

**Auroville International USA's Evolve Newsletter fosters the link between Auroville and it's friends in the USA**

**Poets Corner: "Involve to Evolve" - by Chandresh, AVI USA board member**

It is easy to smile,  
To breeze through spring.  
Easy to forget --  
The constant building,  
Endless nurturing  
Or loads of dirt pile  
That compats beget  
Day in and day out  
In Auroville.  
The City that aspires  
From within,  
Inspires from afar.  
Makes me shout  
From within  
What I am about,  
So far, passing  
Days and months  
And years when

There's work to be done,  
Grout to be poured.  
The constant weighing  
Of the ROE:  
Impersonal time,  
Universal money,  
Personal effort,  
Miles to run:  
Lands to purchase,  
Economy to hum,  
Infrastructure build,  
Bioregion ensure;  
Sprout the National Pavilions  
Midst International Zone;  
Housing ease,  
New comers welcome  
In droves;  
Diverse peoples gather

At the Cultural Zone.  
More Auros circulate,  
Gobs of dollars float,  
More jobs create  
On Eco-friendly tone.  
More work,  
More money,  
Perspiration,  
Consecration,  
Dedication.  
All in all --  
Her help I seek.

Gentle readers  
Of Evolve,  
Simply I implore --  
Is it time  
But to involve?

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**Newsflash from the AVI USA Headquarters**

*Nilauro, AVI USA's new Executive Director reports on AVI USA's recent changes and accomplishments. -ed*

Pulse check... Yes, our pulse is pounding – we've been busy and have made some changes at AVI USA that we want to tell you about! First of all, in the fiscal year 1999-2000 AVI USA received nearly three quarters of a million dollars for Auroville. Part of this money was received as a direct result of a Land Fundraising Tour that AVI USA's board organized for Aurovilians Guy and Shivaya in the summer of 1999. Other funds were also raised at an auction in Los Angeles and through a telephone fundraiser performed by Aurotaranti, then AVI USA's executive director. Large donations were received in the form of stock for the Auroville Land Fund, and for the initial phases of construction of the USA Pavilion in Auroville's International Zone. More recently, AVI USA received a large donation for the Creativity Housing Project, and was also given a plot of land in Baca, Crestone, Colorado.

In order to give momentum to the realization of the USA Pavilion, we engaged Jill Navare to spearhead the project in Auroville, and created a group of seven Americans to find an architect, sanction the construction and manage the USA Pavilion funds. One of the USA Pavilion's functions will be to foster cultural and academic exchanges between Auroville and the USA. In the meantime, Bill Leon, Auroville International USA's President, organized a student exchange program between the University of Washington and Auroville.

Apart from this outreach work, AVI USA has also made some internal changes. On the financial front, our various bank accounts were all consolidated into one Bank of America account, a stock account was opened with Morgan Stanley



*(L-R) H.P. Rama handing in an Auroville Land Fund donation to Kireet Joshi, Guy, Julian and Nilauro. Auroville Feb '01.*

Dean Witter, and AVI USA's accounts were handed over to Olsen & Sims, a Santa Cruz CPA firm. We also lowered the percentage taken from donations channeled to Auroville to cover our operating expenses from 10% to 8.33% (which is 1/12<sup>th</sup>, inspired by the 12 aspects of The Mother.) Changes also occurred in AVI USA's organization when Aurotaranti had to withdraw from her work at AVI USA in order to pursue her education. In her absence, the AVI USA board felt that its volunteer efforts would not be enough to sustain the current open channel between the USA and Auroville. The board thus decided it would engage a full time Executive Director to keep the contact and energy flow between Auroville and the USA alive. Nilauro Markus was unanimously nominated, and he accepted to take on this important work as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001. Nilauro, who was born and raised in Auroville, brings a wide experience, training and enthusiasm to the work.

We would like to invite all of you to work together with Nilauro to help him keep the link between Auroville and the United States open and alive. We are looking forward to an exciting, productive and collaborative year.

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## Radical Women, Marvelous Men

*One of Auroville International USA's board members, Julian Lines, shares some of his impressions of a recent trip to Auroville. —ed.*

Wendy and I went to visit Auroville for the first time in four years and happily coincided with Nilauro's visit. Actually, the whole visit was one long happy coincidence.

The general "up" or "wow" or "buoyant simultaneity" could be seen in the various personalities and dynamic work of recent visitors and their reaction to Auroville.

