

# Auroville MEDIA KIT

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Auroville is an experimental international township in South India (in Tamil Nadu, near Pondicherry) where thousands of residents from over 60 countries are exploring alternative ways of living, working and being together peacefully.





# 5'000

inhabitants from +60 countries\*

# 900'000+

visitors per year\*\*

# 5x

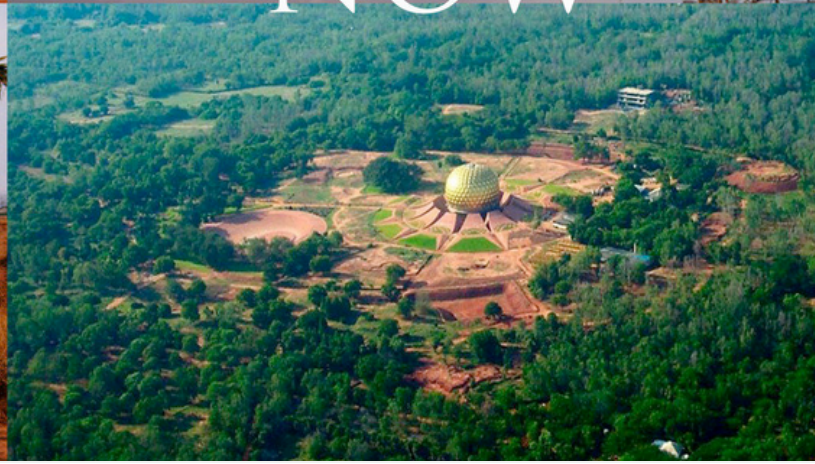
UNESCO General Assembly unanimously adopted five resolutions in support of Auroville

# 39 awards

national and international, for outstanding works and achievements in the fields of architecture, social service, renewable energy, sustainable development, ecology, green works, etc

\* Registered residents + partners + long term volunteers

\*\* Pre-covid



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# Auroville's international supporters and projects undertaken with international organisations

- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS/Habitat)
- United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- International Labour Organisation (ILO)
- Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka
- Aga Khan Foundation
- European Commission (EC) and European Union (EU)
- ICEF (India - Canadian Environment Facility)
- OECD/Hunger Campaign
- Danish Aid (DANIDA)
- Swiss Aid
- Aid Australia
- Commonwealth Human Ecology Council
- Threshold Foundation – USA
- CARITAS and Catholic Relief Services
- BORDA - Bremen Overseas Research and Development Agency
- Breuninger Foundation – Germany
- Stichting de Zaaier – Belgium
- Foundation for World Education – USA
- CRATerre - International organisation on Earth Construction – France
- Auroville International Centres and Liaison Offices in 23 countries





# Auroville's support by the Government of India (GoI) and projects undertaken with the GoI & Indian organisations

- Ministry of Education – Ministry of Environment – Ministry of Human Resource Development
- Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources – Ministry of Science and Technology
- Ministry of Rural Development
- Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO)
- Building Material & Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC)
- Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR)
- Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA)
- National Wasteland Development Board (NWDB)
- District Rural Development Agency (DRDA)
- Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu Governments
- Tamil Fund – Tamil Nadu Energy Development Agency (TEDA) – TN Family Welfare Board
- Tamil Nadu Social Welfare Board – Tamil Nadu State Forest Department
- Indian Society of Earthquake Technology (ISET)
- INTBAU India (International Network for Traditional Buildings, Architecture and Urbanism)
- BASIN South Asia (Building Advisory Service and Information Network)
- India Habitat Forum (Network of Indian NGOs working in rural areas)





# Awards and Recognition

- Aurovilians and various Auroville units have been the recipient of **41 awards, national and international**, for outstanding works and achievements, in the field of architecture, social service, renewable energy, sustainable development, ecology, green works, etc.
- These awards twice included the “Green Building Solutions awards”, in 2016 given during COP 22 at Marrakech and in 2021 given during COP 26 at Glasgow, the Ashden Award for Sustainable Energy, four awards remitted by different Presidents of India
- Auroville units were finalists for these prestigious awards: 2000 “World Habitat Award”, twice for the “Aga Khan Award for Architecture”, in 1992 and 2007 and “Arc Vision Prize” in 2015.
- The Auroville Earth Institute is the representative for Asia of the “UNESCO Chair Earthen Architecture, Constructive Cultures and Sustainable Development”, and is part of a global network of earth builders.
- The Auroville Centre for Scientific Research (CSR) is recognized as a Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (SIRO) under the Ministry of Science and Technology.





# Population

- The Aurovilian population was **3,305 in December 2021** (2,638 adults and 667 children) but more than **7,350** people are living in five villages within the Master Plan area (Edayanchavadi, Kottakarai, Bharati Puram, Irumbai and Alankuppam).
- About **17,000** people are directly connected to Auroville, economically and/or socially, through their employment, social actions, education, etc.
- About **35,000** people benefit from Auroville's socio-economic and environmental development, resulting in the highest per capita income zone within the rural area of Vanur block, and with the best Human Development Index.
- In the villages around Auroville, about **2,500** residential facilities are available for guests, volunteers and interns who wish to stay in the township area and contribute to the growth of Auroville.
- Many visitors are discovering Auroville from a day trip to a few months: **392,000** people visited Auroville in 2021.
- Before the Covid pandemic, **816,000** people visited Auroville in 2019.





