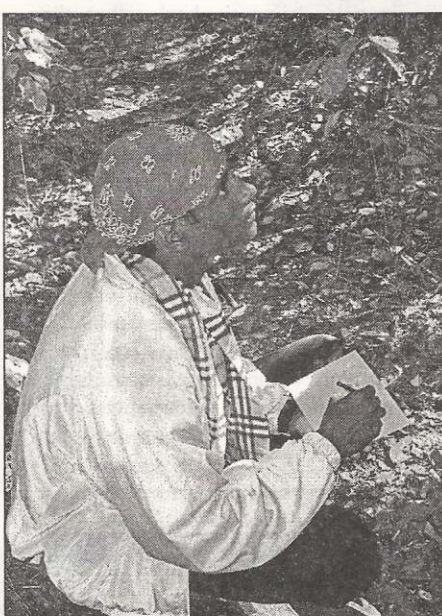
The conference in El Eden Eco reserve made clear that bio-conservation is really an issue which is being worked on all over the earth in very similar ways. That each country or area recognizes the need to put consciousness into maintaining (or not destroying) Nature's infinitely far-reaching gift of life. We are all working in the same spirit and I think it is infinitely important to start to be aware that this is happening in so many places in so many hearts – it gives courage, power and energy to all that can take part in this breathtaking realizations that cannot be expressed in words.

Philipp

Gratitude is a new sentiment that I have experienced to its full extent on this journey. As I looked down at the El Eden and Sian Ka'an bioreserves from their two observation towers and beheld the endless sea of green, below the glory of the setting sun or the turquoise blues of the ocean and the

beautiful mangrove patterns in the lagoons, I could not help feeling grateful for being alive to see nature at its best.

I definitely am different from three weeks ago, before I left on an epic journey to Mexico. Not only have I grown mentally and psychologically, but also in my perspective and aims in life have both broadened and taken on new directions. I can now walk around



Kumaran records field notes

with a feeling of permanent awe at the entirety and beauty of what we live in. My overall attitude to life has changed and I find myself walking around with a firm determination to make this world as well as myself a better place.

All of us learned a great deal and this knowledge, now that I have gained it, seems vital to both my own existence and to that of Auroville. We are after all the future over here, and not having gained this wisdom, it seems to me that we would not properly understand and believe in the ideals this place brings forth. And without belief, comes no faith, and without faith, nothing really works. That is why I think that this trip was vital to Auroville. Another thing to look at is

that the Auroville youth, either because they were born here or brought here by their parents, were not really given the choice of living in Auroville. I also used to have my doubts, the only thing I knew for sure was that Auroville was and would always be my home. However, I never really understood the ideals and thought them to be a tad far-fetched. Now that I have come back from this trip, I can to a certain extent comprehend the novelty, ambition and greatness of a place like this.

If there is one thing I have gained in this trip is an insatiable desire to make the world a better place and to try and make people realize that they are part of this incomparable whole.

Aditi

I think that I changed the most during this week. The fact that I got to meet so many amazing people with whom I became close friends with means a lot to me. I believe that it was the people I met in this particular circumstance that motivated me unconsciously to be my true self at all times. When I say true self I mean that I express my thoughts and feelings rather than that I suppress them as I previously would do.

Another important thing I learned is to dare and get up and speak in front of an audience. Before this trip I probably would not have dared to do so.

There were also sad moments during the trip, for instance when we saw the dolphins and sharks in the small cages exploited as a tourist attraction. This made me wonder if the tourists (who are usually educated people) who go to these kinds of attractions either do not realize that they are actually promoting this sort of entertainment, or that they just want to be entertained and do not care at what cost it is.

The beach clean up we did in Sian Ka'an made me more conscious about what I buy. I try and think if I really need the purchase and if it is environmentally friendly. I know there is also a lot of garbage in India. So why do I have to go the other side of the world to realize this? Because of this we also came up with a plan to improve Auroville's garbage collection.

Since the whole trip, I have been feeling more confident in myself. I feel like I was part of something

worthwhile and actually felt like I am someone, not just a nobody in this world. This journey inspired me and gave me so much energy to do so many things once I got back.

When I finish my studies in Auroville I want to go on to study something in the field of ecology and the environment.

Hilde

I never imagined I will ever travel out of India, so this has been an impossibility that came true.

What struck me most in this trip was the amount of friendships I made at the conference in El Eden. Since coming back, I have exchanged several e-mails with students in the US. I think something has changed inside me, and now I am comfortable with ecology field work.

