

For a bright future of Tamil Nadu, India and the world

COLLABORATION for AUROVILLE AREA PROTECTION Newsletter

January - August 2009

Issue No.45

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

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

Mission Statement:

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

Vision:

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

Vision Kindler:

"More of India needs to be in Auroville, more of Auroville needs to be in India. Because I think the possibility of Auroville is incredibly excitingI believe in communities that can change the world and I do not think that such an exceptional idea exists anywhere else."

Mallika Sarabhai

Reputed actor, dancer, film-maker, art critic and connoisseur,
Environment and social development worker,
Member, Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation,
Awarded "Crystal Award" by World Economic Forum 2008
in recognition of contribution in art and culture to promote global peace.

Annual Report (April 2008 - March 2009)

Report on the year :

During the period under review, Auroville Foundation purchased 7.40 acres in the planned township area while 5.91 acres were secured by way of land exchange with the unutilized land outside the planned township area. Of the total 13.31 acres that were secured during the year, 11.86 were in the Green Belt and 1.45 in the City Area of Auroville.

An amount of Rs. 46,72,695 was received by way of offerings and donations from friends and well-wishers of Auroville as well as from guests and residents of Auroville.

With these purchases and exchanges the remaining area to be secured as on 31st March 2009 in the City (Urban) area of Auroville was reduced to 216 acres or 18 percent of the total 1,200 acres. The City area consists of four zones: Residential, Cultural & Education, Industrial and International. These are centred around the Peace Area which houses Matrimandir, its planned gardens and surrounding lake.

The land situation in the Green Belt (an area surrounding Auroville's urban area) is less advanced, with more than half of the total planned area of 2,780 acres still to be secured or safeguarded. The Green Belt is meant to be an Area for Sustainable Ecology, Health, Agricultural Research, Resource and Education. (ASEHARRE). In other words, the Green Belt is meant to be an area for life and health-regenerating research and development projects, and given the chance could well become a national asset. The work of Auroville Botanical Garden, of Pitchandikulam Bio-Resource Centre and various others are pointers to that potentiality.

Four access roads to Auroville is another aspect which, though detailed in the Auroville Master Plan, is yet to make headway in terms of securing the lands.

During the period under review, Land Coordination Committee (LCC), which was constituted last year, continued its work for consolidation of the planned township area. The members are Dhanapal, Kothandaraman, Jacques, Paul Blancheflower and Saravanan. Once a week their meeting takes place in the office of the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, Thiru M. Ramaswamy I.A.S.

The LRM (Land Resource & Management) team, constituted in October 2007, continued its mandate of managing the un-stewarded lands of the Auroville Foundation. The members are: Arun, Juergen, Ramalingam, Somu, Sukrit and Subramanian.

The erstwhile Auroville Land Fund has been re-named as "Lands for Auroville Unified". (LfAU). LfAU attends to donor communications and publishes a newsletter under the title "Collaboration for Auroville Area Protection". The newsletter is being sent mainly by email to friends and donors and office bearers of the Auroville Foundation. LfAU is a subsection of Land Consolidation Committee and managed by Aryadeep with the help of assistants.

During the period under review, LfAU organized a flea market in the vicinity of the Town Hall area, largely at the initiative of Alice Stevens from Canada, then a newcomer, now a resident Aurovilian. A flea market is an event in which a large variety of items gifted to LfAU are displayed and people are free to take them against a donation. Many Aurovilians and guests participated.

Report for April 2009 August 2009

During the four months, 3.32 acres were purchased and 1 acre was secured by way of land exchange. Both these took place in the Green Belt.

Chairman, Governing Board and IAC visits Auroville



Dr. Karan Singh and Arct. Balkrishna Doshi taking a ride on the newly build tract of crown road in an electric vehicle
- photo Giorgio

Towards the end of July 2009, the Hon'able Chairman of the Auroville Foundation Dr. Karan Singh, and the newly appointed members of the Governing Board (GB) and the International Advisory Council (IAC) visited Auroville. The fact that all the members of the previous GB and all but one of the IAC members kindly accepted the invitation of the Government of India to continue their association with Auroville by re-joining the new team has been heartening, and is tangible proof of their friendship and commitment to further Auroville's vision and work.