# Land

- The Auroville township has a radius of 2.5 km and is composed of the “City Area” (1.25 km radius = 1,212 acres) and the “Green Belt” (1.25 km width = 3,637 acres).
- Auroville owns 88.5% (1,072 acres) of the lands in the City Area, the rest being owned by temples, the Government and private owners.
- Auroville owns 30.6 % (1,114 acres) in the surrounding Green Belt, the rest being owned by temples, the Government and private owners.



# What is Auroville?

Auroville was created in **1968** by representatives from **124 countries** and all the states of India. It is the largest and oldest surviving international **intentional community** in the world. In 54 years, Auroville has flourished from a barren desert to a 3,000-acre township and bioregion in which **more than 3 million trees have been planted**, home to rich biodiversity, 9 schools, multiple social enterprises, etc.

Auroville is based on the dream of **Mirra Alfassa**, known as the Mother, to put in practice the teachings of **Sri Aurobindo**, one of India's most prominent philosophers and leaders of its independence movement. The intentions behind the project are listed in a Charter.

Auroville has been **recognised by global authorities** such as the United Nations (UNESCO passed multiple resolutions supporting it) and eminent personalities such as the Dalai Lama and was supported by the late J.R. Tata. Auroville has also been **supported by the Government of India** through an act of Parliament in 1988.

But if you would ask this question inside Auroville, everyone will tell you their own version of Auroville's essence. Perhaps in this diversity lies the answer? What is this place that can mean so much to such a diverse range of people that they leave behind their land, their stable jobs and security, and jump into a social experiment held together by a shared Dream and a Charter?

## What are the goals of the Auroville project?

Auroville is working to come up with models and systems that enable humans to rise above today's imperfect and unsustainable ways of being and living together that lead to inequality and exploitation: Nations fighting and claiming land and planetary resources as their own causing suffering and misery worldwide; Consumerism and the search for pleasure and material enjoyment for the egoistical satisfaction of desires and passions; Education has become a rigid institution to obtain certificates and posts leading to titles and positions; Material wealth and social standing propel a constant quest for the supremacy of power and money; Human relationships are based almost exclusively on competition and conflict; Art and culture is not accessible to all and depends upon one's social or financial position.

In view of all this, the Auroville Charter calls for a **"living embodiment of a true human unity"**. This implies both **individual and collective transformation** are needed to realise harmony in society. Within the Auroville project are dozens of initiatives focusing on topics ranging from reforestation to circular economy, to universal basic income and participatory governance. The Dream speaks of a place "somewhere upon Earth" where old systems no longer limit human creativity and social innovation. So Auroville is experimenting on behalf of all mankind.

'How to get there?' is a question that has occupied generations of Aurovilians. The Charter calls for "taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within" and it refers to "material and spiritual research" and "unending education". Broadly speaking, one could say Auroville is a living laboratory, where learning and inquiry is invited and catalysed.



## Why is Auroville unique?

Firstly, this project exists because of a unique founder and integral philosophy. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo were clear about the need for **spirituality** to be put **in action**, not removed from society in a dedicated space of worship, to transform and improve humankind and society through an **evolution of consciousness**.

Secondly, the community that has come together around this call to action created **a culture of its own**, quite separate from either the backgrounds of the early participants or the local Tamil traditions, and yet integrating both. In Auroville, there are as many languages spoken as countries represented, traditions from all over the world are shared in various gatherings, and the residents celebrate the creation and existence of this community every year in February during the “Auroville Birthday Week” (between the founder’s birthday and Auroville’s inauguration date).

When people first moved to Auroville, there was no shade, so they planted trees. This led to **greenwork and sustainability becoming the backbone of collective life** – in stark contrast to other cities around the world. Since then, tens of thousands people have attended workshops in Auroville, focusing on sustainability as well as the legacy of experimentation and teaching – both as Auroville for a space to try things out, but also to share knowledge with the world.

While Auroville still remains **in the process of developing**, the level of goodwill and generosity shown in 54 years has been impressive: there are over 150 units creating everything from lampshades to treehouses, people built their own roads and infrastructure, created 12 different schools, 2 health clinics, an ambulance service, a solar powered kitchen that provides 1,000 meals a day, countless buildings using sustainable building methods, 2 amphitheatres hosting more than 2,000 people, and the list goes on and on... A list of Auroville’s achievements is available in the next pages.

Last but not least, the Indian government plays an important role. The **Auroville Foundation Act** (1988) is the first time a government adopted an official act of parliament, inviting an international community that “**belongs to nobody in particular**” within its borders. All citizens of the world can ask for a special Auroville visa to participate in this project. No other country has dared to follow this example.

## How many people live in Auroville?

Today, the population is around **5,000** – including around **3,300 residents** (around 50% of which are Indian nationals), their partners, “newcomers” (people wanting to become Aurovilian), and long-term volunteers. Additionally, Auroville counts about **10,000 daily visitors** and **5,000 employees** from neighbouring villages per diem.

