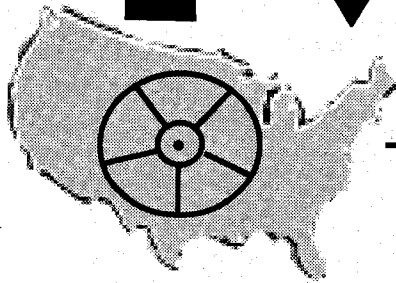


# EVOLVE



Second Edition

Summer 1997

## News Briefs from Auroville International USA

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### YOU LIKED THE FIRST ONE

The first edition of Evolve went to over a thousand people connected with the Auroville International USA network and, can you believe, the attached postcard for feedback came back positive. Thanks to all of you who took the trouble to respond with valuable comments.

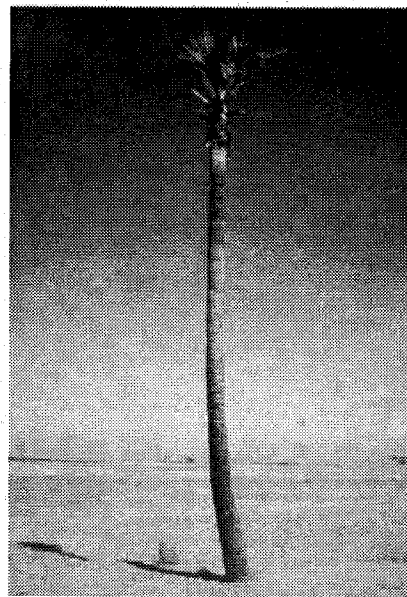
A few clarifications about our last issue based on the feedback: Some people were puzzled over the inclusion of the Charter of Calcutta next to the Auroville Charter. Yes, it was to amaze. This Charter was written by Paul Downton for an Eco-City conference held in Calcutta a few years ago. Paul is an urban planner who designed a eco-habitat complex that is now being constructed in the center of the Australian city of Adelaide.

The inclusion of the website maintained by Auroarindam was objected to by some on the basis that Auroarindam refused the internet domain name of "Auroville.org" to Auroville and generally does his own thing without any coordination with Auroville itself. The AVI USA Board has decided not to refer anyone to his address since it is more direct and less confusing if internet users contact the actual Auroville website page maintained by Auroville (<http://www.auroville-india.org>).

We received comments to the effect that the newsletter could be more "spiritual" since it is based on a vision for the future that is not generally well understood or known. However, there are other publications and sources for such information and this little newsletter is more of

a simple reminder of ongoing events, projects -- a kind of brief information update to keep people in touch and moving. We expect everyone to do their own homework in "inner work" which is, of course, the priority and not separate from the outer manifestation, but all we can

imperfectly track given our time/space constraints in the newsletter, is a few of the details of some of the "outer work". We also invite your brief notes on this and other relevant things which we can publish in the newsletter.



### The Earth the City Needs

Auroville was founded in 1968 with the purpose of creating universal town for approximately 50,000 inhabitants. Since the founding of Auroville the health and integrity of the land has been the overriding concern of its settlers. Land is the support of the City. Without productive agriculture and abundant fresh water, it cannot be sustained. Auroville is faced with many pressures from outside - exploding population growth in the region, intrusive development, rising land values and real estate specula-

tion. The prospect looms that, if we do not act soon, we may lose the opportunity to acquire all the lands needed to complete the City and the GreenBelt. Needless to say, Auroville cannot remain viable indefinitely as an archipelago of small, discontinuous communities. Nor, as such, can it fulfill its mission.

Those who live here have come to share an aspiration and effort to achieve the highest ideal of life on earth that humanity is capable of conceiving and realizing - knowing full well that any such realization is never final but must always be exceeding and transforming itself.

Within the first few years of Auroville's existence, 2,000 acres of mostly denuded and eroded land had been purchased. These were primarily disjointed plots scattered over many kilometers.

The regeneration of the the 2,800 acres now under Auroville's stewardship has gained international acclaim. Extensive reforestation, wise forestry practices, bunding, check dams, organic farming and the cooperation of local farmers and villagers - in short, hard work - has brought the land back to vibrant health. However, without an unbroken block of land, there is a limit to what can be achieved.

In the GreenBelt, a circular buffer of forest around the City area, 2600 acres are required to link up the existing ares. This linkage is essential for management of the five watersheds, for protection and extension of the forest and wildlife sanctuaries, for integration and expansion of the farms and the elimination of life-threatening pollution arising from pesticide use in the region adjacent to Auroville.

In the City area, another 300 acres remain to be purchased. This will make it possible to facilitate the construction of the urban infrastructure. No planning for neighborhood development, for public and private space, can be coherently implemented until this land is acquired.

In addition two "keyhole" areas to the east and to the south of the city are also essential to

Auroville. The area to the east connects the City to the coast. These coastal lands receive the greatest pressure from proposed development. Prices in this area are at a premium and rising.

To purchase all the land necessary for the full extent of Auroville's realization, fifteen million dollars is required. The community has determined that the remaining 300 acres of urban area and 750 acres of the GreenBelt are an immediate priority.

Thanks to Auroville's close working relationship with Union, State and District government, legal constraints to planning and development are being rapidly resolved. At the same time,



*The Earth The City Needs*

Auroville's internal organization is maturing and is restructuring itself for more complex, large scale management.