Their visit was predominantly oriented towards speeding up the land consolidation process. Strong emphasis was laid on evolving a bioregional plan that ensures harmonious development of all the constituents of the bioregion in context of Mother's vision of a unique universal township. Dr. Karan Singh strongly emphasized the absolute urgency of securing the remaining land needed for the City area and the Green Belt through purchase, and by employing land exchange where feasible.

The Hon'able members of the Governing Board came up with many valuable suggestions and offers of cooperation. Especially notable was Ms. Mallika Sarabhai's offer of organizing Auroville Festivals, Ms. Malini Parthasarathi's offer to contribute towards building an image of Auroville's potentialities, and renowned architect Balkrishna Doshi's offer of guidance for evolving Auroville's Bioregional Plan. We, as a community, remain deeply grateful to the GB -members-and friends-in-one for their significant offers and involvement in these defining times for the future of Auroville, and hope that their ideas will materialise soon.



Mallika Sarabhai with Aurovilians taking ride on the crown road - photo Giorgio

The Hon'able members of the International Advisory Council, led by its chairman Sir Mark Tully, and Vice Chairman Dr. Marc Luyckx Gishi, spent a great deal of their valuable time attending meetings, listening to presentations on various projects, interacting with individual Aurovilians and sharing their views, insights and experience in a most cordial and friendly spirit. The deeply benevolent and helpful presence of Dr. Doudou Diene and Ms. Vishakha Desai was an added advantage, while that of Julian Lines, Auroville's close collaborator over several decades, was most appropriate and complementary. We quote below passages relevant to this newsletter from their report.



(Right to left) IAC members Julian Lines, Dr. Doudou Diene, Dr. Marc Luyckx Gishi, GB member Arch. Balkrishna Doshi, IAC Chairman Sir Mark Tully, GB member Aster Patel with Aurovilians - *photo Ireno*

“UNESCO: The achievement of UNESCO World Heritage status may be an important protection and promotion for Auroville. This status is not only for the preservation of historical sites, but applies to cultural and evolving projects as well. Auroville may be well served on many levels of protecting its goals and ideals and viability as a township by collaborating with the GOI to have this international recognition.

“Lands: Protection of the lands, as we all know, is crucial. Creation of a policy document for public/private partnerships and forming an outside Land Trust to provide new tools and strategies for land purchase, trading and control should prove helpful.

“We all understand there is no private property.

“We repeat from our previous minutes that we believe Auroville should formally commit itself to the concept of land exchange but should bear in mind the sensitivities of those who have set up projects outside the Green Belt. To this end we propose the development of a policy document outlining the criteria for exchange of land, which takes into account these sensitivities.

“We urge that goals and time limits be set for this objective and share the Chairman of the Governing Board's view that this is crucial.”

A perspective

Charter of Auroville

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

The Charter of Auroville was declared by the Mother during the inauguration ceremony of Auroville on 28th February 1968. It was like introducing a new creative wave into the world, a new milestone in the progress of humanity, laying down a new comprehensive agenda for the earth's future. Prof. Kireet Joshi, an eminent Indian educationalist and former Chairman of the Auroville Foundation, called the Charter "a revolution". Dr. Karan Singh, present Chairman of the Auroville Foundation, has called it in the Indian Parliament "an arrow shot into the future". (Late) Dr. L.M. Singhvi, former member of the Governing Board, once said that when Auroville was founded it was "very much on the intellectual and spiritual canvas of India."

A span of nearly 42 years has lapsed since the founding of Auroville. Today, we can say that over the years Auroville's presence on "the intellectual and spiritual canvas of India" has consolidated to some extent. The completion of the building of Matrimandir and ongoing work to complete the 12 gardens and the lake surrounding it can only strengthen that presence and penetrate the collective psyche of the country. But beyond the "intellectual and spiritual canvas", Auroville has also made its presence felt on the dynamic side of national life – the social, economic, ecological, architectural and educational canvas of India, thanks to the steady progress of numerous projects and undertakings by Aurovillians, in and outside Auroville. Behind all this, behind the surface level of events, those gifted with the power of perception may see the presence of something sublime, extraordinary and lofty that the soul of the country is striving to accomplish.