Is this enough to build the kind of systems and models humanity needs? Yes and no. For example, there are enough consumer households to create a different model for distribution of basic goods, to run a viable e-mobility service and a library, but maybe not enough for a health insurance scheme. In many ways, Auroville works well in covering its residents’ needs in various domains such as education, art and culture, food and housing, etc. However, in other ways, it can already be considered too big (see section ‘Summary of crisis’ for more details about the current trouble Auroville faces in terms of decision-making).



# What are the fields of expertise of Auroville ?

Auroville has been a hotspot of **green work** and **social innovation** since the 1970s. Auroville has played an important role in sectors covering education, agriculture, reforestation, energy, waste management, architecture, design, and community building.

- **Auroville forests** tell an almost mythical story of humans acting as a force for good at **reversing desertification**. Pioneers planted **more than 3 million trees** over the years, providing a safe haven for numerous animal species: 65 bird, 14 amphibian, 16 lizard, 6 turtle, and 45 mammal species have been spotted enjoying their new habitat. Today, the Auroville tree nurseries act as sacred groves, and Auroville seed banks are enabling reforestation with indigenous species across the country.
- **Auroville architecture** has become synonymous with **sustainable design**, with almost 30 architects, more than 90 interns and volunteers, numerous workshops hosting up to 100 participants. For colleges across India, sending their students to Auroville has become a respected part of their curriculum.
- **Auroville educational initiatives** have inspired countless teachers to try our alternative models and methods of schooling and learning in India and abroad. **9 schools in Auroville** tend to over 450 students, while **12 outreach schools** cater to more than 800 children from the bioregion.
- Auroville residents are notoriously artistic, and Auroville podiums act as an **artistic and cultural centre** of gravity that punches far above its weight. **350 to 750 events are organised yearly** in 16 different locations, offering a wide array of activities under visual arts, performing arts, literary arts, health, crafts, and Auroville.
- Despite being currently under duress, **Auroville participatory governance** stands out as the longest living experiment in intercultural, interdisciplinary co-living and co-creation, effectively managing its own housing, assets, infrastructure, education, immigration, etc.

As a **laboratory of evolution**, warmly hosted by one of the most spiritual countries of the world, Auroville has already proven its desire to progress in numerous fields. What is already here has been built up from scratch, and possibilities abound.

**What is very important for most residents is not the destination, but the journey.**



[Discover a list of 108 Auroville achievements](#)



[Discover how Auroville contributes to solving the world's challenges](#)



# Auroville achievements

The following data, which is far from exhaustive, very briefly summarises what has been achieved so far in Auroville, over 54 years.

## City Infrastructure

- Matrimandir, with 12 Petals around, the Amphitheatre, the emerging gardens and the lake under work.
- Bharat Nivas complex, with its 850-seat Sri Aurobindo Auditorium, art gallery, SAWCHU building, offices and various halls, two guest houses and a restaurant.
- Visitors Centre, with exhibition, video facilities, cafeteria, 3 boutiques displaying and selling Auroville products, and an information service providing leaflets, brochures and books on Auroville.
- Town Hall building adjacent to the Auroville Foundation Office and the Multimedia Centre.
- Collective "Solar Kitchen", providing up to 1,000 meals a day, with a 15 m diameter solar collector on the roof for creating steam to cook.
- Savitri Bhavan complex to promote the study of Sri Aurobindo's work.
- Unity Pavilion, Pavilion of Tibetan Culture, and various National Pavilions either nearing completion or under development study, in the International Zone.
- Pitanga Hall, offering facilities for dance, yoga, therapy, exhibitions and evening performances.
- Museum of Archaeology holding 2,000-year-old artefacts found in Auroville.
- Archives building with extensive archive facility.
- Around 100 sub-settlements (communities), with some 900 houses and apartments for Auroville's residents.
- Network of dirt roads and cycle paths, some stretches being lit with solar-powered street lighting.
- One third of the Crown Road paved with paver blocks, built by the Auroville Road Service with Government of India funds.
- Some 240 wells for water supply, with over 30 Auroville-designed windmills for pumping water.
- Three weather stations, plus 15 micro-stations maintained by Auroville in the surrounding villages.
- More than 25 natural wastewater treatment plants.
- Over 300 kW of electricity-generating photovoltaic panels.
- 250 solar water heating collectors (some 150 houses are fully solar-powered).
- Solar photovoltaic power plants, with 484 PV modules (36.3 kW) producing ~140 kWh/day for the Matrimandir.





