

# The Spirit of Auroville

Letters from Aurovilians to Mr. RN Ravi, Chairman of the Governing Board, Auroville Foundation





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Letters from Aurovilians to Mr. RN Ravi, Chairman of the Governing Board, Auroville Foundation "It is the unity of all in the solidarity of a common manifestation that will allow the creation of the new and divine world upon the Earth.

Each will bring his part, but no part will be complete except as a power in the solidarity of the whole."

- Sri Aurobindo



### Introduction

After 11 months of a painful divide caused by the forcible implementation of the Master Plan and subsequently escalating provocations, Mr. RN Ravi, Chairman of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation finally called to meet with the Residents' Assembly of the Auroville Foundation on 7th November, 2022.

Residents came in hundreds for the opportunity of a dialogue, hoping to discuss how to move forward in togetherness.

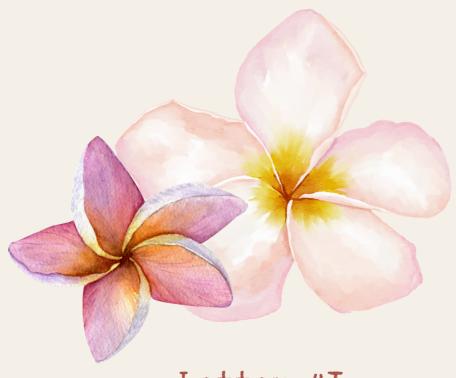
A speech was delivered, the transcript of which is available in the annexure. A space for interaction was not offered.

Instead, residents were requested to email their suggestions.

This book is a compilation of these letters sent by residents of Auroville to the Chairman and the Governing Board, with only the humble hope they will be read.

Each letter uniquely represents the diversity of the instruments that comprise Auroville's orchestra - what pains each of us; what affects each of us; how it churns within each of us; and the choice of response each of us makes, somehow harmonising into a symphony of which She alone is the conductor.





Letter #I

An open letter to the Chairman and the Governing Board by over 500 Residents of Auroville



Dear Chairman and members of the Governing Board,

We came to meet you on the 7th of November with the hope to discover together how we can move forward with truth, humility and courage. However, we were surprised that the dialogue we were expecting didn't happen.

We heard, in your speech, many accusations condemning Auroville and Aurovilians on innumerable levels without clear grounds, making assumptions not only about the reality of Auroville but misinterpreting its ideals and true raison d'être.

Still we welcome your criticism of Auroville as we acknowledge that we aren't perfect and that progress needs to be made. Yes, a good honest shake is helpful to the growth process, individually and collectively — yet with the very clear and honest condition that this shake is conscious and not in itself stepping on the essence, ideals and values of Auroville. And on this path which has never been attempted before upon Earth we are in the unknown. Time, patience and endurance are needed to discover the way and who can really judge the spirituality of any individual or group unless one has realised the Supreme Truth we are all looking for?

We do need to improve the way we live together. More discipline, for instance, would surely be welcome. But this discipline cannot be imposed by any external authority. The Mother herself told us that the organisation should emerge from life itself and not be organised by arbitrary mental ideas or conceptions. This is one of the fundamentals of Auroville and why she clearly said - "Only those who have resolved to stay in Auroville for good have the right to intervene in its organisation".



All of Auroville is profoundly grateful to India - it is her commitment to host all forms of spirituality that allows Auroville to root itself on her blessed land. We are also grateful to India for allowing this experiment which, as per its Charter, does not belong to anyone in particular but belongs to humanity as a whole, in service of the Divine's Will alone. Auroville is a township devoted to the Divine but it is not an ashram. Aurovilians are not French or German or Indian or Israeli — they are Her workers. The city to be built is the material tool to evolve our consciousness; it is neither our goal, nor our ideal. To infuse spirit in matter and evolve our consciousness through this harmony and unity is the essential goal, the ideal, the vision, and the truth of Auroville.

We choose to bet on the beauty of life and on each being, embracing our imperfections and holding hands with the parts of ourselves that need to grow, knowing that it is Her grace leading each of us through different guises and paths in this infinite and wondrous Lila back to Herself. There is a great diversity of people here with a wide range of experience and professional backgrounds in a multitude of fields, from science and governance to arts and poetry, farming to architecture and archaeology, history, education and yoga. While recognised in the outside world for our expertise and achievements, here, we try simply to be useful, to serve, and to learn. The stories of selfless dedication, of sacrifice, of endurance against all odds are not few, and yet mostly remain recorded only in the book of the Divine.

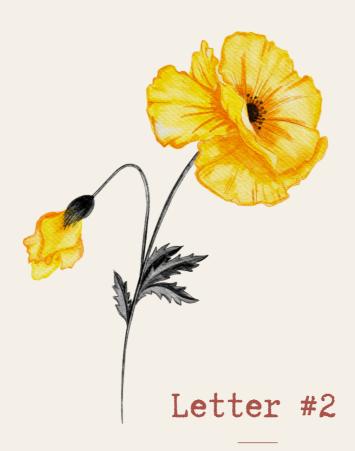
However, the present situation of fear, intimidation, threats of criminal charges, visa renewals being delayed or drastically reduced, cutting of maintenances and much more have seriously endangered the very Spirit of Auroville and our human fabric. For instance, the Dreamweaving exploration was one effort to embody this very Spirit of Auroville — of integrating our differences of opinion, embracing the diversity of our knowledge and expertise, of a true collaboration not imposed but rather a spontaneous, genuine and joyful expression where each can find their place in a holistic development of Auroville.

But why was all this genuine effort made by the Dreamweavers suddenly put aside when it was supported by such a large portion of the community? There was so much hope at that time that this would be the way out and suddenly, the whole experience was abandoned by the Auroville Foundation Office without explanation. We cannot build mutual respect and mutual trust in that way. That will never work. Mother imagined the development of Auroville as a Tower of Babel in reverse, that instead of becoming divided while building the city (as in the case of Babel), we will unite. When we look at what has been achieved in the last year which amounts to almost nothing except for what has been destroyed, including our roads, we can only conclude that building "The City the Earth Needs" in such a climate and such a division is an impossibility. To restore unity through real collaboration is the only path forward. And it should be with the unity of the three main bodies of Auroville, working hand in hand to collaborate with mutual respect and the honest acceptance of our respective roles in manifesting Her vision.

From this perspective we would like to invite you to a genuine dialogue with the Residents' Assembly of Auroville, in an atmosphere conducive to honest sharing, understanding of our different views that may lead to a harmonious and peaceful way forward. We trust that we all are growing through this moment of deep crisis and serious disagreements and that beyond our individual preferences, perspectives and limitations "The City the Earth Needs" will be.

At Her service, Residents of Auroville

This open letter was presented on 14th November, 2022 in a meeting called on very short notice to which all residents were welcome, and it was unanimously agreed upon by the approximately 150 people who attended. It was later signed by 477 residents of Auroville.



by

"An Aurovilian who has lived here for almost 20 years, who cherishes Auroville as the home for her soul and who deeply trusts Mother's plan to bring Auroville forward in exactly the right way."



#### Dear and respected Mr Chairman,

I would like to thank you for having talked to us last Monday. I appreciate that you have chosen a much friendlier tone than previously.

It is of great relief to me that you have mentioned some of the highest priorities that Auroville has in this moment.

Indeed we are 3000 people with so many differences. This is what Auroville is supposed to be, a laboratory working on finding human unity in diversity\*. And we (Aurovilians and the outside world) have to integrate that this is what Mother has set up purposefully. And yes, it is difficult to find this unity, to establish consensus; that is why such a laboratory had to be created. And we are trying our best and are indeed making progress. This progress can be labelled as being too slow, granted. Like any positive effort on individual or collective level can always be considered to be insufficient. Then it depends if we want to look at it as a glass being half empty or half full. This choice is up to everyone individually.

I greatly value that you have recognized Auroville as being different from other places because it is a place of accelerated evolution. This is so true and I am sure that if you come to stay with us for enough time you will also experience signs of this. It does not mean that one becomes enlightened straight away – this would be known – but something happens in us when we stay here long enough. This is one of the reasons millions of visitors from all over the world come again and again and stay for each time longer periods of time. Auroville is a healing place on body, mind, emotional; energetic and spiritual level. This happens to us even if we do not have openly visible spiritual practices that outside people could evaluate and judge.

<sup>\*</sup> Our diversity is not only in nationalities, cultures and ages but also in levels of education – we have illiterate people among us as well as internationally renowned PhDs and specialists in very diverse fields - and in spiritual advancement

As far as our spiritual practices are concerned for many that I know\*\* they are something intimate, something personal. We do not demonstrate them. We do not have any religious stereotyped rituals, nothing visible.