While we were there we attended some very interesting presentations and met some great people. We

experienced musician Ned Rothenberg, a free blowing jazz improviser on sax, and Shakuachi, who was really enjoying Auroville and the collaboration with artists there and vice versa. We also went to see a troupe of Bauls fresh from the Kumba Mehla (lilting drums and plucks from the mendicant Krishna-intoxicated Bengalis). We met Jasmuheen,

an Australian woman who claims to "live on light" as instructed by spirit guide Saint Germain (she purportedly takes only an occasional cup of tea and cake) and Margrit Kennedy, an architect and innovative economist and a member of the Lebensgarten community in Germany. She proposes an interest-free economy and a local currency – dubbed Auros.

That Auroville could invite, welcome and dialogue on so many fronts was a sure reflection on the vitality and overall well-being of the community.

I was thrilled, after enduring so many harsh encounters with buses and lorries and motorcycles and mopeds polluting the air, to hear that Carsten was seriously pursuing an electric bike project - complete with recharging stations. I think it is wonderful that Auroville is forging ahead on this front (Jack Alexander and B Sullivan being the original pioneers on this front).

We found the work at Annapurna, an outlying farm, to be another "gem in the crown" of Auroville. In the long march towards food sustainability, Brooks Anderson and Franz are trying red rice and millet at Annapurna. Their efforts were especially heartening since it is so difficult to farm organically and deal consciously with water, especially in the face of so

much poor use of water resources in the surrounding bioregion.

Many of our dreams for an American Pavilion in the International Zone were hovering in the air during Auroville's 33rd Birthday.

As part of the emerging International Zone, the "last frontier" of the town plan, areas corresponding to the continents have been designated (figure on next page). We consecrated the North/South

American zone in anticipation of actually initiating some building there next year in a very exciting collaboration between Auroville and the University of Washington. Ashram trustees, Roger Anger (Auroville's Chief Architect), Mr. Balabaskar, the Secretary, Kireet Joshi, Chairman of the Governing Board, and Bernard Altar, the American Consul General from Madras, were all in attendance.

We sang and read poetry and had a spontaneous serenade from a group of architects from Chile. It was another step forward. It was a privilege to be there.



*The consecration of the Americas Site of the International Zone on Feb 21<sup>st</sup>, 2001 was a well attended, festive event.*

## To Manifest the New Force

*Jill Navarre, an Aurovilian liaison for AVI USA reports on the USA Pavilion, which will be in the Americas Site of the International Zone. —ed.*

### “An International University Centre:

“The most important idea is that the unity of the human race can be achieved neither by uniformity nor by domination and subjection. Only a synthetic organization of all nations, each one occupying its true place according to its own genius and the part it has to play in the whole, can bring about a comprehensive unification which has any chance of enduring. And if this synthesis is to be a living one, the grouping should be effectuated around a central idea that is as wide and as high as possible, in which all tendencies, even the most contradictory, may find their respective places. This higher idea is to give men the conditions of life they need in order to be able to prepare themselves to manifest the new force that will create the race of tomorrow.”

### The Mother, MCW 12.

This year, the realization of the dream of creating an Americas Site in the International Zone is closer than ever to being realized. On that site (see map below), if we hold true to the idea of a “campus” model, each country from the Americas has a role to play, and all around a focal point of energy. To materialize this dream: we have celebrated an Americas Site Consecration Ceremony in the International Zone on Auroville’s Birthday, that brought together guests such as architect Roger Anger, Auroville Foundation chairman Kireet Joshi, U.S. Consul General Bernard Alter, and several hundred well wishers to plant trees, dance, sing and pledge their energy to go forward with the first steps towards creating the Americas area. A group of architecture students and faculty from the University of Washington expect to visit Auroville next year and build a student dormitory on this Site. Members of AVI USA and the Americas Pavilion group in Auroville are busy looking at several well-known and respected architects whose work would be appropriate for Auroville and inspiring enough to give them the green light to create the U.S. Pavilion.

### The U.S. Pavilion - Full of Promise:

Many of us have written with great passion our thoughts on how to express the soul of the United States through the U.S. Pavilion. Here are just a few examples:

“Present the indigenous spirit, the connection to the land, and the homeless spirit, in the sense of a wandering people, the nomads, exiles, refugees-- can be expressed through art, music, poetry, prose.”