## City services

- Entry Service for people wanting to join Auroville.
- Residents Service recording residents' data and helping with residential permit applications, etc.
- Electrical Service maintaining nearly 900 grid connections, Auroville having its own separate feeder.
- Water Service taking care of wells and water distribution infrastructure.
- Vehicle Service helping with licenses and registration, plus the purchase of new vehicles.
- Telephone Service serving over 1,000 landline numbers.
- Messenger Service making deliveries around Auroville 6 days a week.
- Eco Service, coordinating waste collection, sorting and disposal.
- WasteLess, a non-profit organisation that develops innovative educational programmes, materials and games about sustainable consumption and waste management targeting children aged 6 to 15.
- CSR Geomatics carries out very accurate topographic surveys of Auroville, using advanced equipment. It is involved in collecting water information and data in Auroville to work on an integrated Water Management System.
- Library with over 25,000 books in 8 languages, plus several smaller libraries, mostly specialized, including a children's library.
- Guest Service, helping to arrange accommodation for those wanting to stay in Auroville.
- Employment agency services for Aurovilians and non-Aurovilians.
- Computerized financial service and network.
- Architectural design services provided by more than 40 architects doing highly acclaimed innovative works.
- Town and Development Council.
- Probiotics MG EcoDuties researches and manufactures all natural, biodegradable, non-toxic cleaning and wellbeing products that are 100% eco-friendly and economical.
- Community outlets, one of which provides a wide range of products at cost price, 90% packaging-free, zero-waste initiative, bulk products, mostly using Auroville farms production and other organic producers.
- A "Free Store" where second-hand and new clothing can be obtained for free.
- Numerous bakeries, and more than 15 restaurants and cafeterias.
- Over 40 guest houses and student/youth hostels.





## Education and Culture

- Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIER), a government-supported institute for educational research, which manages most of the schools in Auroville.
- Auroville avails 11 schools: 5 kindergartens and crèches, 4 primary and middle schools, 2 high schools
- Auroville has also set up 14 schools in local villages (6 Outreach schools, 2 CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) schools, 4 skill development centres and 2 scholarship programmes).
- Industrial School providing training for local village youth.
- Language laboratory for language learning, both Indian and international.
- Centres for Indian Culture and Tamil Heritage & Culture.
- Various successful authors, musicians, singers, artists, poets, sculptors and potters, some doing work for outside organizations and individuals.
- Three cinema showing films regularly and three stages for theatre.
- Five annual Festivals of Dance, typically featuring over 100 Aurovilian performers.
- Three choirs, two with adults and one with children.
- Regular performances by several Auroville theatre groups.
- Classes in a wide range of subjects, including health therapies, dance, yoga, martial arts and music.

## Health Care

- Main health Centre with laboratory, X-ray unit, ambulance and pharmacy, offering allopathic and homeopathic treatment. This health centre serves ~200 patients/ day (Aurovilians and villagers).
- Seven sub-health centres provide health care in surrounding villages.
- More than 30 local women health workers, trained by Auroville, are active in 17 nearby villages, giving first-aid, advising on home cures and basic health education, and encouraging better nutrition by way of small family gardens in the villages.
- "Arka", a holistic centre on wellness for elder Aurovilians and other guests, which offers also various therapies.
- Many alternative health therapies are offered at Quiet Healing Centre, Pitanga Hall and other individual therapists.
- Two dental clinics and 11 village-based sub- dental clinics overseen by Auroville.
- Deepam project, caring for disabled children from nearby villages.
- Active conservation and promotion of traditional health knowledge through documentation.
- Coordinated programmes for sterilization, treatment and anti-rabies inoculation of uncared-for village dogs.

## Farming, Agriculture and Environment

- 20 farms growing only organic food.
- Herbarium with some 15,000 botanical specimens.
- Unit specializing in Effective Micro-organism (EM) technology and its practical application around India.
- An Environmental Monitoring Laboratory doing tests on soil and water.
- Campaigns against local spraying of chemical poisons on cashew trees.



# Land Conservation and Afforestation

- Millions of trees have been planted in Auroville and the bioregion.
- The second and third generation regrowth in Auroville is estimated at 2 million trees.
- Indigenous flora and fauna have been reintroduced or have returned naturally, covering 1,300 acres of forest.
- Comprehensive soil and water conservation practices have been introduced.
- Integrated watershed management with check dams, contour bunding and afforestation using indigenous species.
- Tank rehabilitation and rural integrated water management programmes in the bioregion are continuously undertaken.
- Seven nurseries collect seeds, propagate and supply trees of the Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF) and revive species that are listed and/or endangered.
- Pitchandikulam Bioresource Centre, An environmental organisation & community
  - Is composed of 70 acres TDEF forest, a medicinal plant conservation park, an environmental education training centre focused on the restoration of TDEF and a museum of rural Tamil life.
  - Has 800 species of plants (with over 350 medicinal plants), a collection of 250 different medicinal plant seeds. Pitchandikulam documents also the knowledge of local healers.
  - Has established a community environment education centre at Nadukuppam, 30 km away from Auroville.
  - Restored the coastal ecosystem at Adyar Chennai and created a 358-acre "Eco-Park" there.
  - Undertakes Indigenous forest planting programs; Indigenous plant nursery development; Training in local
  - primary health care traditions; Biota and village surveys; Scientific research into ecosystems, and much more.
- Sadhana Forest, A reforestation project and a sustainable living community
  - Is also focused on water conservation and has reforested 70 acres of severely eroded land.
  - Is based on volunteers (~1000 per year) coming from India and around the world to work in Auroville.
  - Has developed programmes in three countries: In India, where they support local rural villages by retaining water and filling the aquifers, allowing villagers to cultivate their food and prevents exodus towards nearby city slums. In Haiti and Kenya, where they set up sister communities.
- Botanical Gardens, A research & conservation unit doing outside consultancy to promote the use of TDEF species
  - Conserves and preserves TDEF on 50 acres with over 1,200 different species of plants and ~10,000 mature trees and woody shrubs, plus many other ornamental plants.
  - Has a TDEF plant nursery producing 50,000 seedlings/ year to promote the re-introduction of the indigenous flora.
  - Is dedicated to bringing ecologically sustainable solutions to the commercial, private and government sectors.
  - Conducts educational programmes designed to awaken local school children's interest in environmental issues and to nurture a "clean and green consciousness" among students through various innovative methods.





