

**Minutes of the 18th Annual Meeting of the Auroville International Association
held in Auroville, India**

31st January to 4th February 2003

**THE INTERNATIONAL ZONE
and
RELATIONS BETWEEN AVI AND AUROVILLE**

Present:

Members of AVI Centers and Liaisons:

France: Alain Grandcolas, Croquette,

Germany: Wolfgang Schmidt-Reinecke, Friederike Werner, Christoph Muehlhans,
Marianne Soerensen;

The Netherlands: Martin Schreurs, Mia, Robert Aarsse;

UK: Martin Littlewood, Sonia Dyne;

USA: Chandresh Patel, Constance, Julian Lines, Nilauro Markus;

Russia: Oleg Shuranov;

Singapore: Nandlal Patel;

South Africa: Jasmine Belombe;

Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation: Chairman Dr. Shri Kireet Joshi;

From the Auroville Foundation: Acting Secretary and Finance Officer
Mr. Srinivasamurthy;

Guests and participants from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram:

Ashram Trustees: Shri Manoj Das Gupta, Shri Albert Patel, Shri Dr. Dutta;

Dr. Ananda Reddy;

Nirodbaran;

Aurovilians: Alan, Alain B., Alain G., Ajit, Angad, Anne, Annemarie, Aryamani, Ashatit,
Ashok Chatterjee, Aster, Aurelio, Dr. Beena, Bhavana, Bindu, Cecilia, Claude A., Danya,
Denis, Erica, Franz, Gilles, Gloria, Guy, Helmut, Horst, Ila, Jana, Janet, Jaya, Jayant Patel,

Jeff, Jill, Jivatman, Joan, Joseba, Joster, Juanita, Jurgen, Kathy, Kosha, Lourdes, Maria Grazia, Mala, Marti, Mauna, Meenakshi, Mita, Nergez, Pala, Piero, Peter A., Peter C.S., Sauro, Serge, Sergei, Sigrid, Shivaya, Shraddhavan, Tim, Tekeste, Thillai, Tine, Renu, Ruslan, Wim;

Other participants: Amrita Banerjee (India/US), Samy Goodchild (US), Vishnu (US), two young guests from the US, five Russians from Moscow, Vladimir Krivchonok from St. Petersburg, Elisabeth, Mara Mandt, Isa Wagner, Savitri, Helmut Ernst, Renate Boerger (Germany), Aram (Austria), Ghislaine Aarsse-Prins (Holland), Deepshikha (ashram), Anamaria Aristizabal from Columbia, and many more.

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Since the mid-eighties the Auroville International Association AVI has not held its meeting in Auroville and it was about time. AVI members from various parts of the world, as well as Aurovilians and their guests met for five days in Verite in the beginning of February to discuss the relationship of Auroville International with Auroville and vice versa, and to be updated on developments in Auroville's International Zone.

Welcome address

The meeting was opened Friday evening 31st of January by Dr. Kireet Joshi, Chairman of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation.

Our guests of honor attending the opening speech were Ashram trustees Shri Manoj Das Gupta, Shri Albert Patel and Shri Dr. Dutta.

The Verite Hall was packed with people. Abundant beautiful flower arrangements were placed in all corners with oil lamps to grace the occasion. A beautiful music played, called "Sweet Master", composed by Vishnu from the US. Alan and Wolfgang gave an introduction of AVI, then Dr. Kireet Joshi spoke about his vision of Auroville and the challenges of Auroville today, namely economy, education, and organisation.

The session ended with a meditation. The sun had set when we were coming out of the hall, and oil lamps were lit, illuminating the paths to the motorbikes and cars.

Saturday 01.02.03. The meeting sessions started:

The relation between AVI and Auroville – what is this relationship and how can it evolve ?

After announcements, a reading of Sri Aurobindo by Sonia and personal introductions of everybody present (about 70 people), some "old" AVI members recalled why they are working so tirelessly and dedicatedly for Auroville, what's their motivation. Julian, Wolfgang, Mia and Martin narrated their personal stories how they got in contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and involved with Auroville -- Wolfgang talked about the on going "love affair" he has with Auroville. Julian expressed his feelings that AVIs are seen sometimes as "second class Aurovilians".

Alan later clarified once and for all that we are all from the same family, regardless where we are living.

From the Aurovilian side Peter recalled his memories from the very beginning of Auroville International. Mauna spoke very lively about the inner processes of evolution going on in Auroville, Guy about the vision and the future of Auroville. Sergei spoke about the Russian-Auroville connection.

After tea, the session continued - what is the raison d'être AVI and how does it help build Auroville's vision from 'outside'. Wolfgang expressed his views regarding fundraising -- sometimes he feels that AVI centers are just "reduced" to fundraising and he feels there is so much more what AVI is doing. Robert Aarsse, a Dutch diplomat, gave his views from the governmental, bureaucratic side.

Aster gave an inspiring, interesting speech, encouraging everybody to stay at the ball and try out new things. Chandresh: "how do we present to the outside world the Dream ? How do they start their search about what is Auroville all about ? Try to touch the person within, and those who are drawn, we will see how they want to be engaged. AVI is about moving energy and people."

Wolfgang pointed out some similarities with the International Advisory Council and AVI. Why is Auroville in India ? India at the moment is quite proud to have Sri Aurobindo and Auroville in their country.

Nandlal Patel from the Center in Singapore. He reported that three complete sets of the Centenary Edition of Sri Aurobindo's books in Chinese are now in Singapore, but they will be sent to China very soon. Nandlal feels that China is preparing to open up to spiritual values, even on the Governmental level.

Topic:

Relation UN and Auroville/AVI

Marti shared her recent experiences and projects. The focus was on the global struggles which is awaiting us as mankind within the next 20 years.

GEN = Global Environmental Network

ECOSOC Status: UN-NGO status interested in the field of sustainable development; this is a status given to "major players";

Wolfgang: AVI is stuck in their application for NGO-status right now, because it needs more active participation in terms of information regarding UN. AVI is too weak to show this participation. A UN-section is missing in our publications.