“Auroville as a whole stands for the unity of mankind, let freedom and individuality ring in the individual pavilions.”

“Something... that recognizes the tremendous cultural diversity of the United States.”

“If one is to search for the soul of something, look to its strengths, the goodness and greatness that are latent in it, or that it has tried to express and may yet express.”

“What has happened in America of real significance has been the result of a certain dynamic action, of ten magnanimous, for the sake of the collective good, or the general welfare and progress of the community.”

“One such strength is that America -- the one I feel -- always looks to the future, to a new creation and a new beginning. This has been most strongly felt in physical, scientific innovation in the last century, but surely its roots lie deeper, in a pointing toward the coming transformation of the species. A second is freedom, the freedom of the individual to develop, free from cultural, religious, or community conventions. Individual freedom is a *sine qua non* of the spiritual life; the individual is always the one who breaks free of encrusted convention and leads the way. That this freedom was not universal in America's history is no mark against the essential movement. A third strength of America, which has been somewhat eclipsed in political life in the last decade, is the spirit of the sunlit path: a sunny optimism that doesn't let failures and obstacles depress the spirit. It is the sense that life is full of promise.”

In the coming year, we hope to see these ideas take shape, and the U.S. Pavilion be a living expression of our highest and widest ideals.

For more information on the USA Pavilion, please write to [jillswar@auroville.org.in](mailto:jillswar@auroville.org.in), or to [info@aviusa.org](mailto:info@aviusa.org)



The new International Zone layout has continental regions, such as the Americas Site, within which national pavilions, such as the USA Pavilion, can be built.

## University Of Washington Sends Eighteen Exchange Students To Auroville

*Recently Bill Leon, AVI USA's President, arranged for 18 UW students to go to Auroville in the Winter quarter of 2001 as part of the "Auroville Program on Sustainability, Community and International Cooperation"—ed.*

"Awakening" "Awesome" "Challenging" "Incredible" "Amazing" "Wonderful" "Well-Integrated" "Community"

These are some of the words that the 18 students use to describe the first University of Washington Auroville Program on Sustainability, Community and International Cooperation, an interdisciplinary learning experience in South India, Winter Quarter 2001. The primary goal of the program was the creation of a holistic curriculum within a learning community structure created by the participants from the University of Washington (UW) and from Auroville. We sought to blend activities that included pre-trip meetings, self-selected service learning opportunities, coursework on topics relevant to the host community and service activities, cultural and linguistic training opportunities, travel in South India, explorations of a unique universal community, and the creation of an intentional community within an intentional community. Although some of these activities occurred at distinct times, the participants unanimously express awe at how the activities and the lives of those involved became integrated into an environment and community where living and learning were no longer separated. Living-learning happened more organically and more fluidly in a collectively-created social environment that erased the boundaries that normally compartmentalize us and our actions.

This pilot program was an overwhelming success and has set the stage for more ventures from UW and other universities in the U.S. and abroad. All participants express appreciation for what they learned and did, how they grew and how they were able to create a short-term intentional community that is transforming into long-term friendships and inspirations for other community-building and learning efforts.

Brian, a political science student who worked on an organic farm in Auroville described an experience shared by others:

"On the last day of our work on the farm Priya had a little going away ceremony to thank Katie and me for the work we had done over the two months we were there. She had recently built a meeting platform behind her house for circles, and we were the first to use it as a group. There is a circle of sand in the middle of the platform, and we drew a small mandala in the sand and decorated it with rocks and shells we collected from the ground nearby. Priya brought out a large platter decorated with food from the garden, food we had all helped to grow. We burned incense and put flowers around the mandala. After a short silence we each took a few minutes to say how we felt about working together, with each other and the land, and to say goodbye. It was a beautiful way to leave these people who had affected me so directly. I think we all felt it was hard to part with each other, but we were also reminded of that seeds that we had planted would sprout and flourish while we were gone, that we had left something lasting and important there. A piece of ourselves, if you will."