## Sports and Physical Education

- Comprehensive school sports complex and a wide range of facilities spread around Auroville, from football and cricket fields to badminton courts, running tracks and a 25 m swimming pool.
- Tai Chi Hall and a fully equipped gymnasium to practice martial arts, dance and various exercises.
- Several horse riding schools, one of which hosts a horse tournament yearly under the auspices of the South India
- Equestrian Association.
- Surf school and 2 shaping bays
- Diving school

## Commerce and Business Activities

- Over 140 business/ commercial units under 25 trusts, several exporting globally.
- These business activities range from renewable energy systems, wind and electric generators, sound engineering, earth construction machinery, metal workshops, to bookbinding, handmade paper, food processing, spirulina, perfumes, incense, candles, aromatherapy, etc.

## Economics

- Auroville has activities, ranging from manufacturing, service and knowledge sector, generating an average annual turnover of ~250 Crores Rs. (~31 million Euros (Oct. 2022) and the contributions of grants received from the govt of India amounts to 10% or less.
- Most of the 400+ units of Auroville generate low profit as most are focused on the net value addition, with emphasis on skill up-gradation, employment generation, investment in innovation to generate conscious products and services.

## Scientific and Applied Research (R&D)

- The Auroville Centre for Scientific Research (CSR) conducts researches on ferrocement technology, biogas technology, wind pumps, wind generators, solar technology, hydrogeological studies for mapping the coastal watershed and aquifers, decentralized waste water treatment systems, rainwater harvesting and storage, water purification and dynamization systems, solar desalination, bio-fuels and many others.
- The Auroville Earth Institute has done a lot of R&D and transfer of technology on compressed stabilised earth block architecture – Various stabilised earth technologies – Design and construction of arches, vaults and domes built without formwork – Earth resistance with hollow interlocking CSEB, etc.
- Development of electric cycles and many other environmentally-friendly devices.



# Rural Development in the Bioregion with Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG)

- Includes of all marginalized sections of the society since 1983. Committed to integrated grassroots community building with the villages surrounding Auroville in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu.
- Implements programmes across the areas of community development, economic development, capacity building, and psychosocial services benefitting indirectly ~100,000 people in 78 settlements and directly ~10,000 people.
- Women's empowerment: Carry out initiatives for the holistic development of individuals and groups.
- Community organisation: Enable the communities to form around 350 women and men self-help groups (SHG) and sports groups in the villages.
- Works for gender and caste equity, and building solidarity with the collaboration of stakeholders in the bioregion.
- Organise asset creation and community participation through programmes for financial inclusion in 80 settlements.
- Actively participated in implementing the Auroville Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Program.
- Assists communities to access government schemes. Links communities with government departments.
- Initiated pandemic relief and education program for 200,000 families with the active participation of the communities in the bioregion. Executed an 'Art Project' benefitting 2500 children in 23 government schools.
- AVAG is a nodal agency for Vanur under the District Disaster Management Department, Villupuram.
- Works closely with millet growers and actively promotes millet consumption in the bioregion.

## Other activities related to Village Development

- Tamarai aims to co-create an enabling environment to foster the full potential and well-being of all, especially children, youth and communities.
  - Addresses the gap in the mainstream education system by enabling a quality and holistic after school learning.
  - Supports young people to become active and responsible citizens and stewards/leaders.
- Eco Femme is a global women empowerment initiative, aiming to create environmental and social change through revitalising menstrual practices that are healthy, environmentally sustainable, culturally responsive and empowering.
- Mohanam Cultural Centre aims to provide village youth opportunities for extracurricular activities, which help them to find identity and connection to their own original culture and promotes the richness and diversity of the Tamil culture, and offers various activities such as:
  - Education, with a kindergarten laying a strong emphasis on a creative and child-centred approach.
  - Women empowerment: Training in various skills and learning leadership skills and self-defence.
  - Community development: Village youth doing developmental works (environment safety, health & hygiene).
  - Folk dances, traditional music, Therukoothu (theatre art of Tamil Nadu) and the Tamil martial art (Silambam).
- Wellpaper promotes Women Empowerment through Local Livelihood (WELL) and aims to empower local village women with skills to build, manage and maintain self-sustaining units. The women receive training, guidance and support in product development, market and team management, and personal development.
  - Wellpaper products are handmade, upcycled and eco-friendly, transforming recycled newspaper into crafts.
  - Over time, the women's groups have developed into autonomous units, making their own business decisions towards their goal of financial independence. Today, some of the WELL women are conducting the training workshops themselves to reach other local women and small business units.