Most of us have also an intimate relationship with Mother and /or with Sri Aurobindo. We don't speak about it (and I am careful with those who mention it too often, who use quotations all the time, mental acquisition of words does not mean spiritual advancement to me), it is a very personal question. And it differs in shape and form between us. Even the way we integrate the Matrimandir in our everyday life differs from one person to the other. It cannot be judged if a person goes often enough into the Inner Chamber or too often to the gardens, this would be inappropriate.

At the same time I also appreciate that you have mentioned the recent tendency of turning the Matrimandir into a tourist attraction. This had never happened before, we see strange events happening in the gardens and the Inner Chamber even at night since about a year and many of us are worried about it.

As for the turn which seems to be taken toward a commercialisation of Auroville in the form of a real estate project aimed at customers from big cities, this is even more of a concern for us Aurovilians and it is so helpful that you denounced it also. We do need your help in this matter and ask you humbly to protect us from this risk.

In case you also meant individual commercial activity, there are definitely some areas where a few Aurovilians are caught in greed and dishonesty and we know most of them. At present and since about one year it seems that some of these people are being used to push a certain agenda which goes in many ways against the Auroville Charter and even against Indian law. This happens beyond our control or influence and your help in stopping this would be greatly appreciated.

\*\* and I happen to know many people very personally as I am working with individuals on a deep therapeutical level

I thank you for addressing the question of food self-sufficiency of Auroville. We all want it definitely! Please help us to enforce the land security for our farms. We do not understand how it is possible that some parts of our farms find themselves on the list of exchangeable land. We are very worried about this fact.

Thank you for recognizing that there is a lot of good work being done in Auroville (you may have read Satprem's excellent compilation of 54 years of achievements and awards in Auroville). Your impression is that this only happens in the material level. There are many things happening in Auroville that appear only at a second look. And please know that the whole magic of Auroville is what the physical eyes cannot see. Only when you listen within and when you spend enough time here in silence do you get a subtle perception of some uplifting sacred sensation. This is surely the Mother's presence and most of us are deeply connected to it.

It is also something that we as a collective are keeping alive because we are grateful for being here. Most of us bring all our resources in many shapes and forms to this place.

It is true that some Aurovilians may have grown into a state of entitlement about their places or units. It is a very typical human behaviour and we have to find a way to stop this. Nevertheless; does this give the right to anyone to bulldoze down houses with no prior notice and without checking that the house is empty of its inhabitants? We were shocked when this happened twice this last year.

Like you we also feel that there are two powers, Indian law and the Charter of Auroville. And we regret having witnessed both of them being stepped on so often in these last months.

Auroville is indeed not a place for force and coercion; neither for blackmail on visas nor for manipulation, brainwashing or falsehood. These types of behaviour are really not conducive for a spiritual evolution. Basic security is needed for it, threats and creating fears are counterproductive to an unfolding of the higher levels of one's being.

And yes, Auroville should absolutely be managed by Aurovilians. We do not support that non-Aurovilians are being hired for different activities since about one year. We have never seen such a thing before and the results of their intervention has been quite disastrous till now.

I express my heart-felt gratitude to you for having read me and hope that you will find some constructive inspiration in my words.

In service of the Truth,

An Aurovilian who has lived here for almost 20 years, who cherishes Auroville as the home for her soul and who deeply trusts Mother's plan to bring Auroville forward in exactly the right way.





# Letter #3

"In India all sages and rishis even the Buddha took refuge in nature, or just found bliss under a tree." Dear Honourable Thiru R.N. Ravi, Governor of Tamil Nadu and chairman of the Governing Board,

"The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life." - Rabindranath Tagore, a very close friend of Sri Aurobindo

Thank you for visiting Auroville on the 7th of November. Many of us were unsure how the meeting would develop but we did wish to have been able to ask you questions and convey to you our deepest aspirations and concerns of the moment.

When Auroville first began in 1968, the soil was a barren, desert-like piece of land with only one banyan tree and a few palmyras. This was the only vegetation for miles. Stretching from the canyons down into the Bay of Bengal, the land was completely eroded, not even farmers could use.

Days and nights were spent by some good willing servitors of the Divine Consciousness to make this land habitable again by understanding the land, creating bunds to prevent the water runoff and soil erosion thus enabling plants and trees to grow creating shade and a cooler climate for everyone. Through this afforestation work, Auroville has become world renowned.

I don't believe anybody living in Auroville here today is against development, and the persistent narrative that green work is by its nature anti-development is incorrect and misleading. Well managed forests and green spaces are an integral part of the city that Auroville wants to be.

The IAC, the GB and Aurovilians need to wake up to the fact that only 25 % of the master plan's greenbelt has been bought and that the land prices have skyrocketed or have been bought by private land estate developers. It's too late to talk about a Master plan unless the govt of Tamil Nadu protects this area, with a novel plan in its entirety and doesn't let anyone buy any land within this designated area. Land exchange without prior consultation and agreement with the Residents' Assembly is not at all the solution and will only create more division.

According to facts and figures over the past 40 years, 30 % of the forest cover the world over has been cut down. Tamil Nadu continues to remain the most urbanised and fast-growing state in India. The vegetal cover acting as a protective buffer zone for the regulation of the temperature is gone, the exposed spaces heat up drastically. We have to wake up to this reality and save whatever forests we have not only for the earth itself, but for the survival of the human species.

Of course, we understand that some trees need to be cut but the pattern in which development has been pursued over the last months is detrimental to the long-term health of Auroville and the bioregion. The forests in Auroville are mostly in the green belt, and what has been planted in the Master Plan area will be transformed into forested parks, according to the Galaxy concept. Darkali and Revelation are excellent examples of that, which shows "landscaped" areas but also wild forest.

We find there's not much respect and consideration for the work done because actually forests help with pollution control, they recharge the water aquifers, they regulate the temperature, they create soil for farming etc. Forests are our ally. I quote Sir David Attenborough: "Forests are a fundamental component of our planet's recovery. They are the best technology nature has for locking away carbon and are centres for biodiversity. The wilder the forests are, the better they are absorbing carbon from the atmosphere."

Our forests are very unique, most of the evergreen trees are perfectly adapted to our environment in terms of being cyclone, drought and water surplus resistant. The seeds mostly come from remnants of sacred groves from the surrounding areas. We remain shocked at all the destruction and environmental damage that has been done over the last months.

The green cover is why Auroville is so attractive to Indians who live in big metropolitan cities. Because it's green. Green elevates and calms the soul. It is because a city is green that one becomes more relaxed and yes more spiritual. Development, in this modern day, has to be done hand in hand with nature. To restore stability on earth today, amongst others, the standards of living need to be raised and there needs to be more green jobs available.

Most of the trouble on our planet is due to **bad planning and human error** and unfortunately in Auroville too. Moreover, to instil fear on our visa situation and economy and internal functioning is against unity, and it certainly cannot be called collaboration. We aspire for human unity yet all we do is create more and more division.

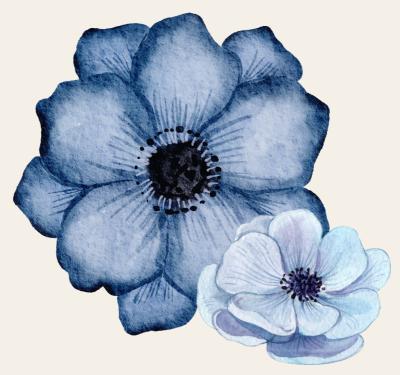
For flowers to grow they need the right conditions, so it is for humans. Auroville is for humans to grow into something more noble and more Divine and unite with their souls and their true nature. If we are to work harmoniously together, we need to have the right conditions and then our differences can be a source of innovation and creativity, where we can become our best selves and create a beautiful society.

A good friend wrote, someone who only got a 3 months visa: "A city governed by the principles of the Charter, a city where its citizens exemplify diversity united around one spiritual goal, that is Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's gift to the world and that we believe is the city the earth needs. That is the city we are committed to serve, to build and ...to plant."

Our goal is to become yogis, seekers of the Truth. Falsehood, greed for power and money has no place in Auroville.

In India all sages and rishis even the Buddha took refuge in nature, or just found bliss under a tree.

Thank you, Spiritual India, thank you Government of India for hosting Auroville, thank you Sri Aurobindo for enlightening our minds, thank you sweet Mother for your infinite and timeless love. And a big thank you to all the sages, seers and saints for paving the way from darkness to light.



Letter #4

"My suggestion and appeal to you, as the Chairman to the Governing Board, is to place again the youth at the centre of Auroville's development as emphasised by Shri Kireet Joshi, for it is us who will continue to make Auroville grow closer to its aims and ideals - however long the journey may take."

#### Respected Sir,

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude for your willingness to meet the Auroville community. I am in good hope that your next meeting with the Residents' Assembly will have time and space to allow for two-way communication.

I already had a chance to meet with you on 19th October 2022 at the Foundation Bhavan, and I had then introduced myself briefly. However, I do not expect you to remember all those you met (especially if there were "hundreds" as you say) and so allow me this short reminder. My name is ..., I am 28 years old, I was born and partly raised in Auroville. After my studies in social anthropology during which I wrote a thesis on the central role of silence in Auroville, I decided to return and settle in Auroville in 2018. Although I am currently a member of [a working group] selected by the Residents' Assembly, I am writing this letter in my personal capacity as a resident and youth of Auroville.