As we travelled in the Yucatan, I was struck by the Mayan temples – they are very different from Indian temples – they all rise taller and taller... My favourite was the pyramid in Chichen Itza.

Kumaran

This incredible trip to Mexico taught me that pretty much everything is possible and that when you really go for something, you can always make it.

I found that towards the end of this trip I became more open and talked to more people I didn't know and made friends. I have become more confident in myself and also more responsible.

Virya

The most important knowledge that I feel I gained was from the travelling itself. Since I did not manage to get my passport and visa in time I had to leave 5 days later. Even though I missed most of the conference I still learned a lot from this trip. Walking through the Mayan ruins and listening to the guide explaining is definitely the best way to learn history. And living in Sian Ka'an (an ecological reserve), for just four days taught me so much about its flora and fauna. There is a great difference now in the way I perceive Auroville. Now I realize what a beautiful and nice place we have and how lucky we are. I realized this by learning a bit about the lives of some of the people around us. But also everyone that we talked to about Auroville said we are a really special group.

Kalrav



# Auroville and the evolutionary challenge

Will Auroville collaborate with the new knowledge emerging around the world?

Savitra, who received his name from The Mother, came to the Ashram in 1969, moving later that year to Auroville. He began his work as a teacher, but was active in many areas including early construction of Matrimandir, organization and communications, environment, fundraising and liaison with America (which included the Peace Trees exchange). During this period he wrote two books which documented the formative years of the community: *Auroville: the First Six Years* and *Sun-Word Rising*. After 21 years, he returned in 1990 to America where he has written two more books, *The Savitri Legend* and *An Evolutionary Agenda for the Third Millennium*. He presently lives in Ashland, Oregon. Recently he revisited Auroville for the first time in eight years. Auroville Today asked him about his years in America and his perception of the difficulties and opportunities facing the community today.

When I returned to the States I began to shift from the Auroville-centric perception of reality to taking on a larger world view. It was an incredible time for me because I was going through a lot of learning in many different fields – ecology, science, psychology, communications, conflict resolution etc. And what it confirmed was what I had always felt: that The Mother is not just responsible for what's emerged in a place called Auroville, but wherever there's an opening to the Light, She's there.

*An Evolutionary Agenda for the Third Millennium* started gestating in me as a need to build a bridge between my experience of Auroville and my experience in America, to bring together the two streams of inner vision and activism. I wanted to take what I had received from Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and put it into a contemporary, secular form that anybody could read without feeling that they were getting a trip laid on them. I realized that people are often left with a spirituality that disconnects them from emerging evolutionary realities, that doesn't make sense of world crises. So I wanted to show that these crises are not the sky falling on us but the labour pains of an evolutionary force that is pressing forth, like it or not, to birth a new principle of being. In fact our resistance only increases the crises and evolutionary stress. In the book, I also tried to provide a more comprehensive strategy and context for what I call Evolutionary Activism.

"Writing it was an extraordinary experience. For much of the book, I didn't know beforehand what I was

going to say: I kind of aspired my way through, taking the best of my experience from Auroville and opening it up to everything I was discovering in the States. This opening and integrating expanded me in the process. In this sense, writing the book was very healing for me. I also hoped, in my secret heart of hearts, that some people in Auroville would read it and it would speak to them, perhaps breaking open a little window and letting in some fresh air for them too. Because it can get quite stale to keep hearing 'Mother said, Sri Aurobindo said' repeated like a catechism. And we might be surprised to know how many people out there are not just talking about evolution of consciousness, body-mind integrality, etc. but seriously researching these fields. That's why there's a part of me that wants to say, 'Please, come on, let yourself out of that loop and see the larger world that is Them'.

"Actually, the tendency to want to take what They have said and put it in a box and protect it is a complete contradiction of what an evolutionary yoga is. We insult Mother by acting as if it all ended in 1973. Yet the tendency to reference back is so strong – you want to be true, you want to be a loyal *sadhak*. But the world She was addressing in 1970 has changed enormously over 35 years. If She was sitting here right now, do you really think she would be telling us all the same things she was telling us then? If we take off our blinders, can't we see that the emerging knowledge in transpersonal psychology, holistic healing, whole systems planning, ecology-driven economics, cellular biology, quantum physics, compassionate listening, etc. are a continuation and unfolding of Her Evolutionary Story in present time? Then the real question becomes: How to collaborate? How to invite this emergent evolutionary knowledge, experience and research into the Auroville experiment, bridging 'inside' and 'outside', 'taking advantage of all discoveries within and without' as the Charter notes?