Constance: Town planning has to become regional; relationship with the local villagers; put forth a joint development council, there's resistance in the local villagers, there's no role to play for them. Create a tool or means to adjust to Auroville's development; empower the people to develop their own lives, share the water and land;

The biosphere-reserve means preservation and conservation of unique areas; it means ecologically sustainable living, lifestyles, and communities. UNESCO is very much focused on this -- what could be a biosphere reserve ? New York city is being considered, Chicago as well. Masterplan = commitment for ecological land use; Auroville itself should consider itself as a bioregion; it includes watershed management; Pitchandikulam is a protected forest; wild areas concept; important for the local ecology; tropical indigenous dry evergreen forest; ecological sustainable land use = biosphere reserve. How to establish becoming recognized as a biosphere

reserve ? Bring back the original forest. The biosphere reserve includes always 16 km, for example from Ousteri Lake to Kalivelli; we have to define the core area and the buffer area; core area has to be protected by law; we have to establish sound relationships with the villagers who are developing the area, also Pondi university, Kalivelli and its watershed has already been considered becoming a biosphere reserve, eradicate the foreign species growing here;
The relationship with UNESCO places Auroville in a global network; looking for large scale projects;

Topic:

AVI and the Government

Shraddhavan shared her ideas and suggestions on how governments can help Auroville and especially the International Zone through the national pavilions to grow and develop. Mother has placed importance that the governments of the worlds should be involved in Auroville, and she even said that this would prevent war, even a third world war. (Shraddhavan has prepared a paper on her speech, which I will email to anyone on request.)

A discussion started on how to involve governments in the best way ...

Topic:

Presentation of Auroville in mass media

The "AV Outreach Team" gave a presentation (Tim, Mauna, Cecilia, Tapas Bhatt; Anne R. was not present but she is part of the team.)

Tim presented his "AV Outreach Newsletter" which is being produced to be sent out to interested people who could help Auroville's development;

It is difficult to always present Auroville in a good light so that it is understood outside by journalists who do not know much about Auroville;

The Indian government is protecting the Auroville name and the Auroville symbol;

Mauna explained the process of what journalists from different countries want to present;

AV Outreach is accompanying film crews shooting in Auroville;

what are those teams are going to say about Auroville ?

Usually the film teams send their arrogation before, but not journalists, journalists are different -- information is often given twisted.

Cecilia picked up at a flight an article where it said: "Auroville was a dream ..."

AV Outreach has people signing up and keeps close contact with them if they want to film in Auroville;

AV Outreach centralizes the information important for journalists who want to write about Auroville and follows up on it;

What is needed is a video which can be shown to journalists about what is the real raison d'être of Auroville (20 min); this would be a good preparation for journalists as a preparation for shooting a film or video; who are and what are Sri Aurobindo and the Mother -- presented in a "cool" way;

Where is our vision distinguished from many other visions going on on the planet;

Discussion started around journalists, film crews and how to improve the situation.

The meeting ended at 6 pm with a meditation.

Evening programme in Pitanga:

Our Russian AVI-meeting participant Ludmilla from Moscow is a professional singer and she sang Russian romantic love-songs from the 18th century for us. She has a coloratura-soprano and an incredible range of voice -- from very low to very high, her voice is 'grande', she could have filled the whole Bharat Nivas auditorium without any microphone. We were all impressed and enchanted.

Afterwards we had a surprise concert: Nadaka with a very good table player from Calcutta gave us a taste of his present works. A larger concert for all of Auroville is planned for end of February.

Thank you, Nadaka, and thank you Ludmilla, for that wonderful evening !

Sunday, 02.02.03 The International Zone

At 9 o'clock people arrive in Verite. Julian reads from the book "Champaklal Speaks" a passage in memory of Champaklal, whose 100th birthday it is today:

Champaklal receives the idea of drawing flowers. He places the drawing along with other letters on a tray being given to Mother, without saying anything to the Mother. She came out a little later, smiling, and said: "Champaklal, here is something for you." It was unexpected for Champaklal. She had written the significance of the flower underneath the drawing. After that, Champaklal went on drawing one flower every day, thus enabling him to receive her Grace that way.

We are meditating together.

Our facilitator of today is Wim, who welcomes Dr. Ananda Reddy for his talk:

"How to look for one's nation soul."

The talk is indeed VERY deep and interesting. It is recorded, and whoever wants to have a copy of Ananda's talk, please order through me (on CD or on tape). A write-up can also be sent by email.

A discussion followed Ananda Reddy's talk. I catch a few swivels here:

The International Zone (IZ) is the symbol of Auroville's aspiration for Human Unity. True human unity can only be achieved at the level of the spiritual consciousness – Sonia: Nation's grouping vice versa non-groupings; the IZ has to evolve around the true soul which is Matrimandir, and second around Bharat Nivas, which symbolizes the Indian soul; don't block the process by too much mentality; we cannot foresee the future and we don't know how human unity will look like; we should not repeat the past, but refer to the present; we have some directions given by Mother / Sri Aurobindo;

Next program point is with Aster Patel and Meenakshi, who present the beginning of the IZ - Bharat Nivas and the Indian soul.

Aster narrates: Mother said, "that every country makes the utmost effort to discover its own cultural heritage". Mother wanted to found Bharat Nivas, because she said India has had unbroken spiritual heritage. In 1973, before she left the body, she made sure that the Matrimandir was grounded, and that Bharat Nivas was grounded. These were put in place under her supervision and guidance.

The journey of Bharat Nivas: She called for a competition all over the country for the architectural design of Bharat Nivas. The architects and the Mother were members of the jury. Mother said later, "I decided to choose this design, because it is the most flexible." She wanted the Government of India to fund it, because the process of the new consciousness needed to reach out to the government, so that they can be involved in the learning processes. The Indian Government gave the full funding for Bharat Nivas, and she hoped to have it completed a few years after. But we know what the process of Auroville went through...

