



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

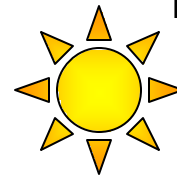
Poet's Corner: "Dawn" – by Chandresh Patel, AVIUSA Board member. May 2002.

Grace, it poureth on everyone!
A bit more on those who walk in rain,
A bit less on those hunkered down.

Truth, it shineth into every nook!
A bit more onto those who walk in the morning sun,
A bit less on those who turn blinds down.

Bliss, it envelopeth every heart!
A bit more for those singing azure notes,
A bit less for those lingering in dreams.

Life, it reigneth everywhere!
A bit more joyously for those who stride,
It is just as sweet for those who just be.



**HAPPY
NEW
YEAR!**

Quick News – June Maher and Nilauro Markus report

USA Pavilion Dorm: The opening of the USA Pavilion student guest house will give student exchange programs the possibility of a new home base while in Auroville. Final construction is underway to complete it by February - in time to receive its first student guests. The finishing touches being done by Paco and his crew include installing doors, windows, mosquito screens, furniture and other time consuming last details. A recent donation from two long-time friends and supporters of Auroville has given a boost to this work.

Poitevanga Scholarship Fund: This fund offers youth an opportunity to acquire additional training and an outside perspective of Auroville, so that they can return to Auroville and become more active in the community. AVI Germany has already been successfully receiving funds for the Poitevanga Scholarship Fund. The full story appears below.

Magazine subscriptions for Auroville: You can offer the minds of Auroville some of your favorite reading material by sending the Auroville Library a gift subscription to your magazine of choice. Please send the subscription to: *Auroville Library, attn: Juergen Librarian, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, India*

Networking with other Non-Profits: AVIUSA and Bhavana, who is visiting the USA in order to network and fundraise for Village Action, have been meeting with other nonprofits in the San Francisco bay area. Foundations such as the American India Foundation are interested in sending service interns to Auroville and are also interested in helping Auroville host international conferences.

Presenting Auroville at conferences: AVIUSA would like to begin presenting Auroville's work at more conferences. We are currently exploring the possibility of presenting Auroville's environmental work at the Bioneers Conference. We welcome your suggestions and ideas for conferences that would benefit from knowing about Auroville.

Land Fund Million Dollar Update

Over \$600,000 have already been raised through the Million Dollar Campaign. We extend a heart-felt thanks to all those who have so generously contributed towards this program. The deadline of Feb 21st, 2004 is rapidly approaching and the Land Fund is encouraging people to donate generously on the home stretch. In keeping with the design of the program, we would need another 400 people from around the world to donate \$1,000 each. We realize that you may not be in a position to donate \$1,000, but encourage you to contribute in whatever way you can towards the completion of this program.

Thank you.

Planned Giving: In September of 2003 AVIUSA and the Foundation for World Education sent out a Planned Giving information packet, which invites you to include Auroville in your will or trust. Please contact us for further information.

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Surfing The Creative International Youth Camp: Navigating The Edge From The Center

Melissa Michaels and friends continue to welcome Auroville youth into their month long camp in Colorado, serving youth 14-28 years.

If ever there was an urgency for us as a humanity to respect the truth of the interconnectedness of all life, it is now. The children of the world are calling to us from every corner of this precious globe, seeking nourishment, connection and hope. Over twenty years ago, I returned from Merriam Hill's Learning Exchange Program in Auroville with a burning question... how do we build a bridge from this place of great sanity, namely Auroville, to the children of this world? Surfing The Creative International Youth Camp is my response to that question.

At the age of twenty-one, just out of college and as my soul-forces were consciously awakening, I traveled to work and study in Auroville. My initial job was to help design housing for Tamil villagers. Within days of beginning this work, I realized that I knew nothing about the people whose homes I was designing. I set out for the village and have never returned, for this journey forever aligned my heart with the youth of the world. I was given a job teaching the children and helping in the crèche, the center for maidens and their younger siblings. Since I spoke no Tamil, I relied on theater and movement for communications. My deepest calling took root as I worked creatively with children and families in our universal language: rhythm in the body.