I would like to take your invitation to send our suggestions to you in writing as an occasion to share some of the thoughts and questions that arose for me after listening to you on 7th November 2022.

#### A spiritual community

In your speech to the Auroville community, you stated that spirituality in Auroville was "grossly deficient". According to your analysis, the Auroville Charter asks from Aurovilians to be bhakts and you further emphasised that the freedom of Aurovilians should be that of sadhaks. However, as you most probably already know, the two only explicit conditions mentioned by the Mother for becoming an Aurovilian were goodwill and to offer one's work in all sincerity. The Mother had expressly warned her disciples of the dangers that asceticism represents and had insisted on the need for a new spiritual path to be found. This is also what Sri Aurobindo had largely written about when he insisted on the need to create a Life Divine, on the need to bring consciousness into matter. Auroville is a place for karma yoga, and the spiritual progress of Auroville is intrinsically linked to the material and social achievements of this place. The sense of beauty everywhere present in Auroville - whether in buildings, forests, arts and culture, even in people's personal stories - is the best testimony of Auroville's spiritual progress over the years.

As a social anthropologist having studied Auroville through the lens of silence, I would also like to mention that Aurovilians have been striving over the years at finding ways to incorporate spirituality into all aspects of their daily lives, including the administration and decision-making of Auroville. One of the most salient of these efforts has been the inception and coordination of a special group of residents, called "Silent Presence Keepers", whose roles are to attend meetings from a space of deep inner concentration so as to uphold the spiritual atmosphere of meetings. Nowhere else in the modern world has such an experiment been conducted to uplift organisational and administrative structures. I appeal to you to meet with more Aurovilians versed in such activities before making claims that Auroville's spiritual dimension is "grossly deficient".

#### Diversity as a key

Another important note to add on the topic of spirituality in Auroville is that Auroville's richness, strength and victory lies in its multiplicity and diversity. Auroville is a universal township aimed at the growth and evolution of consciousness above all existing limitations and boundaries, including nationality and religion. Although Auroville exists thanks to the welcoming soul of India and is an attempt to be a living embodiment of India's international and spiritual identity as envisioned by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, its spiritual achievement cannot be gauged or measured from the perspective of any specific spiritual tradition - however ancient or holistic that existing tradition may be. Auroville is an attempt to create something totally new, never attempted before; and this requires the active participation of all existing diversities.

The Constitution of India refers to Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity as core principles of the Secular Democratic Republic of India, and Auroville wishes to uphold the very same values of openness and inclusivity. Auroville is an international township created for the benefit of humanity as a whole, and it is hurtful and painful to see its universal dimension be painted by a few individuals as "anti-national", which it is not.





#### Reflections on Unity

As you rightly said, Unity comes with an ability to see the Divine that is in myself in all the others that I am meeting. "When I'm able to see myself in all of you and you will start seeing yourself in me - that is Unity", you said - and I agree. This goes beyond external differences and the whole purpose of Auroville is to realise this arduous task in a diverse context and realise that multiplicity is a core component of true oneness. Without this variety, oneness would become a narrow, limiting and stifling uniformity. The Unity that Auroville stands for is that of diversity and vastness. Organising events in which different human beings can learn to better know each other beyond and through their differences is, I believe, a way to achieve such Unity. It is for sure more effective at doing so than the current practice of 'othering' those that may see the world through different eyes and may entertain a complementary interpretation of Auroville.

Yes, Unity is key; and the core component to achieving Unity is the willingness to meet on equal footing, with open-mindedness and flexibility.

#### On the Master Plan

Among many other things, you also said that the Master Plan should be thoroughly followed and it was the Governing Board's mission to implement the same. You are very aware, I am sure, that the Master Plan which was approved by the residents and then notified in the Gazette of India refers to regular review processes, and to intermediate steps which are required before implementation can start. The Master Plan further incorporates and upholds some of the very core values of Auroville. Since your speech on 7th November did not leave space for a 'questions and answers' session, I would like to put three questions before you:

- 1. How is the Governing Board currently complying with the Master Plan's requirements that Detailed Development Plans, Implementation and Layout Plans, Environmental Impact Assessments and many more such studies and documents are required before the implementation of large-scale projects can start?
- 2. How is the Governing Board intending to address the need for the development of Auroville to be sustainable, flexible and integrated as mentioned in the Master Plan document itself? How is the Governing Board intending to involve the Auroville experts and residents in the process of planning and developing Auroville, as also mentioned in the Master Plan document itself?
- 3. How is the Governing Board aligning itself with Roger Anger and the Mother's instructions, who mentioned that Auroville needs to be built by the Aurovilians themselves without which the project would inevitably fail to achieve its true purpose and meaning?

#### On commerce, corruption and Auroville's image

In your address to the residents, you mentioned that Auroville should not be a place for commerce and - taking as an example the Matrimandir that welcomes more visitors than Aurovilians - even less so for tourism. This is reassuring, since many of us fear exactly that: Auroville becoming a site of spiritual tourism in which monetary and financial gain would slowly replace the sense of community that has always been present in Auroville. This would be the end of Auroville, a complete twisting of its truth, and I appeal to you to please help us avoid this.

You spoke of cases of corruption, which are - most Aurovilians would agree - very concerning matters. I hope that individuals involved in such activities can be held accountable for their acts, on the grounds of verifiable evidence and following due process. I hope this will also apply to some of those currently finding a comfortable protection by the side of the Secretary to the Governing Board.

You also spoke of some of the statements that are released in the media and that damage Auroville's image; I couldn't agree more with you. You must already be aware that many heinous comments on Auroville and its people have repeatedly been posted on social media by V.R., a former 'friend of Auroville'. Additionally, in the past year, a group called "Manifesting Auroville" has been posting hateful statements aimed at harassing Auroville residents. More recently, a member of the Governing Board has posted several tweets in which he accuses Aurovilians of being "hardcore criminals", "maoists", and more. Are you, as the Chairman of the Governing Board, intending to take action on such cases of slander which are, as you said, "not in good taste"?

#### On the central role of Youth in Auroville

Finally, I would like to end this letter with a suggestion. In 1968, when Auroville was inaugurated in the presence of the Mother, some youth were selected to represent the then 124 nations of the world and 23 states of India. It is also to the youth of the world that the Mother has extended her invitation to join and build Auroville. This is largely, I believe, because Auroville is meant to be a leap into the unknown, into the new consciousness descending upon Earth; a new Force to which the next generations may be more innately receptive. Auroville wants to be the place of "a youth that never ages", and unending education is a core component of Auroville's raison-d'etre. It is therefore with great dismay - and symbolically evocative - that we saw that in December 2021, the first target for bulldozing was the international Youth Center. My suggestion and appeal to you, as the Chairman to the Governing Board, is to place again the youth at the centre of Auroville's development as emphasised by Shri Kireet Joshi, for it is us who will continue to make Auroville grow closer to its aims and ideals - however long the journey may take.

I truly believe - it is everyday confirmed - that Aurovilians are committed to building Auroville according to its original vision and ideals; and I hope that a fruitful collaboration based on mutual trust can be rebuilt between the Auroville Residents' Assembly and the Governing Board. Auroville is far from perfect, and the Aurovilians are the first ones to admit it - residents are critical of Auroville's current limitations and keep looking towards the future. However for the past 54 years, Auroville has been growing every day closer to its true self, and Aurovilians are dedicated to this continued flourishing. I truly hope that the Governing Board will join the residents' efforts in this endeavour, and contribute to it by restoring the sense of safety, security and stability that has always prevailed within Auroville, and is necessary for the experiment to take place truly and integrally.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter, and looking forward to you participating in a two-way conversation with the residents anytime soon.

Sincerely, ...
Auroville youth and member of the Residents' Assembly



## Letter #5

"As an Aurovilian for the past 19 years, I have been giving most of my time to working with the children of Auroville.

I have invested all my material means into a home where my family can live.

A home for Auroville."



Since the beginning of the present crisis in Auroville I have not been one to speak out much. I have, however, listened, deeply and attentively, to the myriad of voices, inner and outer, that have expressed thoughts, ideas, and much pain resulting from the turmoil we have faced within our community of late. I have agreed with some, disagreed with others, but only since attending your speech at the Unity Pavilion last week have I felt a clear need to speak out and express the voice from within. So at the outset, I would like to thank you for being the catalyst for this - for enabling my voice to express itself.

It was surprising and painful for me to witness the one-sidedness of the gathering last week. As a community we were looking forward to an exchange - to an open listening from all parties and a genuine willingness to seek solutions together, from an understanding that all members of our community potentially have solutions to offer and ideas to express.