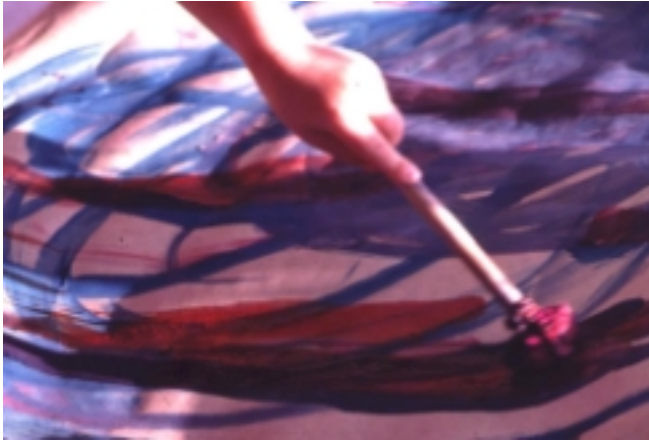


*Sabrina Sadeghi (top), one of the UW exchange students that went to Auroville in Jan-Feb, is an Iranian-American student majoring in the Comparative History of Ideas. While studying in Auroville she worked at new creation school. Next year she will travel around the world on another UW program*

Extensive reflection in papers, journals, summary writings and evaluations provide the basis for a thorough review of the many activities. In addition, many pictures and a video documentary provide visual and external reviews of the program. Some of these pages and pictures will be incorporated into a web site that will serve to educate others about the program, the university's continuing international and educational work with Auroville and the lessons learned that can enhance other efforts to create holistic, integrated learning communities. Such work can provide *incredible, awesome, wonderful, well-integrated, challenging, and amazing awakenings in community* for institutions as well as their faculty, staff and students and the community partners with whom they work. We hope that the documentation will provide inspiration and technical support to others

who seek to replicate this community-learning model in Auroville or other international or domestic settings.

*For more information, or for a copy of the final report, please contact Bill Leon by phone at (206) 380-7730 or (206) 364-6665, or by email at [billleon@geoeducation.org](mailto:billleon@geoeducation.org). If you know of any educational institutions, professors, or other individuals who are interested in establishing exchange programs with Auroville, please contact AVI USA via email at [info@aviusa.org](mailto:info@aviusa.org) or by phone at (831) 425-5620.*



*Although Auroville's schools foster creativity, they haven't always offered their youth an academic education.*

### **An Education from Within And Without Auroville:**

*Renu Neogy, an Auroville youth of "the early days," and a current AVI USA board member, reflects on her education and inner growth. —ed.*

I wake up the first day of the spring semester. I have to smile, in three years I will be 40 and I am taking English 1B! Actually I have been taking a class for the last three semesters, slowly completing my units for a two year University transfer degree. Eventually this will give me a BA and a final sense of accomplishment. It also helps me to focus on who and what I am, (aside from being a mother) and has allowed me to learn some writing basics and discover literature that I missed at the 15 year old stage.

Like most of the children in my age group that didn't pursue academic goals after the collapse of the Auroville school (in the late 70's), we lived in an embarrassed flux, lazy and undisciplined minds eager to change the world but with none of the recognized tools or the self-confidence needed.

I can now celebrate my lack of "formal" education because I have not been molded, ushered or pressured into any role. But this gift is hard to recognize in a world where one's survival depends on a "formal education" and wishing to find my place amongst my peers, I have been alone and unsure.

A large part of my existence has been a bewildered search for what I am supposed to do. What is my special gift to offer the world? And will I be able to survive on it, when I find it? I question and wonder why does a dentist choose to become a dentist? How did the rice merchant become a rice merchant? These obvious and certain careers chill me to the bone. How? How do they know? Oddly it never occurred to me that I could become; a doctor or a scientist or a

rice merchant - must I have aptitudes in these fields? Or is it just a matter of labor by schooling? A little of both I suppose.

Recognizing the gifts of my upbringing has been instrumental in allowing me to find my place on the planet.

The world was already old when I was born. I now know that. Egocentric as I am I had paralleled my experience with the worlds. But in a sense the world does have the opportunity to be new, and in a way it does parallel my/our consciousness - our brief stint on earth is after all shared by the people we see around us (give or take 80 years). So we have the right and the responsibility as a group living on the planet now to behave and act accordingly to our highest ideals. In other words, the barriers that usually separate people from communication and action become small and insignificant in comparison to "our" worldly moment of possibility.

I look forward to my return to Auroville so that I can continue to raise my children with these ideals and with the confidence to make a difference in the world.