Upon returning from India to Colorado, The Mother's quote, "No words, Acts", pulsated through my being. Recognizing the body as our first and primary sacred space, the seat of our will and the universal vehicle for communication, I embarked upon a journey of discovery. What really was Sri Aurobindo speaking of when he wrote, "In matter shall be lit the Spirit's glow"? Dance as a practice became the doorway through which these questions could begin to be answered. The tools gathered on this quest now fuel the Surfing The Creative Youth Programs that today have begun to weave the youth from the west with young people from Auroville. The seeds that the Miriam Hill Exchange Program planted in me over two decades ago have blossomed into this movement-based international rites of passage program.

Surfing the Creative International Youth Programs are a response to the call from our young people for guidance, inspiration and skills as they quest to find the answers to their questions. Who am I? Who am I as a spiritual being? A creative being? A feeling being? A sexual being? How do I work together with others? How can I make a difference in this world?

Inspired by my early imprinting in Auroville, our programs are multicultural, intergenerational experiences that weave community together through the expressive arts, service learning and wilderness rights of passage. As young people make the journey out of childhood into adulthood, the programs serve to provide youth with a safe and provocative opportunity where they get to know themselves, develop meaningful relationships with people of all ages and make a difference through action in the world.



Kalya, in the wilderness at Hummingbird Ranch during Surfing The Creative 2000. He was concentrating in preparation for a long ceremonial dance.

At the root of all our programs is a thorough immersion in the expressive arts including dance, theatre, singing, and writing. These ancient and enduring arts serve to assist the youth in embracing their personal and collective challenges, along with accessing their potentials. Inner wisdom is awakened and honored. During an interview by Emmanuelle, Kalya, a Tamil Aurovilian who took part in the program during the summer of 2000 said, "It was basically a free-movement dance program. We weren't working on a specific dance form but it had to do with individual expression, with the bringing out of emotions and communication between the participants." Emmanuelle then continues, "... in the beginning, Kalya was very shy and didn't involve himself." Kalya agreed, "I was quite shocked at all those people breaking down and crying, or laughing loudly. But then I slowly opened up, and it

was very interesting. I discovered a lot about myself."

By establishing a kinesthetic connection to their bodies, a sensitive alignment with their hearts and a respect for their inner truths, young people are ever more equipped to make sound decisions that serve their futures. The arts give young people a living laboratory through which they can embrace their struggles and creatively seek solutions. Authentic expression, when celebrated in community, also nurtures youths longing for healthy intimacy and connection. Ashok, another Tamil "surfer", when preparing to leave camp wrote the following as his statement of intention for the next cycle

of his life..."My intention is to realize my self, to make boundaries for myself, to be living truthfully, loving people and loving the earth, becoming an open heart, involved in the social activities of my community and living simply. I really want to continue this program forever! It is providing true and powerful youths to the world!"

The service components of our programs provide these same individuals with opportunities to translate these ideals into action. They discover their already developed capacities while recognizing ways they may wish to learn and grow in order to serve ever more effectively in the world. Kalya upon returning to Auroville began a landscaping business, many of his skills learned while in a Permaculture workshop with another youth leader in New Mexico, Valian Roske. Ashok, upon returning to his country established a new community center for Tamil youth, initially offering classes in traditional Indian arts. Self-esteem is thus nurtured and skills are strengthened.

The wilderness right of passage component then provides a simple context through which the young people can integrate, digesting their experiences and awakening to their inner power while dreaming their futures.

In the end, young people remember that they have creative options, gifts that grow out of their struggles and people who care deeply about mentoring them into the future. This work is an invitation to young people who want to heal, awaken, and co-create a positive future. It is a moving journey of empowerment, of connection, and hope. As Jeremy Roske, a Surfing The Creative Youth leader who also lived in Auroville during his adolescence says, "Together we find something deeper. We inspire each other, recognizing that we are kindred, sharing our humanity, realizing our Divinity." These are the real and life-giving front lines that our young people need to traverse, building the future that is ours to remember and make.