The construction came to a halt. There were problems of funding. Only in 1982 the campus (of Bharat Nivas) with the unfinished buildings were given to Auroville. Then Aster came into the picture. We had no funds. We were barely surviving on a starvation diet, people needed office space, we had nothing, but there was usable space, a roof, and a floor. The Center of Research in Indian Culture came into being. It was the need of the growing township, which it housed. It was most important that the work should proceed, THAT was important. 35 units of Auroville came into the campus. Entry Group, Visa Service, Auroville Fund, Auroville Future, Housing Service, etc. etc. office-space for Auroville. It was meant to house the pavilion of India, but housing for the community was more important at that stage. Our goal was not just a pavilion of Indian culture, but also the growth of Auroville. The CIC was kept as a Center for Indian Culture. The library moved in, others moved in, they had no other space, so they were invited to Bharat Nivas. The beginnings of the Tibetan culture were together with Claude in Bharat Nivas.

We had the dynamics of the entire world with us. Months slipped into years, the world dynamics started to take place in Bharat Nivas and in Auroville. New dimensions of Auroville life, and all the interactions started. In this setting to look for the soul of India was a real challenge. A few of us were very clear of the focus. But we were clear we had to be in touch with the psychic. Flowing into a deep aspiration towards India. We sensed her spiritual heritage. How to draw it into Bharat Nivas ? Too long to tell here. At the same time we reached out to the country and to the government, trying to make the government understand what Auroville is like, our work was in Delhi, and all over the place. Interactions, workshops, singers and dancers from all over were invited, and we encouraged Auroville artists to perform. The first money, which came in from the Government, was put into building a small guesthouse, most of it went into the auditorium so that the community could have a space for cultural expression. A deep sense of inner fulfillment, being in contact with the Indian soul -- somewhere there we were being touched. The feeling that renaissance of Indian life and culture was at last beginning to manifest in India. You see now a generation in India, new personalities being formed. New goals, new attitudes, new orientations. We learned that the new Town hall is ready, now the units can move out because they have a permanent space.

The balance of man and nature is not there. Our perception with a one-pointed concentration (to find the soul of India) -- it was like night and day we had nothing else to think about. The fact remains, we gave this brainstorming the sense of infinite, which is the sense of India. We had a lot of plans to move out into this field. In this process there is a secret of energy deep in the Himalayas, which connects with Auroville as a whole, with the work in matter. There is a little valley in the Himalayas, Sri Aurobindo called it 'this is our foothold in the Himalayas'. We found there was accumulated energy, not a spiritual energy alone. 20 years have been spent in that quest. In that same place, a disciple of Sri Aurobindo is building a complex for Sri Aurobindo, where about 200 people could live. Bharat Nivas has been

instrumental in working towards an extension of a Himalayan basis. If you touch even a little bit the soul of a country, it is nothing less than intoxicating.

Meenakshi: When I came here in 1976, my orthodox family in Madurai was not happy. They thought I had come to a hippie land. So they came to see. My grandparents came. They were in their late 70s. My grandfather was very happy with the Europeans -- but my father was just the opposite. He had been in the freedom struggle. Jack Alexander was kind enough to get a horse-cart to drive them around. The white people living in Auroville knew which cows to purchase and that impressed my grandparents. In the evening they were chanting and reading. My parents thought they were chanting the Gita. They did not understand what they were chanting, so they thought it is the Gita.

Meenakshi shared several stories with us. In the end Meenakshi's parents were convinced that Auroville is just the best place where her daughter can be.

The Tamil Heritage Center started in Bharat Nivas. All the villages have the mother goddess in their midst. The soul of each village is expressed in a different way in their festivals. The language between the different villages is different. We need the Tamil Heritage Center - it was accepted by Bharat Nivas and by the Development Group. We want space, not buildings. We want natural space. Space with sacred garden, like the banyan trees, and a lotus pond. Behind Athiti Griha and behind the pump house in Bharat Nivas there are banyan trees. There is the Tamil Heritage Center - in its right place. We are bridging the past with the future. We will bridge the Tamil villages and Auroville. This is very much needed. Other friends went to States, and when they were asked for a story from Tamil Nadu, they did not know a story. So our own villages need to know their heritage. What is the flag of India ? They do not know. We are trying our best, we need your support, it is all of us, not only the governments, but all of us have to see that it manifests. Many activities are already started. Many outreach-schools are actively working. Many other night schools. We are taking care of the culture side through the Tamil Heritage Center. We have twice a year a get-together and learn from each other, music, folk dance, whatever has been forgotten in these villages. Different dance styles, also from other places in India, we perform there. Also from other parts of Tamil Nadu. The doors are open.

Wendy led us to stretching exercises, which feel so good after all, morning sitting and listening. The bones are cracking and the clogged channels open up to let in fresh energy and new breath

Next programme point:

Presentation of the various pavilion groups

Germany

Wolfgang: Nazis were misusing the German soul, that's what makes the nation soul in Germany look like something unspiritual, painful. 10 years of research was often painful, fear of getting again nationalistic.

Peter: In Auroville there's a small group also researching for the German soul, interested to go ahead in both ways.

Russia

Sergei: On the practical side, the Russian pavilion has some money and still there is no construction started or planned in the near future. What we feel in Auroville, we have a Russian pavilion group in Auroville, but we had no counterpart in Russia. We need to bring the information to Russia. The St. Petersburg conference was the first step.

Oleg (speaks in Russian): Our group in Moscow is working now on establishing a website with the aim to make Auroville known and to draw in people who want to work for this ideal. And the Russian pavilion is one of the projects, which we were taking up. Now we are only at the stage to explore of what Russian pavilion means. We are happy that we are able to come here and establish contact with the Aurovilians. We hope everything will work out for the best.