### **All-USA Meeting (AUM) 2001**

#### ***Realizing the New Creation: Revolution, Evolution, Manifestation***

**Mount Alverno Retreat Center  
Redwood City, California  
July 20 through July 24, 2001**

AUM 2001 will be an opportunity to explore how the present journey and future promise of Integral Yoga confront and hearten us at the same moment. It will be a participatory, interactive, dynamic meeting where you can deepen connections with others in this yoga.

#### **Anticipated presenters include:**

**Lynda Lester, Devan Nair, Guy Ryckaert, Alok Pandey, Prema Nandakumar**

For more information, please visit:  
<http://aum.collaboration.org>  
or email: [aum@collaboration.org](mailto:aum@collaboration.org)

### **Center for Integral Education**

***First school on Integral Education in the USA  
to open in San Diego this year.***

For more information, please visit:  
<http://www.integraleducation.org>  
or email: [cie@integraleducation.org](mailto:cie@integraleducation.org)

## Another Green Initiative: The Auroville Botanical Gardens

*As part of a new green revolution, Auroville creates a 100-acre botanical garden. The gardens are located on the recently purchased Peaceful City plot (speculators had planned tract housing there) near Ediyanchavadi in the greenbelt, and will merge with the Success Wildlife Sanctuary. Ed, a former longtime greenworker in the Success/Forecomers area, and an AVI USA board member, reports. —ed.*

Every now and then the question is asked, don't we have enough trees in Auroville yet? One could answer is it possible to be too healthy? Considering what Auroville was like in 1968 and what it looks like now it seems that a lot of progress has been made. How, then, did this amazing green miracle take place and why have Auroville's greenwork programs achieved international renown?

- 1) Intense *determination* of the greenworkers to bring vegetal life back to the Auroville plateau.
- 2) Dogged *persistence* and tenacity in the face of all sorts of obstacles, grazing animals, firewood collectors, droughts, downpours, etc.
- 3) Years of determined experience has cultured an extensive *understanding* of the natural phenomenon in the Auroville bioregion gained through direct and experiential contact with the land.
- 4) An ever increasing *humility* in our relationship with Mother Nature

The more we learn about Mother's Nature, her laws and powers, the more we are inevitably brought to the conclusion that indeed we truly know very little. This realization is one of the foundation stones for the Auroville botanical gardens project. After 33 years of experiments, introduction of exotic and indigenous species and finally a fledgling ecosystem



*Tree planting in the new botanical gardens began last monsoon. (Image from Auroville's new Website: <http://www.auroville.org>)*

that is now, with a little protection virtually self sustaining, it has become extremely clear that Mother Earth, with 6 billion years of experience in this work, certainly knows better than we how to create healthy ecosystems that are appropriate for the bioregion.

The Auroville Botanical gardens will collect species, especially those relevant to the Auroville bioregion, from all over the globe. Species long ago extinct from the plateau and nearby regions will be sought out and then established on Auroville soil. Subsequently, seed from these naturalized species will be made available for propagation in Auroville and other places. A healthy environment is one in which all things are in balance. With the reintroduction of relevant species of vegetation to the region a corresponding increase of wildlife, especially birds, has already been noted indicating that the healing process on the once devastated Auroville plateau is really happening.

In addition to providing a playground for life's natural forces and vectors, the Botanical gardens will be a place of beauty. There will be formal gardens and an extensive arboretum with trees from all over the tropical world. The beauty of nature is in itself, a very powerful inspirational and

educational experience. Those who visit Auroville often return home inspired to assist in the healing of our planet. Let's get healthy!

*To further acquaint yourself with the Botanical Gardens project, please write to [nevi@auroville.org.in](mailto:nevi@auroville.org.in), and check out: [http://www.auroville.org/environment/bot\\_garden.htm](http://www.auroville.org/environment/bot_garden.htm)*

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## Cyclone Relief Sent To Auroville

*Johnny, a prominent greenbelter, writes AVI USA after receiving saws sent to clean up after the Winter 2000 cyclone:*