We hope to open a dialogue with many others of you dedicated to this dream of human unity; weaving cultures, skills, visions and heart-beats with and for the youth. We hope to invite many more Auroville youth to future camps here in Colorado, along with creating opportunities for more Western youth to be and work in Auroville. How can we together support their emerging destiny paths and thus our collective futures?

To support and connect with these young people visiting the U.S. or travelling to Auroville, please contact: Melissa Michaels, Surfing The Creative International Youth Programs, P.O. Box 7478, Boulder, CO 80306, USA, 877-B-Danced, 303-415-0272, or email her at surf@bdanced.com

The Poitevanga Scholarship Fund - empowering Auroville's youth to broaden their horizons in order to become more effective participants in the community of Auroville. Nilauro elaborates.

Auroville is an incredible place for a child to grow up. The entire community, including the school system, is geared towards encouraging children to take initiative, to teaching children to be responsible for their actions and to giving children creative freedom. Auroville's children grow up with the tools needed to meet the challenges of this world. However, it is hard for Auroville's youth to understand the gift that Auroville has provided them if they aren't given the chance to see themselves from a different perspective, without first-hand experience of what the rest of the world is like.

The Poitevanga Scholarship Fund is designed to facilitate Auroville's youth to gain a wider perspective on their lives by engaging in correspondence courses, by attending universities in India or overseas, by participating in internships or vocational training and by enrolling in exchange programs abroad. It is my belief that these experiences will give Auroville's youth a new appreciation for the tools Auroville has provided them with and will also give them new skills that will empower them to return to Auroville as motivated, effective and empowered members of the community.

There are many programs that Auroville's youth could participate

in, given the availability of funding. For instance, Arcosanti, an environmentally conscious township project in Arizona, is offering Auroville youth a 6 month program in which they partake in all aspects of Arcosanti life, including participating in Arcosanti's workshops. Arcosanti would like to accept up to two or three participants from Auroville each month for this 6 month program. That means that there could be anywhere from 12-18 Aurovilians at Arcosanti at any given time. Although the program costs over \$1,700 to participate in, they are waiving all of the fees except for food, which costs \$560 for the entire 6 months. For a young person from Auroville, this fee usually bars them from participating. And that's

where the Poitevanga Scholarship Fund becomes useful.

Through the Poitevanga Scholarship Fund, you can help Auroville's youth gain new perspectives, new insights and new motivation for their involvement in Auroville. Your contribution will empower the next generation of Auroville's leaders.

Please contact AVIUSA for more information on the Poitevanga Scholarship Fund, or to suggest programs you think Auroville youth could participate in. More information on the Arcosanti Auroville Exchange program is in the next article.



Poitevanga (Tamil for "go and return") was started by Gioia to give Auroville's youth to broaden their horizons by working overseas for a year. Gioia has since passed away, and is fondly remembered as a loving and encouraging mother to all who knew her.

Arcosanti Auroville Exchange - *An old alliance between Arcosanti and Auroville has recently been revived. Wes Ozier, Workshop Coordinator for Arcosanti, reports.*

A year ago an Aurovilian named Selvam Rajmani came to Arcosanti with the goal of rekindling the Arcosanti-Auroville-Findhorn Exchange that existed in the 1970s. Selvam stayed at Arcosanti for 6 months and then returned home. Later, Arcosanti residents David Tollas, Nadia Begin and their son Tristan Tollas, Brad Bishop and MJ Bourgeois all went to Auroville for six months.