However what emerged felt like a one-sided delivery, a little like a scene where a school-master is presiding over his unruly and disobedient students who needed scolding and "pulling up by the socks". I left the meeting disappointed and somewhat disillusioned, as did many others, I believe. Since the meeting, I have re-read the transcript of your speech and allowed my thoughts and ideas to stew within my being, until this moment when I bring myself to express them in the written form.

While I do see the truth in certain of the sentiments you have expressed, and I thank you for your candour and directness, I feel a strong adversity to others.

Yes, Auroville is imperfect.

Yes, as a community we still have a long way to go to realise Mother's dream and the ideals for Auroville. Yes, there are certain elements within the community which are not in line with these ideals, yet as a community attempting to realise a divine anarchy, I believe there are forces and divine protections which are dealing with these elements and guiding them towards a reconciliation with the true ideals of Auroville. This requires trust in the process. And these processes need time and patience. They cannot be forced or coerced. This is not in the spirit of Auroville.

I think what stood out for me most in your address was the expression of a differentiation between the spiritual and the material. I do not see these as being separate in Auroville.

As has already been expressed by several others who have written to you, many of us have come to Auroville and invested all of our material wealth to enable us to live a life focussed on deepening of the consciousness and knowing our inner selves towards a realisation of human unity. However, Sri Aurobindo has not asked of us to explore this deepening of consciousness by retreating to a cave and relinquishing all that is material. "All life is yoga": We practice the yoga in all we do, we attempt to bring consciousness into every action we take. Not all Aurovilians have an income from external sources which can enable them to spend hours a day meditating at the Matrimandir.

Some have needed to take up commercial activities within Auroville in order to sustain themselves here and enable the continuation of their spiritual work for and within the community. However, I truly believe that many of these so-called "commercial activities" are a further expression of the spiritual in the material: conscious creations created by Aurovilians who use this process of creating commodities as a vehicle for furthering their inner growth, while at the same time generating the means to enable their continued presence in Auroville.

I found myself uncomfortable with your words scorning those "doing business in Auroville" and claiming that the Matrimandir has become a tourist spot.

As an Aurovilian for the past 19 years, I have been giving most of my time to working with the children of Auroville. I have invested all my material means into a home where my family can live. A home for Auroville.

My life is a fine balance between the spiritual joined with the material. I see opportunities for inner growth in all aspects of my day, not only in the moments of concentration in the Matrimandir (which are, unfortunately not as many as I would like, as apart from all the time invested in my work with children, I also run a small commercial unit in an attempt to sustain my family financially).

I feel your address to us, the RA of Auroville, did not express a deeper understanding of who we really are. It did not see us as a community striving to bring down into reality the beautiful and challenging task that has been set for us by Mother in her dream and in the charter of Auroville.

It did not acknowledge the incredible work that has been done and the good-will that is present as we aspire, work, stumble, get up and try again to manifest what has never been done before.

There are many elements of our functioning that can be improved. Many of us acknowledge that the current crisis has been a wake-up call to re-organise, reinvest ourselves and work harder. But in order to continue to do so, we need to be united. We need a GB that can support us in our work and acknowledge this good-will, not scorn us for not being spiritual enough and having to make money to feed our children.

At the end of your address you requested that we, the Aurovilians, write to you and make recommendations for the way forward. I believe our community is rich with a plethora of practical ideas that can be implemented in order to enable the progress and flourishing of our community on all levels, both physical and spiritual. However, I believe that the platform, the underlying basis for offering these suggestions, needs to be support, understanding, collaboration, a platform of upholding one another, not putting each other down and scorning.

If our community is to continue to develop a system of divine anarchy, of self and participatory governance, there needs to be collaboration and mutual support between the 3 bodies making up this unique system - the RA, the GB and the IAC. With this division between the 3, how can creative ideas be shared and how can harmony be reinstalled in Auroville?

We are here to create something new. Something that has never been attempted before. Something inspiring and beautiful. None of this can manifest out of disharmony, division, and lack of trust. The fear-based, scolding and threatening approach that many experienced through your address can yield none of the values that Auroville is here to manifest.

I ask for your faith and support that Auroville is indeed guided by a higher power and the manifestation of the dream can only happen when we surrender to this, not when control is exerted through threats and scorn.

I send this In trust, and love. With care and gratitude ...



"We are asked not to maintain a selfless disinterestedness during a few hours of seva, to develop our emotional being through some humanitarian work or to be self-satisfied with a bit of meditation in Matrimandir but to lead all our activities of the day in a spirit of sincere self-observation, re-adjustment and offering.

This inner work is not visible to an outside eye."



Dear honorable chairman Thiru R.N.Ravi,

I am happy to see in you somebody who has truly studied Sri Aurobindo and has the same longing as me to live his teachings, to practice his Yoga and possibly to form a gnostic society. I was also relieved to hear that you are not favoring to attract thousands of people to join Auroville that have no interest to grow into servitors of the Divine consciousness. I hope that through some more personal conversations we can clear out some of the doubts and move together forward in manifesting Auroville as Mother has envisioned it. I have given my letter some titles so that you can read it more easily.

#### **Building the City**

To build a city in a way that can serve as an example to the world is a challenging task and cannot be done by one, two or even five individual planners and architects alone. I am myself an architect and have been involved in the dreamweaving process that was conducted recently in Auroville. It involved more than a hundred Aurovilians in a cometogether of experts and residents where knowledge and ideas were shared and woven into ever completer designs for "the crown". I think in Auroville we have the unique opportunity to involve the residents in the planning process and to create a city that fits the needs of the society, has buildings that are vibrating with purpose and are designed environmental friendly and suitable for this harsh environment. What needs to be also unique about Auroville is that it will be a city that has a silent/meditative center without commercial activity and motorized vehicles and becomes louder, worldly, commercial only towards the periphery. I would still suggest to involve the Vastu Shilpa Foundation to guarantee the highest standard of city planning, to have an outside agency that can help in evaluating ideas and to ensure a real participation of residents.

Of course, while building a city we can also be a role model in how to handle trees, how to support their root system so that they can thrive but do not cause damage when they are close to roads and buildings, how to dislocate them and how to remove them if needed. I think it is needless to say that nobody is against the masterplan or unwilling to implement it to the best of his abilities.

#### Throwing "unfit" people out of Auroville

After pondering over this question a lot and studying Sri Aurobindo in depth, I have come to the conclusion that it would not be right to throw those out of Auroville who are seemingly not practicing Yoga but leading an ordinary life. I understand human unity as being not ruled by my ego but by the psychic which has no scorn and does not feel distant from anyone. It sees the psychic in others and wants their highest good, therefore it inspires, leads by example, is patient, gives the right advice with goodwill and treats everybody as it treats its own internal parts of the outer nature which are not yet aligned to the Truth. We are all housing plenty of those parts (vital and mental aspects) and although we would like to throw them out, a real unification within ourselves is only happening by a slow infusion of the light, making those aspects understand, reminding them again and again, showing them the beauty of a higher life surrendered to the Supreme (psychicisation). If this is how we are dealing with our own internal aspects how can we then think that we could treat the people around differently, a strong wish to get rid of some people only shows that we have a similar aspect within us, that is not yet transformed.

#### Even about the Sri Aurobindo Ashram the Mother said:

"The Ashram is a reduced image of life where those who practice yoga are a minority, and if I were to keep here only those who are quite sincere in their sadhana, very few indeed would remain. Sri Aurobindo always reminds us of the fact that the Divine is everywhere and in everything, and asks us to practice a true compassion, as is so beautifully expressed in this aphorism which I am just commenting upon, "Examine thyself without pity, then thou wilt be more charitable and pitiful with others.""

26 January 1962

#### "Seva" (selfless service) and humanitarian activities

When you were speaking of the achievements of Auroville being more of a material practical kind, I got the impression that you would like to see more humanitarian activities, like helping the poor or the underdeveloped, but the aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is not to improve the existing world conditions by humanitarian help but to bring a new consciousness. Also if you investigate those seemingly material activities in Auroville you will notice that everything is done already with another attitude than in the outside world. This is a remarkable achievement because it is not at all easy to work in teams with a multitude of national backgrounds and without a top down hierarchy.

Besides in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga all the activities of the day become a means for our inner progress towards an expression of the Divine will through us. We are asked not to maintain a selfless disinterestedness during a few hours of seva, to develop our emotional being through some humanitarian work or to be self-satisfied with a bit of meditation in Matrimandir but to lead all our activities of the day in a spirit of sincere self-observation, re-adjustment and offering. This inner work is not visible to an outside eye.

#### Psychic atmosphere in Auroville - Harmony

You asked for solutions for Auroville to ensure that nobody is leading an ordinary life but is constantly reminded to strive for the highest. I think we cannot enforce that by rules or by control. We can only offer opportunities and lead by example.