USA

Jill and Julian: First manifestation of the US-pavilion is nearing completion. Dynamic action through matter. To invite young people from America, students, to be and work with us. For the last 3 years groups have come from the university of Washington doing work in Auroville and discovering India.

Africa

Tekeste (from Ethiopia/ Auroville): Message to AVI-people. Mother: "Work will be done by what is invisible to you ..." Africa House needs support and collaboration and funds. Two Aurovilians went to Ethiopia with Tekeste last summer. Meeting with Kofi Annan last year in the US did unfortunately not take place. I will try to contact him again.

Jasmin Belombe (South-Africa): The collaboration between Tekeste and myself is young. Africa House is taking shape. African renaissance is taking place. Keywords: Rainbow nation. Africa lives through mother earth, music, singing, dancing, and the sports. All kinds of artistic expression. Collaboration with young students.

Tibet

Claude: Tibetan pavilion. Tibet is a child of India. We are happy to use the Tibetan pavilion for the IZ-groups. Universal responsibility = important to the Dalai Lama. Tibetan refused in the past foreigners to come to Tibet, and they accumulated black karma. That action of closing itself to the outside world was a wrong action, because they thought that their religion is pure and they don't want to mix.

We want to show the culture of Tibet. Exhibition of Ladakh of ancient thankas for one month is coming. Ladakh is a link between Tibet and India. 15 Ladakhis are coming also.

France:

Serge: 15 years ago the French ambassador has laid the foundation stone and since then we have lost it, we don't know where it is. The clarity of vision is missing, is lacking. Sri Aurobindo's two last dreams were towards human unity and new evolutionary steps. East and West have to come together, have to realize one-ness, insist of what is uniting them. Why should they unite ? To become co-workers in the next evolutionary steps. To contribute to that common work, to manifest the new species. In the IZ it has to manifest, members of all countries do not only understand, but contribute with their essential qualities. European space is the starting point, unification of whole countries.

Italy

Sauro: Laid out 20 years ago first foundation for the pavilion. Financial support was available at that time, but the construction was not possible. Internal problems with Auroville and with the architects. The Italian embassy is supportive now for the cultural activities, which are happening. Italian consulate in Mumbai is being contacted, there is an Italian film festival in India, we are going to define a cultural programme for one year, classical concerts ... concept of the European zone is good for Italy which Helmut drew; we are working with people in Italy. Magazine "Domani" (Translation: "Tomorrow"), Newsletter, mailing list of 1000 people in Italy, about the concept and the design for the Italian pavilion; receiving support from the Italian Embassy but mostly only in terms of staff that can be sent here for various activities (teaching Italian language), also fundraising is going on. The real problem is consensus, what are we going to do with the pavilion;

Britain

Anne and Martin: A great pleasure to present the British group. Over the last 18 months we have had several meetings during which we have had a lot of fun together re-discovering our common British ness while discussing the qualities of the soul of Britain. But our meetings have not been all talk, nearly a year ago a concept for our pavilion was drawn up and presented to the IZ group and community. And this weekend we will present our first activity and there are plans for more throughout this year. Three teenagers attended our last meeting - one a new arrival from Ireland. Now we are hoping for the Scots and Welsh to come to Auroville, as we miss not having them in our group. Martin said that there is a good contact between AVIUK and the British group in Auroville and looked forward to furthering the collaboration between us this year.

Unity Pavilion

Jaya and Jill presented an update on the Unity pavilion project. A model was displayed, and Jaya described the nature of the project, which would welcome all AVI representatives to share the office space in the first building of the complex. The Unity Pavilion annex, which will be finished probably in July 2003. The main building includes the Hall of Peace, Conference Room, Exhibition Hall and Lecture Hall. The funding for this still has to be raised.

The Unity Pavilion also will support research on Human Unity and World Peace, invite guest speakers and others concerned with these topics, encourage student and cultural exchanges. Jill said the possibilities are endless once the project is grounded in the building.

Water

Gilles (from Water Harvest): Very very difficult situation. Several Indian states are affected by drought right now. Sea-water intrusion is happening; sources of salinity in our area - there's a presentation next Wednesday; a lot of effort has been done to harvest rainwater which results now in a very limited runoff because of bunding; there's a 25% rainfall deficit; the aquifers do not recharge; each aquifer is leaking into the other one; second aquifer has 180 wells for Auroville; last summer a lot of trees have died and this year it will be worse because now in January we are in the same situation like last year in April; many wells in Auroville are getting dry; we have to take care much more about our water resources; integrated water management

scheme; canyons of Kottakarai in the South and canyons of Aurodam in the North are very important; the problems as always in Auroville are: where are the resources ? Where do we find water ? Kalliveli tank is 250 km²; South part of the tank is very heavy salty water; the water is declining about 5-10 km south-west of Auroville; the quality of water is not there; to help to find a sustainable level; the problem is not limited to the IZ but all of Auroville is affected; risk of direct contamination of the surface aquifer; Auroville is directly connected to the local villages; how can we develop Auroville without creating a burden to the local villages ? Sustainability first is on the human level; the impact should be there from the beginning; we cannot suck out all the natural resources just for the benefit of human unity, which Auroville wants to achieve; how can AVI help in this situation ? Lot of work to do, the water table is re-charged mainly through infiltration; slow down the run-off and let the water infiltrate; the structures are quite damaged everywhere -- the tanks for irrigation are damaged etc. people are just making bore-wells to suck the water from the ground. Social aspect: create awareness in the local population (also in Auroville of course) -- this will take time, you cannot expect that this can be done in two years. Programmes are normally for 2-3 years -- but it takes much longer, like 7, 8 or 10 years so that people are able to understand the point. There is no awareness in this area how to use groundwater. In the 70s they started to use water in this way; cost for electricity for agriculture is free; the land is degraded; politics and power are involved, and the social level;

It is an on-going investigation; Water Harvest has a lot of documents but no ready-made brochure because the situation is changing all the time; we try to understand ourselves what is happening; we launched a programme right now to educate the Auroville population about the right use of water; the main target groups are children, because this is the only way how behavior patterns will change in the future; rainwater harvesting is very important; very few people have really developed water conservation programmes because it is costly and very difficult; we have very dense rainfall in a very short time; where do you find the money to store that much rainfall in two months in tanks etc ? Classical ways are so far not affordable.