Now Selvam has returned to Arcosanti to continue establishing the Exchange between the two communities. Arjunan Santhaseelan, Arumugam Elumalai and Sheril Castelino are the first people to come over as part of the new Auroville-Arcosanti Exchange Program. Meanwhile, Selvam and Wes Ozier, the Arcosanti Workshop Coordinator, are in contact with Jill Navarre from Auroville to further develop the Auroville side of the Exchange. Jill already has experience facilitating exchange programs when they come to Auroville.

David Tollas sees the value of the Exchange between the Auroville and Arcosanti. His perspective combines lessons he has learned from each:

“Since 1982 I have had the experience of being involved with both communities. If it were not for the exchange program linking the two experiments that was begun by ... Peter Calloway and his Merriam Hill Center in 1978, I would never have experienced Auroville... It is for this reason that I view the recent interest in Arcosanti by some of the residents of Auroville with a deep appreciation.”

Why did Selvam Rajmani, an Auroville native born and raised, want to renew this Exchange?

“Communities are the first tool to save, improve and help the people and the earth. Having this mutual exchange, learning, sharing ideas and skills, from each of us as communities and individuals, helps us to achieve our goals faster and easier. So one of my dreams is to link and have a life long relation between both communities.”

Arumugam Elumalai heard about the Exchange program through Selvam and Arcosanti residents:

“I grew up in Auroville and studied in various schools. I came to Arcosanti in September of 2003 on the student exchange program. I now feel a need to have a good link between Auroville and Arcosanti, which could happen with students from each community.”

After two months in Arcosanti, Arjunan Santhaseelan writes:

“This is my first trip away from my mother nation India and I am very happy to have made this trip to the Arcosanti community. Dr. Soleri treats this place as his institute to share his experiences with other interested and motivated [people]. It's time for us to learn his teaching and save the world from urban sprawl.”



Arjunan, Sheril, Tristan (back), Paolo Soleri, Arumugam and Selvam celebrate Thanksgiving at Arcosanti in 2003.

So the A/A Exchange is happening, it is just still in its infancy.

Aurovilians who come to Arcosanti on the Assistance Program first spend five weeks doing anything from cleaning toilets to child care or even olive harvesting, whatever we need done. After these five weeks the Aurovilians become part of our regular program.

Depending on the type of Visa, a participant can stay three to six months, taking the Arcosanti Workshop program and then staying on as a volunteer and resident.

The total cost for an Aurovilian to come to Arcosanti for six months would be \$1,735 (this is only the cost of living and does not include pocket money.) We realize this is not an affordable figure for many of Auroville's youth, so Arcosanti is offering an Assistance Program for those who cannot pay the fee.

The most difficult part right now is funding for the Assistance Program. We are seeking funding and/or sponsorship to cover the cost of Aurovilians at Arcosanti so that we can expand the number of students who need financial assistance past two students every four months.

Nadia Begin, who visited Auroville in 1996 and again in 2003) says

“I am extremely excited about this exchange program that is developing between Arcosanti and Auroville ... I am looking forward to new people coming next year and to have a group from Arcosanti to go to Auroville. My hope is to merge ideas and help each other in developing a model city for humanity!”

If you are an Aurovilian and are interested in participating in the Arcosanti Auroville Exchange Program, please contact Jill Navarre at jillswar@auroville.org.in or Selvam Rajmani at selman259@yahoo.co.in.

If you are an Arcosanti alumni or American student interested in going to Auroville through this program, or are interested in helping, or know an institution that could help with funding, please contact Wes Ozier at workshop@arcosanti.org.

More information on Arcosanti is at <http://www.arcosanti.org>.

Opportunities for Higher Education in Auroville - *Bill Leon, president of AVIUSA, has worked with others in creating learning programs in Auroville.*

The University of Washington has its fourth cohort of students working and studying in Auroville this winter. Sixteen students are living in Verite and working in various units on topics that interest them. They also visit other units, hear local experts discuss intentional community, holistic town planning and architecture, appropriate technology, organic agriculture and the cultivation of medicinal plants. They are visiting villages, working in schools and health clinics, farming, traveling around India and sitting in Matrimandir and at the Samadhi.