What does not seem conductive for the psychic growth is to live under threat and insecurity by not knowing if the next visa is granted, not knowing if the monthly maintenance will come, not knowing if we will be suspended from our work the next day or maybe homeless by demolition of houses or by construction sites coming up in close vicinity without prior notice. We need to restore harmony again and that will come if our working groups are selected by the residents and not assigned from outside. We have made a lot of progress during the last one year. All our RA working groups are working together, are sharing with the community and have a full support of the residents. We have speeded up our internal decision-making process, the communication is clear and informative, the community meetings are very harmonious and focused and there is actually no divide amongst the residents.

#### Honorable Governing Board

In the past we always had a very trustful relationship with the governing board and never felt a threat but rather a support. I wish we can restore a beautiful collaboration. Please trust in the goodwill of Aurovilians to do their best for the growth of an Auroville as Mother has envisioned it. I am looking forward to a friendly collaboration.

Warmly and respectfully, ...

An Aurovilian living and working in Auroville since 15 years



Letter #7

"...your speech [was] speaking about the dark of Auroville and forgot about the Light that has been here for 54 years."

Good morning, Chairman of Governing Board,

Thanks for open the opportunity to hear us and don't be only with a small information that you spoke about yesterday.

My name is ..., I am an ATB facilitator in training who work at 4 differents schools, (Aikiyam, Nandanam, Center Kindergarten, and Deepanam). I teach 250 children per week, I am learning and teaching something that in my opinion, is the future of the humanity, because the most important thing is to learn about what am I and how to handle myself, Awareness through the body is based on Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and Mother.

Today I feel frustrated, even I couldn't go to work because your speech in my opinion was incomplete, abusive and speaking about the dark of Auroville and forgot about the Light that has been here for 54 years. I usually listen to speeches from all over the world to motivate myself and learn all that I can. Your speech, more than motivates me and unites the community where I live and spend my life working for the Divine, creates another deep wound to heal.

I think a cell can be in two stages, one is protection, the other is growing... and they only grow when the environment is safe and nurturing. The cell cannot do both things at the same time, either it grows or it protects itself.

I wish that also you can see all the beauty that is already happen and let us arow as a flower... without pull it... otherwise the flower will break.

With all my LOVE for the Divine and Auroville as a Soul, ...



Letter #8

"Sri Aurobindo, in response to a question regarding conflicts between ashramites, stressed that it was of paramount importance that there was a great diversity of human natures represented in the laboratory and that the rajasic element was necessary and that it was not possible to have only the satwic element. He went so far as to say that if the diversity was not complete and contained all levels of the human spectrum, the experiment might very well fail."

Honourable and Respected Chairman of the Auroville Foundation, Mr Ravi.

Dear Sir,

At your address on the 7th November at Unity Pavilion you invited the residents to respond to you by mail. You speak frankly and surely expect to be responded to similarly. I like to express a different position in understanding Auroville and the inner world of its residents, with regard to the question of spirituality in Auroville.

Like yourself, I have been a student of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother since my mid teens. I met The Mother and also got close contact with Nolini Kanta Gupta since The Mother sent him to talk to me. As you rightly pointed out in your address, this is of little importance to anybody other than the one who had the privilege, but I mention it only to underline that I'm familiar with the presence of The Mother and her and Sri Aurobindo's teachings.

Sri Aurobindo described his Ashram as a laboratory of evolution. It was, so to speak, a (subset) of humanity that he worked upon with his consciousness. He emphasised that he worked upon it from the inside. It was not merely an assemblage of individuals who tried to practise his sadhana, but himself and The Mother were present within the collectivity and worked to bring down the Force into it. Sri Aurobindo, in response to a question regarding conflicts between ashramites, stressed that it was of paramount importance that there was a great diversity of human natures represented in the laboratory and that the rajasic element was necessary and that it was not possible to have only the satwic element. He went so far as to say that if the diversity was not complete and contained all levels of the human spectrum, the experiment might very well fail. Because what Sri Aurobindo and The Mother attempted was not solely to open up a higher consciousness, where the satwic nature more easily can be realised, but sought to prepare the vital and physical consciousness to contain a larger Force and Presence. This is something complex and needs time to mature since the same work needs to be done over and over again to succeed.

Auroville is likewise a laboratory of evolution of consciousness whose diversity of human types is the condition for the success of the experiment. It must have the rajasic element as well. The whole human spectrum needs to be present. The secret in truly understanding Auroville is to perceive how The Mother's Force is Acting in the community to work on it from inside out. From the start it was a preparation of the vital and bodily consciousness that formed the basis of the laboratory. Because without the proper largeness and mass in the vital and body, the Force cannot establish itself. Working in this way, interestingly, does not require that the rajasic type becomes the satwic type. It requires that the vital and bodily consciousness like a plant receives a ray of the new light and develops the strength, the power, to humbly contain, if so only a tiny grain of the New Force. Intellectualism, ideologies, occupation with ideas of spirituality, can here turn out to be an obstacle. The spontaneity of human nature allows for a greater receptivity.

Nevertheless, most residents in Auroville are well aware of Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's teachings. The 13 volumes of The Mother's Agenda, tape recorded conversations with The Mother between 1957 and 1972, is a work that has formed the very mindset of a large section of the residents. There she gives account of her work in the body, the Supramental Transformation of the cells, and of events in the outside world. Here are recorded the beginnings and unfolding of Auroville. From there the residents learned the spirit in which The Mother was in contact with the Aurovilians. The mighty Force of Love was her primary means of action. She was tolerant and said that if the consciousness was vast enough, there was a place for all. She firmly opposed all forms of violence and coercion, psychological or physical.

The Mother noted after her Experience on the Supramental ship in 1957 that it then became clear to her that the practice of asceticism did not have any place in her yoga. She commented that almost everybody, also in the ashram, were not able to overcome the idea that asceticism and spirituality are synonymous. The humanity she wanted for her work was to be fully engage in life, without any attachment to a purity that more than often follows with the ascetic approach and brings a sense of superiority.

Auroville, constituting a large diversity of human personalities with different temperaments, backgrounds from various cultures, history, languages, experiences and varied stages of personal development, have here accepted to evolve from basic beginnings a yet unknown culture in a social experiment that combines spirituality with life in matter. An unending learning process in the very life of the people. A coming into being of a universal man, not checked by nationality and culture. Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Group Soul and in Auroville one can trace a first beginning of such a formation. However frail and tiny, it is there in the depth growing slowly in spite of the imperfections of its instruments and oppressive circumstances (considering) the predicament of human nature. It takes time for it to advance and there is no option but to accept its intrinsic pace of growth.

The claim that there is no spirituality in Auroville is profoundly erroneous, from my point of view. An oversimplification that does not embrace a yoga of transformation that works to integrate the whole of human nature. It was indeed disappointing to hear, even after several contacts with Aurovilians, that you would not acknowledge nor appreciate the honest struggle within people in the midst of a difficult transformation, this genuine inward effort to face and overcome limitations. The unwillingness to connect to the people spiritually closes a door that ought to be opened wide at this point in time.

I welcome your willingness to communicate and collaborate and to develop Auroville as something more than a construction site. The positive experience was always stressed as of primary importance by both Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. The intention and method of deliberately using force to create a condition of shock among the residents contradicts the spirit in which Auroville was created. Human Unity is not a mere abstract idea of the oneness of all. It is built by all parties who attempt to realise the lofty aim through every minute action that is taken in life, in a sense of a universal sympathy. Spirituality is taught and lived by example. But spirituality is profound, not merely an image of what is easy to recognise by the conventional eye. If you believe Auroville is for satwic natures alone, following traditional values of spirituality, you will not be able to see the workings of The Mother's Force.





"My comments are not made from a vacuum, nor are they random reactions to an unpleasant disruption of the status quo. I have been present at the foundation of Auroville, at the first government intervention, at the formulation of the Master Plan, and throughout the productive period of interaction between the Residents' Assembly, the IAC, and the GB between 2005 and 2015."

Regarding your invitation to the Auroville community to respond to your presentation of Nov. 7, 2022, this is my response, including a few suggestions.

The purpose of Auroville is the evolution of a new collective consciousness to which thousands of people have dedicated their lives for the past five decades. By fixating on the plan to build a city for 50,000 inhabitants, you seem to have ignored the level of human commitment that such an outer manifestation requires, and also the substantial progress that it has already achieved, although you have made passing references to these things.

You have heard or read ideas about Auroville's collective purpose expressed by those who were closest to the Mother at Auroville's commencement, such as Roger Anger and Kireet Joshi. Many of us have also heard these ideas from them, as well as from the Mother herself. The message we have received through working with them is that the inner development of the human being through dedication to the Divine is the essence and truth of Auroville, necessary in order to realize its destined outer development, and the ideal of human unity.

By assuming that building a concrete city is the first priority of Auroville, you have authorized actions that are contrary to the truth of Auroville and detrimental to its progress and the realization of its aims. Because of this, court cases have been undertaken against the AVFO, and members of the community have repeatedly voted in large numbers against such detrimental actions. You say that you find it difficult to understand this opposition. I would like to address your difficulty, and to offer some suggestions for moving forward.