## The need for healing

I feel that there's been so much interpersonal conflict and wounding in this community. From the time that Mother left up to the early 1990s living here was like going through a meat-grinder. The thing that happens when people get deeply hurt is that, if there is no way to compassionately address and resolve it, it gets suppressed, goes into the body and poisons the collective process. But we can't begin the healing until we acknowledge that we're still carrying

this core wounding; and this is not easy in Auroville where the tendency is to be tough or to keep up a yogic facade. We have also been trained in this yoga to work things out in oneself, with the Divine being the only One to trust. And while I still use that as my reference point at an individual level, that doesn't necessarily resolve collective conflict. For the yoga of collective relations, I believe, we have to look to what They are writing now in living script – which means incorporating the best of what's coming out in the fields of holistic psychology, the emerging healing modalities, deeper communication and listening skills, etc. This means that a lot of the healing will happen only when Auroville heals its relationship with the rest of the world and is able to ask others for help; because the kind of wounding that we have suffered here requires knowledge and skills that we haven't sufficiently developed within the community alone.

I believe this individual and collective healing process is an essential step in order to reunify and re-empower the collective. And since Auroville is, after all, a collective experiment, true leaders should nurture, cultivate and encourage individual initiative and creativity as indispensable to a healthy, dynamic, self-governing community. Yet in reality, after Mother's passing, Auroville has had this revolving hierarchy of overbearing parental figures and well-meaning autocrats, who kept telling Aurovilians: 'Listen to me, I know what Mother wants, and if you don't listen to me, you're going to mess up Her Auroville.' You can't have synergy like this. In fact, you miss the whole point. For how can you find the magic that happens – the quantum breakthrough when a collective intelligence finally starts to resonate together and the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts – under such imposed top-down visions no matter how compelling? Sensitive leadership, on the other hand, empowers people, helps us heal rather than dividing us, giving us confidence in ourselves so that we can find our right place, like cells in one body. I think that's the thing I've always fought for, even before I knew it: for this chance to synergize as a collective, where suddenly something else can really happen.

Auroville represents so many potential advantages. You can't do something really new on an integral scale in places like San Francisco or London or Hong Kong because all the regulations and formations are already there. In Auroville we started

with nothing, and for a while we were free to experiment. The reforestation of a barren plateau, bringing life back to a dying landscape, is a testimony to some of those early innocent initiatives. But that era was cut short, and the community's been weighed down for decades under a series of overlays and master visions, including the government's. I believe these influences have confused the internal decision-making process, weakening its cohesiveness and innovative spirit, forcing it to fit into an organizational structure in which major components have been defined or designed by others.

## Inseparable bond

If you'd asked me two years ago what I felt about Auroville I'd have said, 'It's hopeless. There are some great individuals and projects here, but basically Auroville is locked into a holding pattern and not really responding creatively to the urgencies of the planet.' But on this trip, because of the way I've seen the community respond to the tsunami and because of the heartfelt connection I've felt with longtime friends – here I can walk into a moment with comrades and get to a place I could never get to elsewhere – I've realized that something is still here that is unique and precious. And this has been very healing for me, very gratifying, reaffirming and reinspiring my deeper, inseparable bond with Auroville and the Aurovilians. I mean, here there is a true microcosm that exists nowhere else on the planet: A multicultural collective vessel that has already rooted a great diversity and complexity of people, structures and natural environments. There is this place where the world can plug in its wisdom in a true Joint Venture between within and without.

And one can already see the collaboration, exchange and cross-pollination accelerating. Since I've been here, there's been waves of students and teachers offering courses here from the California Institute of Integral Studies, the University of



Savitri

Washington, the Geo-Commons student groups; and then there's Auroville's indigenous spectrum of workshops offered under its first Winter Integral Studies Programme – all of which I see as humble indicators of this new direction of shared learning, using Auroville as a planetary laboratory for applied research in sustainable transformation. And somehow I feel that, in some unprogrammable way, the crises on the planet coupled with this growing engagement with the world will help Auroville find and reclaim itself.

For the fact is, the Earth urgently needs another model for conscious, sustainable, cooperative living. The present competitive patterns of natural resource consumption and the conflicts they foster, the breakdown of the Earth's immune system, the degradation of our biosphere, etc. allow us, at most a couple of decades to turn the ship around before consequences are irreversible. I believe this is Auroville's moment to outgrow past limitations and expand into its true role as the City the Earth needs. But we cannot do this alone. We cannot do this in isolation. We need to willingly join together with our gathering allies around the planet. And though we will likely have to endure more breakdowns, more inner and outer tsunamis and other versions of 9/11 to leverage us forward, at some point sooner than we may think the gift that's waiting from the world outside and the gift that's waiting here will meet. I look forward to contributing to this dialogue and coming together.