# Outreach

- Annual “Sangamam” festivals for Auroville employees and their families.
- A monthly journal “Auroville Today” since 1988, and various other regular periodicals in English, Tamil or French.
- A web radio and a Media Liaison Service facilitating visits of filmmakers and journalists.
- A Coastal Development Centre working with local authorities and various NGOs to improve the lives of the local population.
- Installation of affordable and reliable renewable energy products & services (in the form of solar panel systems) in 12 Indian States, benefiting 80,000 people.
- Programmes for the restoration of tropical dry evergreen forest in south India, associated research work, seed collection and tree nurseries. Through the works of Pitchandikulam, ~2 million trees and bushes have been planted all over Tamil Nadu, on ~2000 acres.
- Pitchandikulam has trained more than 25,000 people from 10 countries in Restoration Ecology and Tree Planting.
- Water Harvest has collaborated with local water authorities on coastal salination monitoring, groundwater recharge and restoration of water holding infrastructure.
- Auroville Earth Institute has developed earthen technologies which have been disseminated globally:
  - 13,923 people from 93 countries trained in Auroville, India and worldwide (data on 17th Sept. 2022).
  - Worked and transferred these technologies and architecture in 38 countries on all continents.
  - Construction of the 21.16 m diameter dome of the Dhyanalinga Temple near Coimbatore in only 9 weeks.
  - Construction of Al Medy Mosque of 425 m<sup>2</sup> in the heart of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in only 7 weeks.
  - Transfer of technology to various NGOs for the rehabilitations following the 2001 earthquake of Kutch in Gujarat and the 2004 tsunami: Training and assistance to the Catholic Relief Services to build 2,698 houses in Kutch.
  - Has been the recipient of 15 awards, 4 International and 11 National.
- Sadhana Forest has created two other communities and programmes in 2 countries:
  - Haiti: Setting up a sister community sharing the same values and commitment to human unity. ~ 80,000 food bearing trees have been distributed and planted in the local communities. With the current survival rate this number of trees has the potential of feeding 70,000 people.
  - Kenya: Setting up another community in Samburu County, aiming to grow food forests with the Samburu people to help promote food security in an area that is often affected by droughts and malnutrition.
- Botanical Gardens is conducting various types of courses, such as:
  - 4 month ecological horticultural training course
  - Intensive three-day “species identification course” on the Tropical Dry Evergreen forest
- WasteLess, has been conducting many programmes to educate the youth all over the world about waste management and plastic pollution. These include:
  - “kNOw PLASTICS”, an 8 lesson educational programme that inspires children to reduce the use of un-safe and single-use plastics.
  - “Garbology”, 13-standalone activities about waste separation, recycling and a circular economy.
  - “Sea Change”, a 5 lesson educational programme focusing on microplastics and marine plastic pollution.
  - These new educational resources have reached more than 1.2 million students in ~45,000 schools spread over 20 countries, on all continents.
  - The curriculums developed by WasteLess have been integrated into the State Curriculum textbooks in Tamil Nadu, into 5 chapters in the Science and Social Science textbooks for grades 4,6,7,8 and 9.
- Programmes for improving the standard of education in local schools, supporting local sports & healthcare activities, reforestation, and wasteland development.





# Summary of the current crisis





# Summary of the current crisis

To understand the present crisis, one has to understand that, until now, everything that has been done in Auroville was **organised by its residents**: They choose their committees, follow different decision-making processes and seek ways to progress while **maintaining unity**. Top-down decision-making has been rejected by Auroville, because it undermines the **collective spirit** that underpins everything else and goes against the very values and principles on which Auroville was founded.

Referring to the Auroville Foundation Act (under sub-section (3) of section 10), there are three bodies that are expected to work together to develop the project:

- 1) **the Residents' Assembly** (consisting of everyone 18 and above who lives there);
- 2) **the Governing Board** (appointed by the Central Government of India); and
- 3) **the International Advisory Council** (eminent scholars and elders from across the globe).

The Act balances their powers in a nuanced way, but goodwill from all sides is required to make it work. This is where things have gone amiss...

## Newly appointed officials

**In July 2021**, a new Secretary of the Auroville Foundation was appointed by the Central Government of India, vide its Ministry of Education. **In October 2021**, new members were appointed to the Governing Board as well. The new Governing Board and the new Secretary made their mission very clear: Auroville was, according to them, stagnating and not fulfilling its goal of building a city with 50,000 people. They would take measures to fix this, and fast. Sri Aurobindo's 150th birthday was coming up in August 2022, and by this date they wanted to show the Indian Government and the world something tangible, starting with a central road. Their aim, they said, was to welcome 12,000 new residents within three years.