What the soul of India could be striving to accomplish through the idea of Auroville Universal Township? We have been saying that Auroville represents a stupendous chance for the country, because India is a pre-eminent part in the Auroville worldview and world vision. Auroville draws her inspiration from the two torchbearers of the future, namely, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, who envisioned a new world, and in this vision India holds a key component: a new India in a new world. Consequently, development of Auroville Universal Township cannot but strengthen enormously India's position in the world and brighten her prospects for the future. The idea of Auroville can contribute tremendously in universalizing the idea of India. It goes without saying that things of fundamental importance such as India's unity and prosperity will be served great deal by the creation of a unique township on her soil.

While we are convinced of the immense potentiality of Auroville for India and the world at large, the realization of those potentialities depends on Auroville's (and friends of Auroville's) ability to convey and convince about this to the potential sources of collaboration in India and in the world, and to offer ways and means through which these sources can channel their goodwill and collaboration.

Collaboration for Auroville Area Protection (CAAP): a new name for the newsletter

"Auroville is too important to be left to the Aurovillians." Dr. Karan Singh (in 1996)

This is one of the most insightful and significant statements ever made on Auroville by a visiting dignitary after prolonged contact with Auroville.

In the history of Auroville, timely collaboration has played crucial roles. Starting from India's late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and Bharat Ratna J.R.D. Tata, a foremost Industrialist of his time, a number of eminent individuals have made vital contributions to the growth process of Auroville

Institutionally, the collaboration of the Government of India and of UNESCO have been of extremely notable significance. The former brought stalwarts such as Dr. Karan Singh and Dr. M.S. Swaminathan and many others into Auroville's life through the establishment of Auroville Foundation.

Individually, it was the timely cooperation and assistance of Thiru L.K. Tripathy, IAS, the first Secretary to the Auroville Foundation, which helped in securing the lands for the emergence of Matrimandir Gardens, considered by the Mother "as important as the building of Matrimandir itself". It was again the timely alliance and assistance of Thiru G. Dattatri, the former Chief Town Planner of Chennai, the inspiration of Dr. Kireet Joshi, former chairman of the Auroville Foundation and (late) Dr. L.M. Singhvi, member of the GB, that resulted in the creation of the Auroville Master Plan in 2000. It is largely through efforts of the current Secretary of the Auroville Foundation Thiru M. Ramaswamy that a major 23 acres plot was purchased on the edge of the inner Green Belt of Auroville Township. Similarly, without the silent, selfless and enduring

contributions of numerous friends, well-wishers and donors to Matrimandir, or to the land-safeguarding task, things would not have happened as they have.

In other words, collaborations have rendered critically important help in the journey of Auroville over the last 42 years.

The message is clear: The future of task at hand i.e. safeguarding the area needed for the appropriate and unified development of Auroville Universal Township, depends on the collaboration that Auroville is able to build up and retain. The new name of our newsletter reflects this understanding and perception.

News in Brief:

(Due to space shortage, we are limiting this section. More news will be covered in our next issue.)

Dalai Lama visits Auroville:



Photo : Ireno

January 20th, 2009. While Mr. Barak Obama was sworn in as the 44th President of United States on this day, on the other side of the planet, in Auroville, His Holiness the Dalai Lama inaugurated on the same day the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture, and addressed a large gathering of Aurovillians and people from surrounding areas. This was His Holiness' third visit to Auroville, after a gap of 15 years since his last visit.

The Pavilion of Tibetan Culture is the first pavilion to be completed in the International Zone of Auroville, thanks largely to the efforts of Claude Arpi, a French resident of Auroville and author of a number of books on Tibet and India's national security.

The Dalai Lama's characteristics - deeply held human values which he regards as basically gifts of India, and himself just a messenger of those values - endears him to all.



Photo : Ireno

His Holiness' visit to Auroville was, once again, testimony of his tireless pursuit for a better and more hopeful world order.

*"Collaboration for Auroville Area Protection"
newsletter*

Postal Address:

Lands for Auroville Unified
Centre for Urban Research
Auroville 605 101, TN, India

Phone: +91 413 2623699 / Fax: +91 413 2622055

email: lfau@auroville.org.in

Information for donations: Cheques/drafts should be drawn in the name of "Auroville Unity Fund". Please mention in the accompanying note "Contribution for Lands for Auroville Unified". Each donation is acknowledged along with a receipt and subsequently donors will receive a newsletter either by email or post depending on their choice.

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