Based on an interview with Alan

## CULTURE

# Music of the Heart

Birthday week in Auroville brings a welcome though overabundant flood of cultural events that usually leaves one with the dilemma of choice. Bharat Nivas, the pavilion of Indian culture, in collaboration with Kalamitra, Kalakhoj, and S.A.I.I.E.R. hosted a series of Indian classical performances, one of which was a concert by Carnatic vocalist Rama Varma. He was accompanied by brothers Sivakumar on the violin, and Ananthakrishnan on the mridangam (percussion).

Rama's short concert was an irresistible blend of 'spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and sensually' engaging music. He and his two companions dialogued with each other, pushing themselves to explore the limits of their creativity, delightfully

revelling in the discoveries. Presenting a sampling of ragas, beginning with a composition in *raga Hameer Kalyani*, Rama also showcased an alaap in *raga Lavangi*, a 4-scale raga composed in the late 20th century. Unusually for an Indian artist, but much appreciated by the mostly Western audience, he peppered his performance with tidbits of theory on nuances of the Carnatic style and explained the differences between Indian and Western classical music. In an unusual departure from tradition, he presented a soulful rendition of Jacques Brèl's song 'Ne Me Quitte Pas' in French. Though Rama professes to be a better Veena player than a vocalist, his debut performance in Auroville resulted in a standing ovation.



Rama (centre) pauses to appreciate Ananthakrishnan (left) on mridangam as Sivakumar plays violin

Aswathi Thirunal Rama Varma, a prince of the royal family of Travancore, notwithstanding his formidable blue-blooded lineage – which

he said was a barrier rather than a boon – is an artist to watch out for. Unpretentious, spontaneous, with a disarming humility and sweetness, his

music reaches out and touches the heart of every listener. We are looking forward to his next performance.

Priya Sundaravalli



# The Akadamic Genius Brothers Show

As part of the ongoing three months long Kalabhumi Festival of Arts, the much awaited 'Akademic Genius Brothers Show' season has started again.

The by now internationally-famous Akademic Genius Brothers (Wazo, Paul, Jessy, Johnny and Auroson) are at it again, with their songs, crazy improvisations and incredible dynamism and energy. This time, their venue is the new outdoor Kalabhumi amphitheatre under the stars, and judging by the crowds who come pouring in to witness their shows, their fan following seems to be on the increase.

Two shows have already been staged since the beginning of the year, and there's a third, very special one already scheduled: "The Auroville Puncture Service", which will be staged in Tamil, with special 'polyphonik translations'. The two first shows were absolutely terrific and the Genius Brothers, with their sometimes subtle, sometimes in-your-face humour, had a large audience comprising individuals from all age groups and walks of life rolling on the floor with laughter and gasping for air.

As always, the Brothers touched upon a lot of the current issues relating to Auroville's present society, as well as recent events, in their sketches and songs. My personal favourites from the first show were the sketch about the Working Committee and Auroville Council members' nomination process and the sketch about the Winter Integral Studies Programme. The sketch about the 'cell phone epidemic' was great fun too.



Fundraising for the puncture service: The Akademic Genius Brothers singing their theme song in Tamil.  
Right: Wazo as the princess in an adapted version of Shakespeare's The Tempest

They were at it again a few weeks later, with their second show: clad in beautiful embroidered saris in one sketch, performing amazing sporting feats in another, and displaying their great theatrical prowess in yet another, they were truly unforgettable!

The latter theatrical sketch was a very original retake on Shakespeare's 'The Tempest', recently performed by the Auroville Theatre Group at the Kalabhumi Festival of Arts. Or, more precisely, it was the 'continuation of the story', narrated by Paul, with great 'Shakespearian dramatic authority', and starring Auroson and Wazo as the love struck prince and princess, Jesse as the tyrannical king and Paul

as the distant relative of the prince, who has become an enlightened guru in some far-away land. It is to find the prince undertakes a perilous journey, accompanied by a servant who is none other than the princess in disguise.

Then there was also the Bharat Natyam performance, the hilarious sketch where Wazo explains 'evolution' to Paul, the retrospective on 'financial contributions and fund raising' in Auroville and the much acclaimed

'plastic trumpet horn' dialogues.