This type of holistic education that replaces class time with sweaty work and lets students develop their own intentional community was not developed by Auroville, but would be unlikely to happen this way anywhere else. The program grew out of my experiences in Auroville in 1991 and those of Karen Litfin, a UW faculty member in Political Science and Program on the Environment. Both of us are long-time friends of Auroville and incipient yogis. Mother said that Auroville will be a place of “unending education,” and we both saw that it could be a living classroom for college students studying any discipline.

With humility, we made our aspiration in the spring of 2000 with a plan to take 15-18 students there the following January – not knowing if anyone would want to go. We had never led such a venture but persevered through many problems (university approval, funding issues, bureaucratic blocks, poor timing, a pregnant student who still wanted to go – who also returned pregnant) and succeeded in establishing an ongoing educational adventure that has now served nearly 100 students.

How? Grace, luck, persistence, help from more experienced staff like Jim Clowes and positive responses from students and faculty who saw that Auroville and the flexible program we initiated can help each of them tailor their educational experiences to their own interests and ends.

The current class is taught by Greg Hicks, a specialist in water law from the UW law school. His unifying class will focus on water as a necessity, source of conflict, and opportunity for collective problem solving in the bioregion. Previous themes have been Sustainability, Community, and International Cooperation; Nature, Spirit, and Political Theory; and Sustainable Architecture. The architecture and planning students designed and (along with Tamil workers from the surrounding villages and some volunteers from Auroville and its visitors) built a 12 person dormitory with a host of innovative environmental features like rammed-earth and hand pressed brick walls, roof water catchment and storage, solar pumps, composting toilets, and a waste water

treatment system that also waters plants. It will be ready for use by students and others very soon.

Students prepare for their trip by taking a fall class on Auroville and Indian and Tamil culture, which is taught by the lead professor and Shankar, a Tamil teacher from Auroville who spends a month in Seattle. This time together also helps the students bond, develop their own code of conduct, and explore service learning opportunities in Auroville so that they can engage in their work after getting oriented to India and to Auroville.

Karen, who has led two of the groups, described it as “incredible” and felt that this group really opened to a full quest to understand Auroville, important world issues, and themselves in light of new knowledge, new kinds of work, new environments and new people.

The students concurred – with one labeling Karen as “Awesome”. Their evaluation forms spoke in superlatives. A typical summary comment was, “It was the best learning experience ever. The content of the instruction changed my life and worldview forever.”

When the pieces come together right, it changes lives. One student commented, “In...Environmental Studies no professor has ever examined the root cause of the crisis – until now. I'd been feeling hallow and not too thrilled about my prospects for making change in the world.... Now I'm excited to graduate, get out there and do amazing things in the world.” Auroville has the ability to be a physical, cultural, social and spiritual space that allows – but does not force – students to discover and reorient their priorities. One student who observed this said, “My time in Auroville has given me the clarity to realize my passions and see the place of my education within that.”

Other universities are beginning to “discover” Auroville and the potential for student learning there. Many Aurovilians have developed their capacities for facilitating their adventures and assisting in as hosts, presenters, mentors, tour guides, coordinators, and recipients of their service. More than two dozen helped in this program alone and they can help many groups create a unique experience that meets the educational and other goals of visiting groups. Organizers such as Jill and Ross help professors take care of the many details and work with the groups throughout their stays.

AVI-USA, UW and facilitators and teachers in Auroville are committed to growing this and similar programs so that more and more students can learn in Auroville. The experience, by the way, costs about the same as spending the quarter studying in Seattle, but the weather is much, much better. If you are interested in starting a similar program for students or other adults, contact me at billleon@geoeducation.org and I will be happy to share what we have learned with you.



Willy from the University of WA helps carry dirt away from the pit that will hold the USA Pavilion's underground cistern.



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The Evolve Newsletter is published by:

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Auroville International USA is an educational non-profit organization, registered under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and whose main purpose is to foster the link between Auroville and the United States.

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