We implore you to reverse the approach that you have taken to the reorganization of Auroville based on erroneous assumptions, and to adopt a wiser approach that restores harmony and order to the collective process of Auroville's development.



You unfortunately do not seem inclined to follow such a course of action. It is unfortunate, too, that you consider your opinions and judgments about Auroville's stewardship and sadhana to be more correct than and superior to those of the residents of Auroville. It is disconcerting that you say Auroville's development should be the responsibility of Aurovilians and yet you persistently demean their commitment and achievement. You seem to consider the commitment of their lives, sometimes for family generations, as a violation of principle and a sign of ownership and entitlement to be shunned, broken, churned and disrupted, so that your mission can be achieved.

In order for you to see yourselves as the saviors of Auroville it seems necessary for you to see Auroville as a place of deviation from its ideals, and a habitat for people who have lost their way. It seems easy for you because you are not an Aurovilian and you do not share the commitment and experience of Aurovilians; you consequently do not perceive and understand the level of devotion to its ideals that their lives represent.

You are experiencing difficulty with these things because your judgments are based on preconceptions, and you are motivated by an attitude of self-importance and superiority, to which you are accustomed as an official of the government. Your statements have made your position abundantly clear. Unfortunately the point of view that you express regarding the nature of Auroville, the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the Charter, and the role of the Governing Board in relation to these things is distorted and misguided by a certain attitude of self-righteousness and authority that prevents you from seeing the truth of these things. The difficulties that you have and the distortions that you perceive are a reflection of your own misconceptions.

Auroville is not the place that you have described in your presentation. It is not a place without norms where the ideals on which it is based have been compromised. It is not a place where service to the community and its surrounding populations have been neglected, or where a sense of collective purpose and well-being has been lost. These thoughts and impressions are a projection of some confusion about many unrelated ideas, concerns, and experiences of life that occupy your own mind. The distorted view of Auroville that you have expressed is a false view. And such a distorted view cannot possibly be the basis of any form of resolution of the difficulties of Auroville at present, most of which have arisen primarily due to your erroneous assumptions and misguided interventions.

Let me, therefore, suggest a few simple corrections to this view and course of action that might be made so that we can find a path forward together that could be more fruitful

The separation that you have made between the Auroville Charter and the laws of India, on the one hand, and the management structure defined by the Auroville Act, on the other hand, asserting that the former are of primary importance and the latter do not matter, is erroneous and must be rethought by you. These things are in fact a unity. The Auroville Act is a law. The governance structure is an instrument of the Charter and, as such, it matters a great deal.

The Master Plan was never set in stone; it was the product of immediate, practical circumstances. It is unfortunate that the government did not see fit to step in and fund it at the time, but that would probably not have been appropriate. However, you must understand that "revision" is an inherent part of the Master Plan, by definition. To revise it after 10 years is the normal course of such an instrument, and not a deviation. Similarly, the norms of life in Auroville were defined by the Mother and are embodied in a living way by the lives of the residents in an evolving way, in accordance with the Mother's guidelines. It is an inherent necessity and responsibility of Aurovilians to adhere to them, and their lives are a constant endeavor to do so. But such norms, with their developing interpretations and applications, cannot be dictated by an external authority; they are a product and expression of the swabhava of Auroville. To attempt to alter them, improve them, determine them from outside the life of Auroville would be a violation of the norms themselves, and the attempt to do so will naturally be rejected like a disease from the body and mind of an organism. It is you who are violating the norms of Auroville, not the Aurovilians.

The answer to your question - Why is there such opposition and resistance to our intervention? - is that the authoritarian, destructive, disruptive nature of your approach is the wrong approach to solving any of Auroville's problems. It is contrary to the spirit and truth of Auroville. It is not Auroville and Aurovilians that need to be corrected; it is your approach and the intention of your intervention that were wrong from the beginning.



If you have truly studied the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, you will know of the central importance to sadhana, and to the processes of the world in general, of the factor of Time. One of your fundamental errors has been the leap you make in your conception of Auroville's development between 2010 and 2020, and your attempt to connect a past with a present, excluding the significant movement that has taken place in between. The past decade has borne the fruition of the previous decade and forms the basis of the next decade. There is an inevitable continuity that you have failed to consider. My sincere request is that you make an effort to understand this reality of the movement of Time, which is an expression of the Divine Will. If you can attune yourself to that reality, it will be easier for you to rectify the disjointed and erroneous nature of your conceptions. The future can only be built on the reality of the past; to ignore this reality of Time can only be the cause of disharmony and destruction.

You have asked for suggestions and advice, and I am responding to your request as sincerely and frankly as I can.

My comments are not made from a vacuum, nor are they random reactions to an unpleasant disruption of the status quo. I have been present at the foundation of Auroville, at the first government intervention, at the formulation of the Master Plan, and throughout the productive period of interaction between the Residents' Assembly, the IAC, and the GB between 2005 and 2015. I have participated actively in Auroville's educational development, taught courses and published books on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, and graduated many students from village families with hardly even a secondary education, who have gone on to earn Bachelor's and Master's degrees. In the 70s I was associated with AVARD and published articles in their journal, at a time when your party was on the verge if its first brief assumption of power. I have taught Indian political science and I know something about the subject; I have lectured at MS University in Varodra.



I speak from the experience of Auroville, and I say to you that your attempt to deny and disrupt the integrity of the Residents' Assembly and its legitimate role in the development of Auroville is contrary to the purpose of the Auroville Act and contrary to the Charter of Auroville. I sincerely implore you, as I stated in the beginning of this letter to you, to take my observations into serious consideration, reverse your course, and restore integrity, harmony, and order to the collective process of Auroville's development.

You have made harsh but revealing judgments regarding the soul of Auroville and the Bhakti of Auroville, about which you know nothing. You claim to know the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo based on what you have read and the conceptions you have formed, but these have not enabled you to grasp the soul, the sadhana, and the swabhava of Auroville. You have condemned Auroville's commercial activity without understanding that it was emphasized by the Mother, along with the creation of an industrial zone, because it is essential to the growth of Auroville. You have not grasped the fact that Auroville is a township devoted to the Divine and not an ashram. You have failed to make these fundamental distinctions because you are not one of those who have dedicated their lives to Auroville and for whom its truth is a reality. When you say, "The core has to be respected, the core has to be restored," let this aspiration be directed to your own soul, and let your mind grasp the truth of Auroville on a higher, wider, more holistic, more inspired plane of consciousness. Then let us realize that unity and universality about which you have spoken.

Nov 9, 2022





### Letter #I0

"Teamwork is hard at times and it means listening to different opinions, letting go of fixed ideas and adapt(ing) to changing circumstances. More than once I had a great idea, but my team did not go for it. Instead of using my authority and pushing my idea through, I accepted and adapted. This is for me the only way in Auroville.

Power- and ego-trips have no place here. We need to go together as a community however difficult this process be."

To Shri RN Ravi Chairman of the Auroville Governing Board

First I would like to convey my appreciation and gratitude that you make the effort to get in touch with us residents of Auroville and I would like to share some of my thoughs with you.

As I understand Auroville was meant by Mother as a laboratory and an experiment. Auroville is well-known all over the world and has a good name for (its) efforts in afforestation of bare land and for quality and beauty. The city development should be in the same spirit which means quality and creativity combined. The dreamweaving group has contributed with many ideas and is a great example for collaboration which should be valued and made use of. People in India and abroad are looking in Auroville for inspiration. Please maintain this unique fabrique.

The diversity of cultures, opinions and approaches is at the same time a chance and a challenge. Each of us has a responsibility towards the collective. Both listening and patience are essential to achieve a sustainable development. In my opinion development has to come from within and cannot be forced from above.

Myself have been implemental to build up in Auroville a successful social project, step by step from scratch, which was only possible with a team. Team work is hard at times and it means listening to different opinions, letting go of fixed ideas and adapt to changing circumstances. More than once I had a great idea, but my team did not go for it. Instead of using my authority and pushing my idea through I accepted and adapted. This is for me the only way in Auroville. Power- and ego-trips have no place here. We need to go together as a community however difficult this process be. The autonomy of Auroville has to be preserved. Right now there is a fraction of pretty strong personalities over-powering the majority of residents which is against the very spirit of Auroville. I find this is a very unhealthy situation and not beneficial at all.

Most of Aurovilians gave their lives for this experiment and came for Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's vision. Unfortunately the words of Mother and Sri Aurobindo are getting used to support personal and egoistic opinions. Some persons claim they would know better what Mother wanted in Auroville and what is better for others who live here.

There are many Aurovilians who are extremely dedicated to their work and don't make much noise. A minority cannot rule Auroville. Different opinions are fruitful. The different parties need to listen to each other and work together.