A little 'Magic' tea shop has also been set up by the Brothers on the Kalabhumi Festival premises: The Neo Urban Polyphonik Agency, which offered a great diversity of teas (especially brewed by the tea master), each one with a 'secret magik power' and an intriguing name: the neo urban tea, the jazz tea, the polyphonik tea, the genius tea, the brother tea and the kerozene tea...

The Genius brothers have also got a new logo, the 'genius cow', and T-shirts with the logo printed on them are being sold at the stands, so enthusiasts and fans can buy them to show their support and appreciation.

Wazo, a Genius brother who's also one of the organizers of the Kalabhumi Festival of Arts, has now gone into reporting. To the delight of his fans, his 'Kalabhumi Festival Chroniks' are published in the Auroville 'News and Notes' each week, 'in Anglo-French with spelling mistakes and other stuff'...

Humour being an essential and integral part of any society, especially an experimental one in the making, I feel something very important would be missing in Auroville if the Genius Brothers didn't remind us, every now and then, to laugh at ourselves...

Emmanuelle

## A magical Tempest

In Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' the revelation and resolution of long-hidden secrets is presaged by the storm of the opening scene. The storm has been conjured up by Prospero to shipwreck his usurping brother and his ally, the King of Naples, onto the island that has been his and his daughter Miranda's dwelling in exile for the past twelve

years. Prospero's command is the deformed slave Caliban, exceptionally well performed by Charu, who loves the island but hates carrying wood for his master. But the generosity of spirit that pervades this play is such that even the hag-seed Caliban can be touched by beauty, whether that of

well played by Nico) who has been sheltering from the storm under Caliban's gaberdine. Although Prospero is content with his books, it is necessary that his daughter Miranda, who mistakes the island for the whole world, to know the secret of her origins. It is Prospero's aim that she marry Ferdinand, the Prince of Naples, one of the wholly good elements among his entourage of enemies. Miranda's sense of innocence and wonder is well-conveyed by Ketki Pandit, an actress from Pune, who stood in, at the very last minute, for an Aurovilian who fell sick.

Jill Navarre, who directed the play, believes the play represents a transformation of consciousness through words,

dance and the elements. No one is hurt by the storm but every character loses himself on this magic island, only to recover a new sense of self by the play's end. Even Prospero, who harbours thoughts of revenge, relinquishes them when he sees that even Ariel is moved by the sufferings of those who are being punished. "The rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance," he decides and thereafter forsakes his magic arts.

The Auroville theatre ensemble can only be thanked for three nights of magical entertainment, notwithstanding the difficulties occasioned by it being a multi-cultural cast, some of whom had never acted before.

This was certainly an ambitious but ultimately worthwhile production, and it provided an auspicious beginning for the new Kalabhumi theatre and arts complex.

Roger



Top: The choir sings as the spirits bless the couple  
Right: The inebriated conspirators Charudatta as Caliban, Otto as Stephano and Nico as Trinculo

years. 'The Tempest' is a play full of magic and enchantment, where nothing is as it seems. With its theme of redemption and the reconciliation of opposites, it is, perhaps, the most appropriate of the bard's plays to be performed in Auroville.

In this presentation, the stage props are minimal. Jean Legrand plays Prospero with the right gravitas while Ariel, the spirit at his com-

Miranda or of the unearthly music that is sometimes heard on the island. "Be not afraid," Caliban comforts, "the isle is full of strange noises that give delight and hurt not." These lines occur in perhaps the most entertaining scene when the drunken butler, Stephano, played with convincing gusto by Otto, is reunited with his friend, Trinculo, (also



Jean as Prospero and Srimoyi as Ariel

## In brief

### Birthdays

The Mother's birthday on February 21st was celebrated at sunrise in the amphitheatre with live Vedic mantra chanting. On the occasion of Auroville's birthday on February 28th the traditional bonfire was held in the amphitheatre.

### Mother's smile

An exhibition of rare and well-known photographs of Mother's wonderful smile was held at the new exhibition space in Savitri Bhavan.

### The Mother in Japan

Photos and paintings by the Mother from the period 1916-1920, when she stayed in Tokyo and Kyoto, were on view in the Aurelec Cafeteria.

### Birthday week

Four artists inspired by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother offered their work in the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium, Bharat Nivas: Sri Prince Varma, Carnatic vocalist; Sri Santanu Bhattacharya, Hindustani vocalist; Japanese dancer Masako, contemporary and classical dance; and Sri Krishna Kumar, Carnatic vocalist.