It's 5.30 in this misty morning in Fertile. We're taking advantage of the first light to encourage the male calf born in the night to suckle the overloaded udder of its omniscient mother. It's months since that big wind blew through here, but now that we've created a surplus of firewood the forests still look heavily trampled upon. So when Nilaurol rolled in here the other day with the most magnificent crosscut saw any of us had ever seen, there was an awed silence until we tried it out on the trunk of a large fallen mango, and then there was only music, the kind of music that sharp steel makes as it sings through hard wood. The cut was fine and straight enough to cut a series of dinner plates. So it's not wasted. I'm chasing up a saw manual that exists here to set and sharpen the other one. Over and above the actual acquisitiveness of associating with such things, there's a wonderful sort of cargo cult blast from the transactional mysteries that eventuate in such visitation. Thank you. And thank you for the smaller bush saws that Tine passed on to us from you a month ago. Love, Johnny



*Annapurna, a farm of 100 acres, has the potential to increase Auroville's agricultural self sufficiency, but cannot do so without a large water reservoir, another tractor and a place to store grains and equipment.*

## **Annapurna Farm**

*Annapurna farm, located 10 km from Auroville's center, has been growing rapidly in an attempt to produce more of Auroville's food from within the community. Brooks, a sociologist, whose main interest lies in ecological accounting (see AV Today, Feb 2000), helps manage the farm by doing interpretation, outreach and public relations. He recently wrote AVI USA a letter, which we thought you might enjoy reading. —ed.*

Dear Nilouro, 8 May 2001  
I hope you are well. Things are good here. The sun has just set behind dark, thundering clouds that look like they could deliver our first summer shower later this evening. To the East, a full moon has just risen above the neighbor's casuarina tope. A strong breeze breathes life back into us after a day of withering heat. I just finished making paneer cheese from our evening milk. It is a little task that I do to help keep our dairy in the black.

It was a pleasure to see you again, and to walk around Annapurna with you and Julian and Wendy back in February. I appreciated your recent interview in Auroville Today. From the impressive response to requests for support for land purchase and for the construction of the Americas Pavilion, I gather that the community of Auroville enthusiasts in the USA is very serious about participating in the realization this ambitious dream, this dream called Auroville. I am writing to ask; what level of interest do you sense among Auroville's American supporters for making Auroville more self sufficient in meeting its own food requirements?

When you were here, I showed you several current developments at Annapurna; the new student guest house, the expanded community kitchen, the recently enlarged pond for irrigation water, and the large extension being built on the farm's multi-purpose godown/barn. In the past three years, we have clearly shifted into a higher gear of development at Annapurna, thanks entirely to an increased flow of support from well-wishers in Auroville and abroad. To keep the work on-going here, I need to identify more individuals and organizations that share our concern for Auroville's future food security. Specifically we are presently looking for support for doubling the farm's pond from 8,000 cubic meters to 16,000 cubic meters. Increasing this

source of post-monsoon irrigation water is critical for enabling the farm to raise crops during two, rather than only one season. There is a lot of potential for raising post-monsoon season crops (between February thru April), that will grow largely on residual moisture from the monsoon rains, but we need at least enough water to provide the irrigation needed to get the plants to germinate and get started. As I mentioned during your visit, our experience working with Auroville's Water Harvest's earthmoving equipment showed that we can excavate a cubic meter of soil for just over a US dollar. So to double the farm's pond, we are looking for a grant in the range of \$8,900.

Another critical need at the farm is a tractor. A German woman gave money for a new Mahindra tractor about three years ago. It has performed beautifully. However, our problem is that the time that we have for preparing fields for the monsoon season is very short. In August and September, we are preparing fields for both flooded rice (paddy), and rain-fed waragu (millet). With the cage wheels on the tractor for puddling the rice fields, we have difficulty finding time to take the cage wheels off the tractor so that it can plough the waragu fields. We really need to have one tractor for the rain-fed crops, and another tractor for the rice. This is becoming a particularly urgent need because we are putting another 6 acres under waragu this year (the casuarina has just been removed from the fields). I just saw the new John Deere tractors standing in a showroom in Villipuram two weeks ago. A new, 50 horsepower tractor is in the range of \$7,250.

The last project at Annapurna that urgently needs more funds is the expansion of the godown/barn that was just starting while you were here in March. The extended barn will serve many purposes. It will include rooms for the workers to put their clothes and to bathe, for storing cow food, for storing seeds, for storing harvested grain, for storing pipes and other material and machines and equipment. It will also include a large workshop, which is very badly needed. Last year we put three garages on the backside of the existing godown, which are currently serving as the workshop space and storage space for material. Last, but not least, the expanded barn will provide more processing space for milling grains and mixing cow food. We farm very differently here from our neighbors.