Angad talked about Bharatipuram, a village which is partly located inside the International Zone, and whose presence needs to be integrated into our city plan, one way or the other. Bharatipuram is actually an extension of Kottakarai. The villagers moved onto puramboke (government owned) land, they were squatters, and from there it grew. Years ago, some 60 huts came up suddenly over night, and presently about 1200 people in about 200 houses are settled there. Part of the land they occupy was destined to be for the pavilions of China and South-East Asia in the International Zone. This village has been there for a very long time, and ways are being explored to integrate them, perhaps as an exhibition area of local culture, adding in a special way to the 'internationalness' of the Zone. One solution could be a site museum, which would expose unique things which we find in the ground, which we would restore together with the villagers.

Joseba (member of the Interim Development Council) observed in this context that the existence of Bharatipuram arose out of neglected contribution from Auroville's side towards the workers of Auroville; we have to scrutinize Mother's idea about a labour colony. The planning section of Auroville's Future has developed the concept of a model village with about 60 houses, as a model for the future.

Bharatipuram is not a naturally grown village but came into existence attracted by the work-opportunities of Auroville. It will be better to improve the living situation of these people and move them into new housing. The Mother was envisaging these labour colonies at the edge of the city, not inside the city; Auroville has to create infrastructure for these people.

CIRHU = Center for Research of Human Unity

Kathy: Higher education came into focus through SAIER (Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research) various faculties; funding through the government; recognized as an institution of education; East-West human unity; through the escalation of global problems CIRHU gets invigorated and is ready to be manifested; student service -- to funnel students from all over the world as supervisors and teachers into Auroville; teaching-learning capacity; lots of things were happening in education and research but it wasn't centralized, like Savitri Bhavan and CSR; many of those units felt with enhanced funding they could do much better work; there's a four-page documents which can be sent to you; there's an email forum to discuss practical steps and maybe some of the AVIs are interesting contributing to; Auroville curriculum for visiting students; high school-age and study in Auroville as a living-learning center; current activities Center for Studies for Future Learning (CFL), the unfolding experiment for the laboratory of human unity; how decision making is being dealt with or conflict resolution; how is this new society unfolding here; invite leading thinkers; to promote and coordinate research is inherited in the Auroville Charter; resource base is being developed and can be used for others who need advice; consciousness and evolution; these are all under the SAIER development proposal; living research in organisation, how to function together as a team; office space is now the Sri Aurobindo World Center for Human Unity (SAWCHU) in Bharat Nivas, but we envisage to move in due time; to host more VIPs, conference and meeting facilities will be created; now we need to deal with the influx of teachers and students from all over the world; sharing research both within and outside Auroville;

After that CIRHU presentation it is tea time ...

In the meantime a taxi arrives and Nirodbaran emerges -- smiling, he sits down, gets a tea served. If he wants to say something, address the assembly ? No, he says, he only wants to sit here. Amrita Banerjee starts playing the harmonium, she sings some bajans. It is a very nice atmosphere. People concentrate. Afterwards Nirod distributes blessing packets. Then he suddenly grabs the microphone and speaks his heart. "But Nirod", Ananda says, "you did not want to say anything !" "Yes," Nirod says, "but it just comes."

Next programme point: Extended International Zone- group proposal

The proposal is read out.

Basically it deals with direct – virtual ? – participation in the International Zone group as equal members to the Aurovilians present, and more. Anybody who likes to read this document, which was worked out at the AVI-meeting in California last summer, please write to me.

Discussions started.

Wolfgang: informal involvement. We want to participate in developing the infrastructure.

Aster: let's keep it at the level of inner searching. Let's try out 6 months and then see if it is necessary to change the structure, 6 months or a year. Let's not be too organizational, let it grow from within.

Ananda: Sense of being together, real participation. They wanted to come in as an equal force and not that Auroville has the last word.

Sergei: Let's understand that proposal in the most open way. General command for participation. One possible way is to have one Aurovilian member directly communicating with the AVI group. It would be a blessing for the IZ-group if this would be possible. We just invited members from other working groups to participate in our meetings. Another way would be a virtual participation. For example we send an agenda for the meeting to come and also the report of the meeting. So the AVIs can then send us their response. That's it. That's what we thought of. There may be other ideas how it can function. This requires actually a well-functioning office facility of the IZ. It needs a budget, which the IZ-group does not have at the moment. What else? Members 3 years with the possibility of re-selection. Members are not elected. It is impossible. Members are directly involved in the IZ and taking part regularly in the work. On the Auroville side this is not possible to have a limited membership.

Aster: I am the only surviving member of several IZ-groups. Make it simple, we may not want you forever, but let's not give a time limit.

Sergei: Auroville representation of Bharatipuram. Either Angad or Bhavana.

Aster: We do not want any uprooting displacement for Bharatipuram. Let's speak with Angad, Bhavana and Meenakshi.

Sergei: Outside consultants are already accepted, we are working with consultants whenever necessary.

Core group is composed of Aurovilians, which are here. All major policy decisions are made by this group.

Jaya: Everybody who wants to participate from the pavilion groups can do so, but many people do not have the time to come.

Peter: Let's not call it "Extended" IZ but just International Zone group and it is understood that the AVIs are included. (Everybody agrees.)

Martin: I am very pleased that everything what we have discussed in California has been very well received here in Auroville. There is a real wish of all parties to get on with it. Communication and obtaining decision -- how will the process work? How we make sure we get the right response? Everybody should be in agreement how it should be done and I think everybody will be very happy if this structure is in place.