### Elements and Links

Ireno's photos were exhibited in Pitanga in a show called 'Elements' while 'Links' was shown at Gallery Square Circle.

### Creations for our kids, our future

A group show by Auroville artists to fund raise for a corpus fund for Auroville's teachers was held at Gallery Square Circle, Kala Kendra, Bharat Nivas. The event collected more than Rs 65,000.

### Village Heritage Festival

The Mohanam Cultural Centre in Sanjeevinagar organized a Village Heritage Festival to give Aurovilians and their friends and guests a taste and touch of the beauty of some of the traditional ways of the Tamil culture. The programme was opened by the Minister of Education, Culture and Tourism, Pondicherry.

### Sacred Art exhibition

The Tibetan Pavilion hosted an exhibition of paintings of gods, and gurus, symbols representing spiritual traditions from all over planet earth, interpreted in the classical south Indian 'Thanjavur' style from the Janaka art studio, Auroville.

### French film festival

A selection of the best French films shot during the Second World War occupation was shown in the Bharat Nivas auditorium.

### Concert at Deepam

Deepam, a day-care centre for children and youth with various disabilities from many of the surrounding villages, organised a concert of Western classical music.

### Journey into deep waters

"I was running after a dream to write a word on the sands of time." These words from a poem of Anna Maria accompanied the exhibition of her paintings at Gallery Square Circle, Kala Kendra, Bharat Nivas.

### Sanskrit

An exhibition visualising the Sanskrit language was held at the Pyramids. It was followed by a 7-day workshop 'Experience India through spoken Sanskrit'.



# A village environmental education experiment

Aurovilians reach out to Nadukuppam, a rural school 30 kilometres north of Auroville

"Good morning, Paul," says the little girl brightly to 'Botanical' Paul as we get down from the van. She's standing by the colourful mosaic gates of Nadukuppam Government Secondary School which, I'm already beginning to understand, is no ordinary school. "Actually, when we first came here in 2001 it was pretty desolate," explains Joss. "There was three acres of dust, three rooms in a bad state of repair, one or two trees, no water, no toilets and five teachers for 572 children! This school had the worst academic record in Villupuram District which, in turn, has the worst academic record in the whole of Tamil Nadu. So we were really starting at the bottom."

Since then, among other things, the original rooms have been repainted and repaired, a well has been dug and toilets installed, three new classrooms and an Environment Education Centre have been constructed, there is a pond, a tree nursery and gardens and shrubs and trees are beginning to green the perimeter of the compound. Above, all there's a palpable sense of energy and joy. "That's how it works around here," explains Paul. "If you do something, it pulls in more energy which allows other things to happen."

Aurovilians initially became associated with this school through a European Commission-funded project to restore the Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest, which included a component for environmental education in the bioregion. It had long been a dream of Joss's to create an outreach centre in the region where the best of Auroville's experience and skills could assist in rejuvenating local communities. Nadukuppam is an ideal location because it is relatively unspoiled (it's off the beaten track about 6 kilometres to the north of Kalivelli Lake) and is located between two remnants of indigenous forest. "Moreover, the school's lack of resources and poor academic record made it an ideal test case. If we could achieve something here, it would really mean something."

The first essential work for those working on the Nadukuppam School project was to build trust and relationships with the teachers, government education authorities, parents and local village leaders. "Once people understood what we wanted to do and saw that we were committed to really doing something, everybody became very supportive," says Joss. "For example, the Chief Education Officer immedi-

ately sanctioned extra classrooms, the Headmaster gave up part of his room so that we could create educational materials and the local panchayat donated paramboke land."

With money from the European Commission project and additional assistance from Quaker Service Australia and the Australian Government (which provided Australian \$ 150,000), the major focus of the project – the construction of the Environmental Education Centre and the training and employment of environmental studies teachers – began about a year ago. Lourdes, a Tamil Aurovillian who has been trained by Heidi Watts and Subash in innovative teaching methods, comes daily from Auroville and is the moving force on the ground. "We didn't choose teachers from teaching colleges. Instead we went into the local villages and chose unemployed graduates and girls who had passed at least their 10th standard. Then we took these ten girls and eight graduate youths and put them through an intensive training for one year. Now they are a strong team with confidence in their own abilities."