The present situation is one of mistrust and insecurity which is detrimental for Auroville as a lot of collective engergy is lost and goes into fire-fighting. One example is the insecurity of the visa situation of foreigners in Auroville which creates a lot of personal hardship. Foreign nationals left behind their families and friends and often a much more secure life. The Indian Government should safeguard the foreign nationals who give their work and life for Auroville. At the same time I believe there should be also an exit policy and persons who purposefully abuse Auroville (foreign and Indian nationals) in any way would need to be taken off the Masterlist - of course only after a thorough examination by an absolutely neutral group of Aurovilians and in a very transparent process.

In recent times there is often told that not enough has been reached in Auroville in the past years. Sorry, but I grew up in a village of similar size of Auroville. There was a small town hall office, one kindergarten and one primary school, a church, a place for sports, two restaurants and 3 shops for grocery items. Compared to that Auroville has countless facilities and activities: schools from kindergartens to high school, the Visitor Centre, the Matrimandir, Bharat Nivas, Cripa and Pitanga Hall, a cinema, Solar kitchen and many other restaurants, guesthouses of all kind and thousands of visitors, the townhall with a growing administration, volunteers from all over the world, many businesses who contribute some of their income, farms which serve the community, a telephone service, an electrical service, a raod service, recreational activities and sports of all kind, health facilities including a pharmacy, etc., and not to forget the many outreach programmes for the surrounding village population.

Also there is often pointed out that Auroville has a problem with drugs being used. Be asured that most of us Aurovilians are absolutely not consuming drugs. The abuse of drugs needs to be tackled in a very sensitive manner as it is a serious problem which exists all around us. In the local villages almost every family is severely affected by alcohol abuse. Drugs are too easily available. The Indian Government should take more strict measures. As long as governments earn taxes from the sale of liquor there might be no improvement of this situation. Nearby Pondicherry is frequented by tourists who come especially to consume liquor and these persons drive to Auroville with cars and bikes often under the influence of these beverages. I absolutely agree that there should be no drugs in Auroville as Mother said, but the root of the problem needs to be tackled and more awareness, support and counselling has to be offered to addicted persons in Auroville as well as in our local villages.

Auroville is very complex and diverse and there are no easy solutions and recipes. The only way is to communicate and to strive for a collective process however hard it is. In the present atmosphere I prefer to submit this letter anonymously.

Thank you for listening.



### Letter #II

"When the Mother declared [that] true collaboration paves the way to divinity, she obviously didn't mean a collaboration imposed by a section of the community upon another, but a spontaneous, genuine and joyful collaboration where each one of us could naturally find its place in the manifestation of Auroville."

### Respected Sir,

After the speech you gave us on the 7th of November, I would like to share with you my deep concerns about the present state of things in Auroville.

First of all, I appreciate very much your dedication to promote the ideals of Auroville as we all came here for the Mother's Dream. But if we wish at all to build Auroville in all the various aspects of its life, not only the city but also its society, the very first need is to find some sense of mutual trust and mutual respect. This is the only way to bring back some sort of peace and harmony, without which nothing can really be done in the spirit of Auroville.

When the Mother declared that "the true Spirit of Auroville is Collaboration and must be more and more so, true collaboration paves the way to divinity", she obviously didn't mean a collaboration which would be imposed by a section of the community upon another, but a spontaneous, genuine and joyful collaboration where each one of us could naturally find its place in the manifestation of Auroville. And that is why if we truly, sincerely, wish to work for our ideals there could be no other way than to, first of all, come to some common ground and a common vision.

Today, what is really dividing us is not at all the reluctance of some to live according to the Mother's vision and go their own egoistic way (although we do not deny that we have some problems to solve) — no, it is just the way we **interpret** this vision.

As an example, when it is said that we need to follow the 2010 Master Plan because it has been gazetted we wonder why this Master Plan is showing 12 radials when in the last drawing approved by the Mother there were only 7 complete radials plus 2 incomplete. Why this change? And why is there is no room for discussion when we pretend to be willing to implement the Mother's Dream? And there could be many more example similar to this one.

Also why was all the work done by the Dreamweavers was suddenly put aside when it was supported by such a large portion of the community? There was so much hope at that time that this would be the way out and suddenly, without explanation, the whole experience got trashed. We cannot build mutual respect and mutual trust in that way. That will never work.

Today, I believe it is urgent that a real debate happens in this community. We cannot afford to go on that way forever, and we do need to come back to our ideals. But this cannot happen in the present climate of fear, threats, and insecurity. Something drastic needs to change.

And the very first thing, the only prerequisite would be that there is a general will to become more **flexible** in order not only to listen to each others but have the courage to challenge or be challenged so that some clarity could emerge at last. Then only will we be able to find a common ground, define what the Mother's vision really was and how we could all together work to manifest it in a peaceful, creative, beautiful and happy way.

In that perspective, an open debate could be organized in a safe space, a debate where we could all share in a peaceful way our concerns, perspectives, expertise and aspirations for the future of Mother's Dream without forgetting that beyond all our preferences, opinions and perspectives what really matters is not what we think or wish but what the Mother's Will is, not ours, and today, not 50 or 60 years ago.

As Sri Aurobindo wrote in The Synthesis of Yoga:

"The Gita itself thus declares that the Yogin in his progress must pass beyond the written Truth, beyond all that he has heard and all that he has yet to hear. For he is not the sadhaka of a book or of many books; he is a sadhaka of the Infinite."





## Letter #I2

"Only the Aurovilians, despite obvious limitations that we know only too well, can realise Mother's project and vision. It is a matter of transformation and evolution which needs to be given the space and time to mature with Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's grace."

### Your Excellency,

You have had a distinguished career during which you have held high office positions, dealing with difficult problems of law and order and communal harmony. However difficult these problems may have been, I believe that they were familiar to you as per your training and experience.

Coming as Chairman of the Auroville Foundation, you have been given a mission, a task to perform. The problem is that there is nothing familiar for you in the situation. Auroville is unique as the oldest surviving and thriving intentional community in the world. I deeply believe that it is India's inner greatness which made Her protect and preserve this Divine project.

As you yourself pointed out, Auroville has already faced many problems leading to a forceful central Government intervention beginning with the Ordinance of November 1980. I myself had come to Auroville in July 1973. The year before, in August 1972, the year of Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary, I had spent one month in Pondicherry, filled up an application with my picture to become Aurovilian, and was accepted by the Mother.

Soon after the passing away of the Mother, the relationship between the then residents (about 400 at the time) and the Sri Aurobindo Society which were taking advantage of their position of legal masters to try to impose their views, deteriorated to the point of open revolt in 1975-76. The battle with many twists and turns lasted for about 12 years. It was not an "internal conflict", it was a conflict between an outside body and the residents.

In August 1988, I went to Delhi with two other Aurovilians, ... (the first Aurovilian) and ... who had joined Auroville in the late seventies. We were asked on August 20th to provide a draft for a law on Auroville that then Government wanted to enact.

Thanks to the knowledge and expertise of Shri Kireet Joshi, the draft for an Auroville Foundation Bill was ready on August 22nd. Amazingly, the Auroville Foundation Bill was passed by both Houses of Parliament by September 5th, less than 3 weeks later, after due vetting by the Law Ministry and the Central Government Cabinet. This was described as a miracle by one of the high functionaries who had participated in the process.

I therefore feel that the Auroville Foundation Act has been sanctioned not only by the highest authorities of this land but by the highest that is, the Divine. Therefore, I feel it is utterly wrong to ignore the provisions of this Act which has established the Residents' Assembly as one of the three authorities and which is supposed to organize the activities of Auroville towards the fulfilment of the ideals expressed in the Charter of Auroville.

Auroville cannot flourish as a Government department and you, with your experience of administration, must be keenly aware of this fact. I heard Dr Karan Singh, our former Chairman, express this view quite forcefully to some bureaucrats a few years ago.

I therefore see no possible repair of the present situation unless the residents are given back their rights and responsibilities, in letter and spirit, as specified in the Act. Only the Aurovilians, despite obvious limitations that we know only too well, can realize Mother's project and vision. It is a matter of transformation and evolution which needs to be given the space and time to mature with Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's grace.

Respectfully yours, ...





# Letter #I3

"Do you think that Human Unity should be reached only by an elite, the Aurovilians, when the rest of the world still lives in the present condition and that mankind still struggles, competes and fights everywhere?"

Honourable and Respected Chairman of the Auroville Foundation,

Thank you very much to have come to Auroville and shared your thoughts on Auroville.

Though I could not attend your lecture, as I am blocked in France for the reasons that you know, I was told the content of your intervention. Therefore, I would like to mention again here what the spirituality in Auroville is about and what we are trying to do here. You will find attached only the page 3 of my presentation on Auroville and 54 years of realization, that ... gave you last Monday and that I sent you by email.

As wrote the Mother on 17th July 1957 in the "Great Adventure", "You are not to repeat spiritually what others have done before us, because our adventure begins from beyond that stage."