Sergei: Include the value of the land + 50% of the cost of the building for the cost of the infrastructure. Provide a regular monthly budget to the IZ-office.

Budget presented by Ruslan

We don't have an office; we are working at home or at the school with Sergei. In August (?) we hope to shift to the Unity Pavilion, but we need office furniture (1 lakh of rupees for equipment and furniture; this is a one-time payment) and then we need a maintenance budget. Full running budget includes water, electricity, stationary, maintenance for two people etc. this is Rs. 12,800 per month. Temporary running budget is Rs. 6600 per month until August/September.

Budget for development we don't know how it will be. Compilations, research etc. this is just to make you aware that in future we need funds for that also.

Aster: don't put the entire budget on the AVI centers. Some part should be met by internal resources. The Central Fund will not find any money for it, but under CIRHU it may be possible. They would be having money for equipment and maintenance; a certain portion could be funded by CIRHU.

A discussion started on how to make an application to get these funds via CIRHU.

The meeting ended with singing of bajans by Amrita and everybody. A very sweet ending.

Monday, 03.02.03 Tours and Programmes

Two outings are on the programme today:

1. Walk the International Zone (with Helmut)
2. Land tour by bus (with Guy and Peter C.S.)

We were out and about today, meeting at Bharat Nivas for a tour of the International Zone. First stop was the Annex of the Unity Pavilion which may be up and running by August 15th. Jaya and Helmut showed that already the window gratings are there and plans to house the various offices are under way. Even AVI is invited. There may even be room for the Nakashima Peace Table, which would then be safe from the monsoon flooding at CIRHU. It was amazing to see how much had been accomplished in a year.

Next stop along the trail was the archeological dig where Popo has excavated Iron Age burial places which look to extend over a number of acres. This painstaking work of uncovering granite sarcophagi and burial pots may hopefully end up as a "site museum", where people could see exposed portions of these ancient civilizations. What a leap from the trenches going back up to 2500 years and turning towards the Unity Pavilion embodying mankind's hope for peace and reconciliation for the entire planet.

We headed back through Atithi Griha Guest House at Bharat Nivas, which is done in the tradition of Tamil houses with a beautiful courtyard for performances and a spacious dining area to CIRHU, where Aster has numerous exhibitions of art and culture at CIRHU. This building has served as a seed, which will blossom into a number of programs in the coming years as the Bharat Nivas complex expands and develops and the various States of India participate. The group highly anticipates the introduction of an Indian restaurant serving the various regional cuisines.

The neighbor nearing completion in the International Zone is the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture. It was pointed out how visitors had been so moved by a block brought from Tibet and placed by H.H. the Dalai Lama, that small pieces had been taken as a sacred memory, leaving it eroded to the point that a protective cover had to be installed. We toured the courtyard and saw an exhibition by French artist GAP, who was there to welcome the visitors. Soon a collection of thankas from Ladakh will be exhibited thanks to the persistent dedication of Claude Arpi. Meetings of the International Zone are being held there and Kireet Joshi is currently giving a class on the Upanishads

(which has been appreciated by at least one member of the students visiting from the University of Washington State, USA).

We headed to the US student dorm, which is nearing completion. Doors, windows and the final roof seem to be the final elements to a building which paid special attention to water collection from the roof and composting toilets. The leech field ends with a group of banana trees. Plans are to market them under the name “Extra Yellow”.

An attempt to head directly to the parking lot and the Visitors Center was thwarted by a new fence, an indication of the circle tour around Auroville revealing such astonishing things as a giant Durga as tall as the Matrimandir being constructed to the South of Auroville, rampant expansion from Pondicherry northward and the nefarious disregard for Auroville’s plan by local real estate speculators. Guy and Peter C.S. guided two buses through various sensitive areas answering and pondering many confounding questions. We can only hope farsighted planners can help create a status for Auroville and the funds to keep its integrity. A miracle donation is very much needed.

After another delicious lunch at Afsanah’s Guest House, the afternoon provided a breakup into small groups covering the following topics:

- a. Auroville in the Mass Media
- b. Auroville and the United Nations
- c. Minutes of the subgroup meeting on ‘city planning and grouping of pavilions’

a. Alan’s notes on the media group

Nilauro: 1) very few people in the States want printed material about AV. Normally we refer people to the AV website if they want info. But this makes it essential that the website is updated regularly and that there’s some quick indication on the site of what’s new. Doris from the web team will take this up.

2) also important how info about AV is put across. Nilauro usually doesn’t mention Sri Aurobindo or Mother to many donors as they are willing to support specific projects in villages etc. but may not be willing to support a spiritual community. Nilauro is willing to proofread brochures, and articles intended for US readership.

Martin: 1) never hears about many new publications, videos etc. until he comes to AV. Suggests that one copy of all new brochures, videos etc. should be sent to each center and liaison. Tine agrees to be point person for this.

2) Can be a problem when there are funding appeals to AVIUK members, which are not routed through the center. Happens with Matrimandir at present. May result in members getting a slew of uncoordinated appeals.

Need for AV to prepare a first-class press kit. Should include high-resolution (min. 300 dpi) photos, up-to-date articles, endorsements from UNESCO, and people like David Brewer etc.

Need to encourage video makers in AV to be more active. AVIUSA is willing to commission videos on topics which are not covered adequately at present (villages ie). It is important that videos and articles should refer to challenges, difficulties as well as the achievements.

b. Auroville and the United Nations

Shraddhavan and Helmut Ernst worked on a document to be presented to the Governing Board members of the Auroville Foundation, who met on 14./15.02.2003 in Auroville. Here is the presented document in its entirety.

