

Saturday, 20th July 2002

Bhavana and Eveline (AVI-Sweden)

Presenting Auroville Village Action Group's project for the integration of the villages in the Auroville Master Plan

Since Auroville has drawn up its Master Plan and it has been approved by the Government of India, the fact that the Auroville site includes ten Tamil villages has taken on new significance for Auroville's planning and development. Bhavana told us that the slide show she is presenting had been put together by Selvam, a Tamil Aurovilian born and raised in Auroville – and she had been delighted to find that in selecting the photos, in fact, he did not naturally distinguish between brown and white Aurovilians – for him children were children, Aurovilians Aurovilians, villagers were villagers, but the color or race was not naturally perceptible to him.... something going right!

The slide show presented the maps of the MASTER PLAN AREA with the VILLAGES highlighted, and had plenty of photos which reminded us of the Auroville ambiance, built as it is on the red soil and the ever present cooperation of the Tamil villagers.

We got a glimpse of what Auroville's outreach units are doing in employment, water shed management, wasteland reclamation, biodiversity, health care and education. But it focussed on the new project which VILLAGE ACTION GROUP (AVAG) is taking up in conjunction with Aurofuture.

This project will build on Village Action's 15 years of experience which means a strong team of local villagers as staff, a tried method and an excellent reputation with the villagers and the local government agencies. Their goal is to strengthen the community organisation of each of the 10 villages which fall within the Master plan area, as well as 13 more which are closely bordering on Auroville. Eventually there should be a Village Planning Council in each village, made up of women's club reps, men's club reps and the elected and traditional leaders. Together with Aurofuture, they'll make master plans for their own villages. And all the Village Councils will become part of a Joint Planning Council including Aurovilian planners as well.

Besides this, Village Action will step up its activities with the school children of the area, preparing special materials to introduce Auroville and what it can mean for their own development. Performances, trips to Auroville, plenty of extracurricular activities to be sure that these children get the full benefit of living in Auroville.

The call was for participation from everyone: "Aurovilians" living abroad can definitely be involved in this. They can help by bringing their enthusiasm and social skills, they can help train development workers, they can play with the children, they can help in project administration, they can lend a hand on village microprojects, they can study and report on the project progress.