In the greenbelt (a circular buffer of forest around the city area), another 2,600 acres are required to link up the existing areas. This linkage is essential for management of the five watersheds (control of runoff and preservation of the recharge zones), for protection and extension of the forest and wildlife sanctuaries, for integration and expansion of the farms and for the elimination of life-threatening pollution arising from uncontrolled pesticide use in the region adjacent to Auroville.

In the city center, 300 acres need to be purchased in order to complete a total area of 1213 acres.

This will make it possible to initiate the urban infrastructure - the layout of permanent roads and streets, power and communication cabling, water supply, sewage and waste treatment. No planning for neighborhood development, for public and private space, can be coherently implemented until this land is acquired.

In addition, two "keyhole" areas to the east and to the south of the city are also essential to Auroville. The area to the east - along a two kilometer corridor - connects the city to the coast. These coastal lands receive the greatest pressure from outside development and land speculation. Prices in this area are at a premium. Already, the cost of new purchases on this side of Auroville are rising rapidly. To the south, the Auroville plateau falls away towards Usteri Lake. This is an important watershed and recharge zone, a significant wildlife habitat, and a source of raw material for building.

The community has determined that the remaining 300 acres of urban area and 750 acres of the greenbelt are an immediate priority. Thanks to Auroville's close working relationship with Union, State and District government, legal constraints to planning and development are being rapidly resolved. At the same time, Auroville's internal organization is maturing and is restructuring itself for more complex, large-scale management. Auroville is now poised for a great leap forward.

The land is both the key to the city and the springboard to the future. Today, acquiring the land is Auroville's number one priority.

## From Garbage To Cashews

In 1992, Aurovilians in many settlements complained about the ever increasing tormenting plague of summer flies. In winter 92/93, Auroville suffered a typhoid epidemic. Fifteen cases were reported within four months. Previously, only one or two cases had been diagnosed per year. As flies can cultivate a pure culture of salmonella typhi in their guts, one could assume that the fly plague and the

typhoid epidemic were cause and effect.

It has been traditional for village farmers to utilize urban organic wastes for composting and fertilizing their fields. Thus, organic wastes were recycled in an ecologically appropriate way. The solid waste from the city of Pondicherry had also been largely organic and more than 95% compostable until a decade or two ago. However, now with the changes to "modern consumer values", Pondicherry's garbage has changed its character to become only 80% organic. This remaining 20% consists of glass, plastics, infectious hospital wastes (which breeds flies) and other toxic or hazardous materials such as paints & batteries.

In 1995, Dr. Lucas of the Auroville Health Center initiated a small project which attempts:

- 1) channelling various waste materials to the appropriate solution: composting, recycling, incineration/recovery of energy, or disposal.
- 2) to discourage the import of hazardous urban waste as "compost" to the fields around Kuilapalayam and Auroville.
- 3) to educate the people of Kuilapalayam on issues of waste and waste disposal, and
- 4) to influence the farmers of Kuilapalayam about their agricultural practices which presently involves heavy use of chemical fertilizers and of pesticides.

In winter of 96/97, focal group meetings with farmers in this project led to repeated questions about pesticides, their toxicity and alternatives to them. So, a consultant was appointed to guide a group of about 20 cashewnut farmers through a one year season without pesticides. Some 20 acres of cashew were put at the disposal of this experiment. Psychologically this is a significant step for these farmers who for years have been brainwashed by the government authorities into complete dependency on yearly increasing amounts of pesticides. Dr. Lucas has completely dropped his clinical work for the time being and has become a full time student and organizer of ecological cashew farming.

# KLEEBACH CONFERENCE

The annual meeting of all the Auroville International Centers conducted itself in a classical music institute overlooking the forests of a valley in northern France. Just downwind from the famous cheese town of Munster, the Kleebach Institute hosted the about-sixty lucky people who could converge from around the planet in this quiet, scenic spot.

With a general motif of harmony, aided by walks, songs, the stick game and musical interludes, the conference worked on the land purchase project for Auroville, planning the information and fund raising for all the centers, update of the legal statutes of the organization and assorted business. Serious discussion took place on the topic of Auroville's spiritual/secular status as AVI Germany has had their tax exempt status with-

drawn because they have been classified as a sect. They will attempt to get this ruling overturned. Representatives

from Spain and Italy were at Kleebach to see how they might become more formal AVI centers.

Auroville International is working on common stationery as part of the effort to be recognized as an NGO by Unesco.

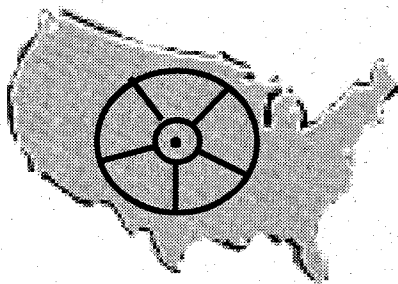
The world expo

scheduled for Hannover in the year 2000 will be a major focus for the AVI Centers as Auroville plans to be a participant in the exposition. The meeting next year will be held in Italy with UK as a backup. The five-day conference which took place during the last week of June was summed up by Mauna, the AVI coordinating secretary: "We have been living Auroville, all sixty of us, intensely and gratefully."



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