Auroville, 14.02.2003

Concept of an invitation to the member-states of UNESCO

for consideration by G.O.I.

submitted to

The Chairman and Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation

based on an outline endorsed by

the General Assembly of Auroville International

February 4, 2003

- ? Recalling that the member-states of UNESCO have given unanimous support to the project of the AUROVILLE International Educational Township by resolutions passed in 1966, 1968, 1970 and 1983;
- ? Considering that the AUROVILLE project embodies in its Charter the aim of fostering the realisation of Human Unity and worldwide Peace through unending education, and invites the collaboration of representatives of all the nations of mankind in this effort to create propitious conditions for the development of a higher and truer consciousness everywhere in the world;
- ? Considering also that the AUROVILLE project, now in existence for 35 years, already has amongst its permanent residents representatives of over 40 nations from all the earth's continents, engaged in an ever-expanding spectrum of dynamic and forward-looking projects, as well as a worldwide network of support groups known as "Auroville International"
- ? Considering also the present and future orientation of AUROVILLE to be a unique Campus for an Integral Education and Research into the full potential

of both Matter and Consciousness, where research, teaching and demonstration are blended together and where all the various aspects, which are essential for the fair, just and sustainable development of all nations and its peoples, will be integrally addressed.¹

- ? Considering also that the AUROVILLE Master Plan provides four major sectors for the township (the Cultural, Industrial, Residential and International Zones), amongst which the **International Zone (IZ)** is specifically envisaged to be composed of the Pavilions of the Nations, where each nation can present its distinctive culture and achievements and unique contribution to the human heritage in the context of the above Campus whereby a living, experiential learning and research environment focusing on human unity, sustainability and a shared brighter future for the entire planet is created for the youth of the world;
- ? The Government of India hereby invites all the member-states of UNESCO to renew and build upon their earlier support for the AUROVILLE project, by participating in a further step towards the development of the National Pavilions in Auroville's International Zone.
- ? It is proposed that each of the member-states should select 3 – 5 outstanding young people, and send them to stay in AUROVILLE for a period of 3 – 6 months, with the assignment of studying and understanding the unique spirit and environment there, and developing a proposal about the most appropriate way for their particular nation to be represented in the International Zone as part of the Campus of Integral Education and Research in Auroville. The costs of travel and stay in AV should be borne by the respective governments. The representation should be gender-balanced. Upon their return home these young delegates would present their proposals to the relevant departments of their own government. It would be at the discretion of each government to decide whether and in which way they would take up these proposals. Their decisions should be communicated to the Government of India. The IZ-group in Auroville and the Auroville International (AVI) offices in many countries² could then serve as points of further contact.
- ? At this time of impending widespread conflict, the Government of India urges all member-states to take up this opportunity of collaborating, in a modest symbolic fashion, in the realisation of a project which is devoted to furthering the cause of Peace between Nations, International Understanding and Human Unity.

Auroville 4th of February,

2003

¹ Details of this educational orientation and of the multiple aspects of practical research going on in AUROVILLE are to be given in attached brochures.

² Attachment on AVI to be added

Joint Resolution

As the outcome of the exchange and discussions between AVI-representatives and members of AV's International Zone (IZ)-Group in February 2003 the General Assembly of AVI hereby resolves

- (a) to request the Governing Board and, if possible, the International Advisory Council of AV to recommend to the relevant department of the Government of India (GoI) that, in the context of the Mother's 125th Birth Anniversary celebration an invitation should be extended by the GoI through the channel of UNESCO to all member states to follow up on their earlier support of AV in the form of UNESCO resolutions by active participation in the development of AV's IZ as an international university campus devoted to experiential learning for human unity and international understanding;
- (b) to take up an active program of informing all the foreign embassies and High Commissions in India about AV and the aims and objectives of the IZ with the aim of encouraging the participation of national governments in developing the IZ.

* * *

Note: The document had been presented to the Governing Board members at its meeting in Auroville. The GB agreed that it is a good document, but due to other pending issues and conflicts within the community, it did not receive the necessary attention. A follow-up is being done.

c. Minutes of the subgroup meeting on 'city planning and grouping of pavilions'

Peter A. expresses the need to clarify where we are between ideal and reality as well as his concern with the ongoing development in Auroville. It's high time to work together in a better and more efficient way, like the example of the 'land use coordination group' (LUC) shows, which was formed in a coming together of almost

all related Auroville-working groups. There's a need for Auroville to collectively tune into the greater focus, regarding such important topics as:

- Land for Auroville (land has been 'purchased away from under our feet'),
- Ownership approach /attitudes,
- Town planning (architects working parallel but not together),
- Matrimandir (what relation should it have with the city?), etc.

In terms of planning the city, the 'galaxy' should be seen and made use of as a unique energy field, where all the parts are related to the centre, instead of going into disparate developments.

For the International Zone, in the discussion about the nations finding a place, the aspect of relating to the city should also be taken into account. In this, the landmarks are already given by the Mother: Matrimandir and Bharat Nivas, in addition also SAIIER/ CIRHU, Unity Pavilion and Savitri Bhavan along the crown, the Visitor's Reception Centre.

Aram it seems to be favourable to not impose any specific "grouping of pavilions" upon the process of finding the proper physical place for the nation's souls to express – while on the other hand, the current town planning proposal for the IZ, does require such (sub-) grouping. People might not be aware that relevant planning alternatives do exist. Outlining the shape of the IZ as a whole, it is proposed to form a 'loop' connecting the university campus (CIRHU) to the crown (with Unity Pavilion and Savitri Bhavan), the Visitor's Centre and back, circling around Bharat Nivas. The highest density would naturally develop around the intersections of the crown with the loop. Nations who want to build a 'plaza' together can do so. However, pavilions can freely find their place along the loop. Any unifying element along which to develop the IZ should be simple and convincing.

Jana The IZ is a special chance to work together because of the land situation, the included Tamil village, the need to work with our present water situation. Last not least because all the planners, architects and participants have the chance to fine-tune all the unsolved questions like traffic, the crown as city space instead of a road, a public urban space with plazas, cafes, shaded sitting areas. Regarding the grouping of pavilions, I would like to see the urban space along the crown coming to life.

Sami I'm very touched by the possibility of the 2500-year-old Tamil culture to become part of the International Zone.