The resolution of the Governing Board came as a shock to residents who feel that **the City of the Future requires thoughtful, experimental and consensual development**. Decision-making processes are deliberately time-consuming due to their participatory nature, and an emphasis has been given to exploring and establishing rigorous social solutions. New buildings and infrastructures are consistently being built; city development priorities have been identified, and innovative processes of moving forward with harmony and collaboration have been explored. In spite of the **numerous achievements of Auroville**, recent Governing Board minutes noted that Auroville has not made progress and this has been taken as a clear affront to the hard work of Aurovilians over more than a half-century. Not an easy start for a healthy working relationship.

# Bulldozing Auroville forests without warning or consent

In December 2021, the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, Dr Jayanti Ravi, started a series of strong **top-down decisions**, and sent in bulldozers to construct a controversial road, destroying parts of Auroville's famous forests and demolishing structures built by Auroville youth. In a shocking action, **bulldozers were sent in the middle of the night**, escorted by police, and later began their destruction surrounded by a large group of unknown men, claiming to have been hired, who **manhandled residents**. Needless to say, these violent events shook Auroville.

Alongside the destruction, the Office of the Secretary put a **gag order** on the residents' media representatives, and simultaneously **threatened foreigners by delaying recommendations for visas** if there was open dissent. Two Indian residents submitted a plea to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) regarding the unwarranted destruction of the environment and quickly obtained a stay order – meaning no more trees could be cut before the court verdict. However, much damage was already done: **more than a thousand trees had been destroyed** with no proper planning and ignoring any ecological assessment. The bulldozers were just about to destroy one of Auroville's main water catchment areas when the court order came and put things on pause.





# Aggressive take-over of community institutions

**In January 2022**, the Secretary Dr. Jayanti Ravi decided to take over Auroville OutreachMedia, the Auroville service in charge of Public Relations that was run by the residents, and appoint its own 'spokespersons' instead.

**In April 2022**, after the verdict of the NGT, Dr Jayanti Ravi continued her take-over of Auroville's internal structures. She appointed her own Town Development Council (the planners of the city) and supported a renegade Working Committee (a statutory committee to be selected and appointed by the Residents' Assembly). To understand what this means, imagine that the right of the citizens to vote for their representatives is removed and all decision-makers are puppets of a supreme authority.

What makes the situation additionally complicated is that Aurovilians abjure mainstream politics. **Residents strive for peace and harmony**, and are committed to non-violence. In addition, almost 50% of the residents are foreigners, who do not have the same rights as Indian citizens, and many are afraid to lose their visa, since the Secretary is the authority that issues recommendation letters for the visas. In the face of a takeover of the city, non-Indian residents face a very tough dilemma: raise their voice and their visa will not be renewed, or silently witness the destruction of their city.

## Tribunal verdicts and highest ever residents' participation disregarded

In April 2022, the National Green Tribunal ruled that development in Auroville requires **environmental clearance** after **detailed development plans** are drawn up and approved. This has been appealed by Dr. Ravi in the Supreme Court.

On August 12th, the Madras High Court (MHC) opined that the Auroville Town Development Council must be appointed by the Residents' Assembly and that the selection of the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly is under the sole jurisdiction of the residents. The MHC insisted on **the crucial role of the Residents' Assembly in the management of Auroville**. This has also been appealed in the MHC by Dr. Ravi.

Dr. Ravi has opposed the Courts' judgments by continuing to remove the residents-appointed committee members and in their place appointing a handful of her allies **to control all key committees of Auroville**, including those taking care of all the Auroville assets and companies, in effect **a complete take over of Auroville**.

Dr. Ravi's false narrative that only a few "landlords" and "foreigner hippies" were against her actions was definitively disproved on August 26th when **the Residents' Assembly passed a resolution** to cancel all of her recent orders in the **highest ever voter participation in Auroville's history**. The resolution also commits to respect the verdict of the MHC, which stated that all the three governing bodies of the Auroville Foundation were to **work hand in hand to ensure the future of Auroville**. Read the article about this vote and resolution [here](#).

You can also find a very detailed list of the events that happened since December 2022 here: <https://standforaurovilleunity.com/timeline-of-the-events/>. This website is updated regularly.



# Call for Global Solidarity and Action

- Auroville, the celebrated 54-year-old international township located in South India, founded by representatives from 124 countries and recognised by UNESCO, faces violent intervention led by civil servant Dr Jayanti Ravi, appointed in July 2021 as Auroville Foundation Office Secretary,
- Future of this community famous for advancements in sustainability, social development, education, and more threatened by the Secretary's destructive intervention in once-peaceful town and bioregion
- Residents call for international support and action as the new Secretary continues a campaign of **deforestation, intimidation, and forceful takeover** despite court rulings from India's National Green Tribunal and Madras High Court

Auroville, the UNESCO-recognised, world-renowned international community located in South India, famous for advancements in sustainability and other fields, is today calling for international solidarity and action as it faces a never-before-seen threat to its very existence. Home to around 3,300 residents from approximately 60 countries, Auroville has long been a pioneer for exploring alternative living and realising 'human unity' since its founding in 1968, discovering **practical and scalable solutions to pressing world challenges** such as governance, climate change, and social inequality.