One of the environmental teachers sensitizes the students to snakes

Since a Supreme Court judgment in the early 1990s, all educational institutions in India are obliged to provide education in environmental studies. However, in many schools and colleges only lip-service is paid to this ruling, partly because many teachers resent the extra workload it implies. The Nadukuppam School project is an attempt to remedy this because not only do the new trainees take up the responsibility of teaching environmental studies, but they also assist the regular teachers in dealing with learning difficulties. "As the school had such a poor academic record," explains Lourdes, "it was clear that we couldn't ignore traditional academic needs. So for 1-2 hours every morning, our 18 trainees take small groups of slow learners and help them improve their reading and writing through fun learning games. Once they have attained the required standard, they return to their regular classes. The results have been dramatic. When we first came here, there were students in 9th and 10th standard classes who couldn't read or write Tamil, and only 10% of students reached the required grade at 10th standard. In only one year, that has increased to 41%."

For the rest of the day the

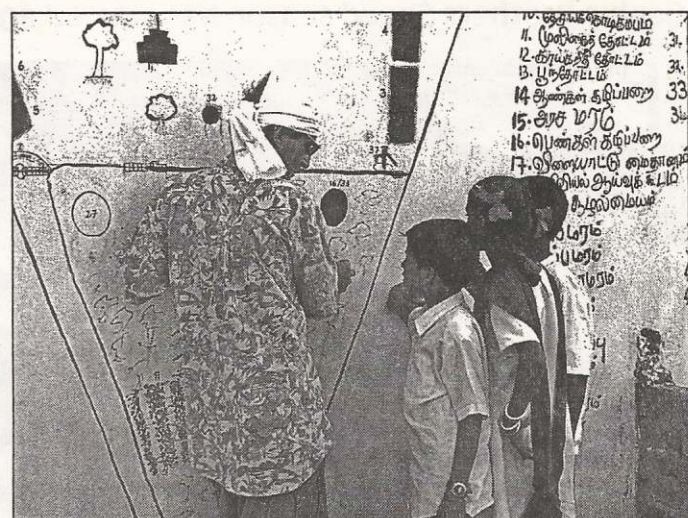
trainee teachers devote themselves to environmental education. In this respect, the school campus is like an open-air classroom. There is a tree nursery containing indigenous seedlings, a raised-bed vegetable garden, a medicinal plant garden, and many of the 1600 trees and shrubs scattered around the perimeter of the compound (and which are cared for by members of the school's eco-club) have explanatory texts. "In this compound," explains Joss, "we have many plants, including medicinal ones that are not well-known. If we're going to bring back traditional pharmacies and knowledge in the villages, it makes sense to have them here so that the children can grow up with this knowledge

and become their parents' teachers." The environmental message is also reinforced by the 'baffle' toilets which recycle waste water into a pond, and by the solar pumps which will be used for irrigation.

The centre of environmental activities, however, is the recently-completed Environmental Education Centre. As we enter the classroom Eric, a field biologist, is preparing something in a corner while his class sits patiently on the floor. He turns, and there is a gasp. Sitting on his hand is a huge black scorpion. Eric, a benevolent bear of a man who makes the small children sitting in front of him look even tinier, speaks quietly in Tamil as he

holds the scorpion in front of him, explaining that as long as he does not try to injure it, it will not sting him. Then he starts enumerating its many uses, including the fact that it is partial to cockroaches: "so don't kill scorpions." The children stare, wide-eyed. Then he draws out a jar with a lid and passes it round. Inside is a huge centipede with yellow stripes. "This is a tiger centipede," he explains, "it's very poisonous so don't play with it."

Environmental education is not confined to Nadukuppam School. Every afternoon the trainee teachers also go out to teach in primary schools in the area. "The core of our environmental studies work is projects," explains Lourdes. "Project work is much more interesting than just sitting in a room reading textbooks." The team have just completed a pilot project on ponds. "A class in each school in the area took their local village pond and researched its history by questioning the elders of the village. Then the children explored what lived in the pond, and the usefulness of the pond to the environment and to the villagers. They measured it, documented it, wrote stories about it, made puppets and finally performed a play about it for their parents and members of the panchayat (during one presentation a student let a frog loose among the panchayat leaders, causing a near riot). In this way, the student learns not only about the environment but also Tamil, maths, how to self-study, creative writing, drawing, model-making, speaking skills



Cooperative planning: Joss and some students

and how to work in a group: it's truly integral education. The pilot project was so successful that all the headmasters asked us to continue. In fact, to take whatever lessons we like!"

Have the regular teachers begun to adopt these innovative methods? "They come when their class has environmental studies," says Lourdes, "but I don't know how far they adopt the methods. For one thing, it's very difficult to apply these methods when you have more than 100 students in a class – we take only about 20 students at a time for environmental studies – and project work would involve them in much more preparation. For example, we produce information cards for each project, based on information from resource people like Eric or Paul and from gathering information about local customs, history, skills, flora and fauna etc. Finally, these will be translated into other languages and made into a manual for other teachers to use (we've already had enquiries from a college). The information will also go back to the villages through the students and through our regular outreach newsletters."