Isa I'm from the German group for the German pavilion. We founded the 'Sri Aurobindo Centre' in Berlin, coming from a beautiful vision of the Mother... then we felt we should do something now, and not wait any longer. The place for the German pavilion came not by mental planning, it suddenly was there – there's a divinity, a grace behind, and if it is needed, it will come. I feel that the link of the pavilions acts as a bridge in two ways, between the countries and Auroville. The pavilions to me are something precious, they come out of an inner experience, from the heart, not out of an act of mental planning. I wish we could come from the heart.

Jana For me it would be of importance to create the planning of the International Zone in a way as to give space for what wants to come into reality and when. Since we have

nearly all the land I would like to start the IZ as a landscape with huge rainwater catchments, hills, water recycling, tree plantings first – as one green connection from the Centre going far out into the bioregion – and then let the pavilions come into existence.

* * *

In the final session, we had the following reports. Since the information on the Auroville website is more complete and interesting, I refer you to the following URLs...

ARKA - reported by Maria Grazia

<http://www.auroville.org/society/arka.htm>

Dr. Beena spoke about her work for Auroville Health Services and her attempt to advocate and write grants for the various approaches, locate existing equipment and expertise, and raise funds for pure research not covered under the current maintenance schemes. A DVD is in production about her work and will be distributed to Centers in the near future. A brochure of project proposals is available from <avhs@auroville.org.in>

Mita spoke on the AV Language Lab and asked for “Language Ambassadors” from the various centers.

http://www.auroville.org/society/Language_all.htm

Sigrid mentioned the Amphitheater needs a new sound system. As more people come to the Urn for music and Art programs, Rs 10,000 or US \$2500 is needed for a professional quality outdoor system with mixer, weatherproof speakers, cassette and CD player.

<sigrid@auroville.org>

Jeff spoke last about the Farms. They are providing the community with more than enough fruit and some vegetables, depending on the season, up to 25% of Auroville's needs. With increase in electric costs over the past few years, a number of farms are facing bare viability. More support for the farms is needed and welcome and in the case of some farms would begin to realize their potential if sufficient investment were made.

http://www.auroville.org/environment/agri_farms.htm

In the evening we attended a theatre play by the Auroville Theatre group “Sacrifice” by Rabindranath Tagore at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium. Directed by Jill, it included an all star international cast. An intense drama, with timely themes, it was well acted.

Tuesday 04.02.2003, last day of the AVI meeting

Aurelio played music for us

This is usually a place for creative silence. Meditation, meditative dance, and inner work. Let us use the music to create a flame of aspiration and a call for the grace falling as rain. Use these two images as I play the flute and this new instrument.

Aurelio used two string instruments, one is called Anantar -- it is built in Mohanan Crafts which is created by Village Action, and one Lyre.

Board Meeting Report by Wolfgang

General Assembly

We are about 45-50 people

AVI 2004 in Brazil

Brazilians Carlo, Ila, Aryamani, Paulo and Jivatman are involved in the preliminary exploration and preparation. It is an adventure to organize the meeting in Brazil in the city of Belo Horizonte, where Carlos lives. The help of other South Americans would also be welcome either in or outside of Auroville. It is a chance to network with South America. It will likely be in mid-June 2004. A forum will be created. There is a suggestion to invite one of the Brazil members (Paulo), to come to our AVI meeting in Paris as a preparation.

The meeting approved that surplus funds from this meeting be used for the air ticket from Brazil to Paris.

I would like here to thank everybody who supported this meeting financially, especially Mr. Amrit Imandar from New York, who generously gave a donation of Rs. 30,000.

The International Zone group gave a good response to our proposal from the California meeting to participate more actively in decision making. This positive reaction will allow a more informal participation by those AVIs who are hosting active pavilion groups. Aster added that there is a joy in the movement of reaching out in a joint collaboration.

Wolfgang presented two papers to Ruslan as IZ representative. One is a research done by Ananda Reddy on everything relevant in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. This compilation regarding the IZ will be made available for all. The second was from the conference of international architects. Excerpts from interviews with Mother will be added to the archive of relevant papers and put on the internet or otherwise distributed to the AVIs.

Outcome of the group work yesterday

Shraddhavan and Helmut (AVI-Ger)

a) request the Governing Board (GB) and International Advisory Council (IAC) to recommend to the Government of India that, in the context of the Mother's 125th Birth Anniversary celebration an invitation should be extended by the Government of

India (GOI) through the channel of UNESCO to all member states to follow up on their earlier support of Auroville in the form of UNESCO resolutions by active participation in the development of Auroville's IZ as an international university campus devoted to experiential learning for human unity and international understanding.

b) to take up an active program of informing all the foreign embassies and High Commissions in India about Auroville and the aims and objectives of the IZ with the aim of encouraging the participation of national governments in developing the IZ.

The General Assembly agreed to make this proposal known to the community through the Working Committee and the recognized channels, also to discuss it with the Governing Board at its upcoming meeting next week in Auroville.

* AVI in Paris 2003 around the 10th of June

Topics: finalization of the pavilions

New elections of the AVI Board

Changing and amendments of the AVI statutes

How is Auroville presented in the mass media – (see also the Monday afternoon report)

AVI USA has big donors who donate to projects in Auroville but they do not emphasize the spiritual side of Auroville. Need for more PR brochures.

Coordinate fundraising with Auroville and the AVI-Centers!

Documentation of Raman's video is very interesting.

Sharing

The last part of the meeting is as usual dedicated to sharing of things people would like to express -- whatever that is. These are observations, emotions, experiences, appreciations, critics, many expressed gratitude...

Then Aurelio guides us through the Matrimandir and the gardens into our own self and then out into the world.

We are listening to a CD sent by Tatiana from Bulgaria. Thank you, Tatiana !

Good-bye, everybody, may you all be happy

and see you on the road and around - and hopefully again in Paris !

Tine