The future of the world's oldest international conscious city is now in an existential crisis following the appointment of a new official, Dr Jayanti Ravi, to the position of Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, whose **authoritarian takeover** of Auroville's administrative network, decision-making processes, and finances undermines the community's 54 years of peaceful and progressive self-governance and development

Starting with the felling of trees and built-up structures in December 2021, Auroville has been faced with an escalating, divisive conflict as Dr Ravi forces a **ruled urban development** while brushing aside the community's established decision-making processes and critical concerns, such as the protection of Auroville's famous forests, water catchments, and community centres. **Despite orders from the National Green Tribunal** to halt all work until an Environmental Impact Assessment is done, and **orders from the Madras High Court** ruling that the Secretary cannot make decisions and take actions without respecting the community's legitimate decision-making processes and wishes – all during a time when India loses 14% of its forests every year, according to Global Forests Watch – Dr Ravi's destructive campaign continues with no end in sight.

Furthermore, Dr Ravi's actions **infringe on the rights, personal safety, and well-being** of the Auroville residents as she threatens and hinders the immigration process for foreign residents — including those who have lawfully lived in India for decades— and uses **police intimidation and harassment** to proceed with the deforestation. Dr Ravi's measures to enact a total takeover of all aspects of Auroville governance, including **seizing the community's lands and assets**, which have been funded by individuals and international donations for over 50 years, as well as the community's fund for which residents raise money through commercial activities and monthly contributions, also threaten the physical and financial security of the city. To learn more about these actions and other developments, [click here](#).



Contrary to Dr Ravi's claims that Auroville has not realised any significant achievements, the community's 54-year history is full of groundbreaking experiments and milestones that benefit both local residents and countless individuals, organisations, and communities worldwide. These achievements include:

- **Ecology:** The extensive hands-on ecological restoration of Auroville's 2,200-acre land showcases best practices for reforestation that have since been acclaimed worldwide
- **Equality:** Auroville exists as an equity-driven society by removing all concepts of ego-centric competition and engaging with thousands of locals to encourage equitable social development in the surrounding region
- **Sustainability:** A 'living laboratory' for research into meaningful ways of life, such as local farming and permaculture practices, zero waste and renewable energies, Auroville openly spreads its knowledge for the benefit of humanity
- **Education:** Auroville offers cutting-edge educational programmes and serves as a hub for personal and academic research, especially in fields such as social equity, sustainable development, spirituality, governance, and circular economy
- **Economy:** With a focus on circular and local systems, Auroville is a pioneer in building a new economic model for an urban community that is respectful of nature's limited resources and residents' quest for conscious living

The Auroville community now seeks **international support**, solidarity, and action to raise awareness of Dr Ravi's actions and stop the destructive impact of abuse of power that threatens this important multicultural project.

The community also wishes to share a **message of solidarity** with those who are experiencing violent political intervention in the name of development in other parts of the world. In the spirit of Auroville's mission to realise human unity, the community encourages peaceful, environmentally responsible, and socially sustainable resolution to these challenges, and shares the following quote attributable to His Holiness Dalai Lama, issued during the inauguration of the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture in Auroville:

*"We are deeply impressed by the spiritual aim behind the building of an international city called Auroville. The importance of the effort to achieve human unity and international co-operation by the creation of such a city cannot be over-emphasised; nor can we neglect the benefit to be acquired from it."*



# Auroville Dream and Charter

## A dream

There should be somewhere on earth a place which no nation could claim as its own, where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme Truth; a place of peace, concord and harmony where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weaknesses and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the concern for progress would take precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the search for pleasure and material enjoyment.

In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their souls; education would be given not for passing examinations or obtaining certificates and posts but to enrich existing faculties and bring forth new ones. In this place, titles and positions would be replaced by opportunities to serve and organise; the bodily needs of each one would be equally provided for, and intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority would be expressed in the general organisation not by an increase in the pleasures and powers of life but by increased duties and responsibilities.

Beauty in all its artistic forms, painting, sculpture, music, literature, would be equally accessible to all; the ability to share in the joy it brings would be limited only by the capacities of each one and not by social or financial position.

For in this ideal place money would no longer be the sovereign lord; individual worth would have a far greater importance than that of material wealth and social standing. There, work would not be a way to earn one's living but a way to express oneself and to develop one's capacities and possibilities while being of service to the community as a whole, which, for its own part, would provide for each individual's subsistence and sphere of action.

In short, it would be a place where human relationships, which are normally based almost exclusively on competition and strife, would be replaced by relationships of emulation in doing well, of collaboration and real brotherhood.

The earth is certainly not ready to realize such an ideal, for mankind does not yet possess the necessary knowledge to understand and accept it nor the indispensable conscious force to execute it. That is why I call it a dream. Yet, this dream is on the way of becoming a reality. That is exactly what we are doing on a small scale, in proportion to our modest means. The achievement is indeed far from being perfect, it is progressive; little by little we advance towards our goal, which, we hope, one day we shall be able to hold before the world as a practical and effective means of coming out of the present chaos in order to be born into a more true, more harmonious new life.





# Auroville Charter

1. Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But, to live in Auroville, one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.
2. Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.
3. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.
4. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity.



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