"Taking the local knowledge back into the villages is very important," points out Joss, "because this helps the villagers recover and own their own knowledge. Concerning the environmental studies programme, we need only do something here that is clear and replicable and it will spread like wildfire. The Chief Education Officer is already watching this experiment with great interest. If we can create a successful model of environmental education here, it can become a model for rural schools in the whole of Tamil Nadu and even further afield."

For Joss, this environmental education programme is just one strand in a vast concept of rural regeneration in which committed individuals and modern technology will assist the recovery of local wisdom and encourage new, sustainable forms of livelihood based upon respect for the environment and the promotion of human dignity. As a next step, he hopes that an organic farming and agroforestry demonstration centre can be located next to the school so that local farmers can learn of the vital inter-relationship of farming and forest. Lourdes' interest in the Nadukuppam School project lies in its being both a proving ground for his teaching and organizational skills (by all accounts, he and his team are doing superbly) and in its being the first big outreach centre for Auroville methods and skills in rural Tamil Nadu, indeed in all of India. "This could be the beginning, a way of transferring the best of Auroville's experience in areas like education, health and environment and renewable energy in an integrated way to the bioregion. I haven't yet spoken to the children about the ideal of Auroville, nor do I mention what Sri Aurobindo and Mother wrote about education. Here we try to be it, to do it instead."

Alan



Planting another tree

## Subscription information

◆ One year subscription rate: India Rs. 250; other countries Can \$51, € 37, US \$38, UK £25.  
◆ Two year subscription rate: India Rs. 450; other countries Can \$92, € 67, US \$68, UK £45. Those for whom the subscription rate is an obstacle are invited to contact Auroville Today for information on reduced rates.  
Auroville Today does not receive any funds from Auroville. Your subscription (or your supporting contribution of double the amount) helps us to continue this work.

## There are three ways to subscribe:

◆ Send your contribution directly to Auroville Today, Surrender, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, India. Cheques sent directly to Auroville Today should be made payable to Auroville Fund, specifying: 'Contribution for Auroville Today'. Personal cheques are preferred to bank cheques. Please do not send postal money orders or cash.  
◆ Through our website [www.auroville.org/journals&media/avtoday](http://www.auroville.org/journals&media/avtoday)  
◆ Send your contribution to one of the following Auroville International Centres:

◆ **Germany:** Auroville International Deutschland e.V., Solmsstrasse 6, 10961 Berlin, tel. (49)(0)30-42803150, Fax (49)(0)30-92091376, email: [info@auroville.de](mailto:info@auroville.de). GLS Gemeinschaftsbank, BIC: GENODEM33, IBAN: DE16430609678019389200.  
◆ **The Netherlands:** Auroville International Nederland, email: [info@auroville-int-ned.nl](mailto:info@auroville-int-ned.nl), Postbank account: 3948138, account name: Auroville Int. Ned. Account address: Generaal Knooplant 85, 5623 MV Eindhoven, (IBAN: NL80 PSTB 0003 9481 38, BIC: PSTBNL21)

◆ **U.K.:** Auroville International U.K., c/o Martin Littlewood, 30 The Green, Surlingham, Norwich NR14 7AG, tel. 01508-538300, fax 01508-537122, email: [info@aviuk.org](mailto:info@aviuk.org)  
◆ **USA:** Make checks payable to Auroville International USA, and send to either:  
◆ **U.S.A (1):** AVI USA, P.O. Box 1534, Lodi, CA 95241-1534, Tel: (831) 425-5620; email: [info@aviusa.org](mailto:info@aviusa.org); or to  
◆ **U.S.A (2):** Auroville Information Office, PO Box 676, Woodstock NY 12498, tel: (1) 845-679-5358, fax: 5853, email: [AVINY@aviusa.org](mailto:AVINY@aviusa.org)

**Editorial team:** Alan, Caryl, Emmanuelle, Priya Sundaravalli, Robert, Roger. Proofreading: Navoditte. All photos, unless otherwise attributed, have been taken by Shiraz. DTP: Caryl. Photo editing: Mathia

Printed and published by Caryl Thieme on behalf of the Auroville Foundation, and printed at All India Press, Pondicherry, and published at Surrender, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, India.

Auroville Today does not necessarily reflect the views of the community as a whole.