Do you really think that Aurovilians have lost or forgotten the ideal of Auroville? What can make you think that? Do you really think that because we did not reach yet the final goal of Auroville, Human Unity, we failed or forgot the ideal?

The search for Human Unity, in the history of the world, is probably attempted for the first time in Auroville. Do you think that it is so easy to reach it and that every Aurovilian could be in contact with his own psychic being, and that everyone could see the Divine in each other so easily? Do you think that this can be reached in the present atmosphere of threats, coercions, takeovers and violence which started on 4th Dec. 21?

Do you think that Human Unity should be reached only by an elite, the Aurovilians, when the rest of the world still lives in the present condition and that mankind still struggles, competes and fights everywhere? Why do you think Aurovilians have done so much work in the villages of the bioregion for 54 years? Do you think that people who do not have the basic material and psychological needs to live a decent life can afford to think of a spiritual life and Human Unity?

For years, Aurovilians have given life again to this land and tried to uplift their Tamil brothers from the bioregion. Do you really think that this was a waste of time and goes against the ideal of Auroville? Thus, we have left aside the construction of the city for this reason but also because we did not have the resources and knowledge to build the City at the Service of Truth. Now time has come, and we can focus more on that.

Yes, everything in Auroville is not yet perfect and a few things were not done in the spirit of Auroville. Things must be corrected, perfected and transformed. This is part of the work we must do here. Being a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness has many expressions. The Mother did not call for sadhaks, in the traditional sense, in Auroville.

Do you really think that Aurovilians do not have an inner search, that there are no bhaktas or devotees in Auroville? How much time have you spent with Aurovilians and how many have you met? Of course, the inner search of everyone can always be more sincere and higher. But who can judge that, except the Divine?

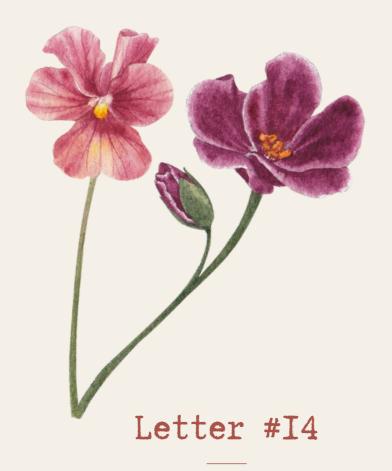
Further Sri Aurobindo wrote the following about Spiritual Transformation in "The Life Divine":

"It must therefore be emphasised that spirituality is not a high intellectuality, not idealism, not an ethical turn of mind or moral purity and austerity, not religiosity or an ardent and exalted emotional fervour, not even a compound of all these excellent things; a mental belief, creed or faith, an emotional aspiration, a regulation of conduct according to a religious or ethical formula are not spiritual achievement and experience... they still belong to the mental evolution, the beginning of a spiritual realisation, experience, change is not yet there. Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being, to be in communion with It and union with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature."

CWSA, Vol. 21, Pq. 890

More inspirational quotes from Sri Aurobindo can be found in the fourfold transformation.

Very sincerely, ...



"We look to our Governing Board for faith and support in this journey of conciliation, synthesis and divine discovery. Please trust us, please protect us; please assure us the necessary freedom and the necessary time for this arduous task of profound transformation, to accomplish this process of a new birth, for a new Earth."



Dear Chairman, dear members of the Auroville Governing Board,

I am writing to you to thank you for your honesty and for your sincere openness to listen to us, the community of Auroville.

We had been anticipating the meeting with you yesterday afternoon with hope, looking forward to a frank and fruitful interaction based on trust and shared aspiration. The occasion turned out to be different from our expectation, and I understand it must have been painful for you to deliver your message, as it was painful for us to receive it. I greatly appreciate the invitation to us to write to you, and your commitment to make time to read and hear what we wish to share with you.

Among the undelivered messages we had been carrying to yesterday's meeting was one of welcome to you, our invitation and heart-felt plea to the Governing Board to please make time to meet and get to know us. Us, this motley crowd of Aurovilians, this vastly diverse community of people living scattered across the red-earth plateau of Auroville. We are only a small village of 3500, and yet so difficult to capture, to get to know, defying all attempts at definition and categorisation...

As someone who has been part of the international Auroville community since forty years and living here for over a decade, enthusiastically engaged in our collective, I still feel like a newcomer, unable to say, 'I know Auroville'... and will probably never know it in this lifetime. Because each time I meet an Aurovilian, I meet a new universe, and Auroville being the sum of so many universes in their infinite richness... the present residents, the many who have come before us, who have passed through and brought their contributions, and the countless 'expat Aurovilians' across the globe who are intimately connected in so many ways...

When I take just a little time to get to know someone beyond the mask of appearance, beyond the quick judgement, the stories are always moving. Each one's journey led by the unfathomable ways of the Divine, precious and unique.... There are those who have met Mother in the physical body and carry forever the imprint of Her Grace. There are others who have been touched by Her in the most miraculous ways, making them turn to Her for good. And there are those whom the Divine leads through different guises and paths, in Her infinite wondrous Lila...



Many of us have come from far-off countries, leaving behind families and friends, lives of professional fulfilment, material and social security and all comforts, called by Mother's adventure, by the ideal. Carried simply by faith. We come with hope and idealism, facing an environment with far greater challenges and insecurities than the world we left behind. We do not know who among us has a PhD, who has had glory and fame and riches, as these things tend to fall off, they do not count in the life of Auroville. We do not know how many of us have given their savings so that Auroville could purchase another piece of land, but they are not few. The stories of selfless dedication, of sacrifice, of endurance against all odds, they mostly remain unwritten, recorded only in the book of the Divine.

It is often heard that Auroville harbours an exceptional accumulation of talent. People come here in search of a soil where they can freely unfold their gifts from within, follow their swadharma... Many among us have authored books, on a multitude of subjects, from science to arts and poetry, farming to architecture and archaeology, history and education and yoga, and would be recognised in the outside world for their expertise and achievements. Here, we try to simply be useful. To serve, to learn... Our yoga is in the daily lessons of life, in the small things, mostly invisible... following the prayer given by our Master, 'In all things may I see the Divine'.

And no, we cannot boast perfection. The journey is humbling. Individually and collectively, our sadhana is interwoven. We do have shadows to face and plenty of knots to undo. Today I dare to say that we are willing to do so.

Whoever has tried to bring something new, knows how much resistance arises at every step. Slowly we learn that it is not so much the ill-will of our fellow Aurovilians, but forces behind the veil that try to oppose. Auroville being a representative microcosm of the entire world, the living laboratory of human evolution as Mother would say, we seem to have to deal with every possible obstacle before real change can take root. And then, it is Mother's lasting Victory.

Mother has created Auroville as a place of research and innovation, where humanity could prosper in harmony with Nature. Many of us have come, and ever more keep coming, with the intense thirst for healing our environment, the base of our physical existence, and for creating a different city, developing novel technologies and approaches respectful of Mother Nature that would replace the unsustainable cities of the past. Building the city the Earth needs in the spirit of Auroville, manifesting the Galaxy with Mother's inspiration of pioneering innovation, supple flexibility and practical non-dogmatism, is what we understand as Her guidance for the way ahead.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother taught us that the Divine is equally present in Spirit and Matter, and Auroville is meant as a glorious expression of this truth. Reconciling Matter and Spirit, reconciling the apparently opposing approaches from both ends of the polarity, is what can and must bridge the gap that has been dividing us in the community, and humanity on the planetary scale, for too long. It is our divinely given task, for Auroville, for the Earth, for Them.

We look to our Governing Board for faith and support in this journey of conciliation, synthesis and divine discovery.

Please trust us, please protect us; please assure us the necessary freedom and the necessary time for this arduous task of profound transformation, to accomplish this process of a new birth, for a new Earth.

Thank you for travelling the journey together with us, based on the three essential principles proposed to us by Sri Aurobindo: Freedom, Equality, and Brotherhood.

We look forward and count on you.

At the feet of our Masters ...





# Letter #I5

"It took 1000 years for Bhagiratha to make Ganga descend on earth.

Permit we take a few more years for achieving the goals of Auroville."

### Your Excellency,

At the meeting with the residents, you advised us to send suggestions to you. For the past one year, the Working Committee of the residents (whom you met on your previous visit) kept sending you very detailed and clear suggestions. Some members of the IAC sent you also points on which action could be taken. Your administration has not acted on any of those. Not even on obvious and shocking things like illegal decisions taken by the present office of the Foundation. Which leads me to believe that after spending only a few hours in Auroville your mind is already made. It does not encourage one very much to write a letter.

Nevertheless I very respectfully shall try to make a suggestion -- triggered by your talk.

In your speech you seemed to describe the Aurovilians as money-minded people, business-oriented people, having the mentality of land owners instead of being just stewards.

You seem to ignore that many people here have given all their money to the Mother and now sometimes find themselves at 80 plus without any financial security (to which you want to add uncertainty about visas). Is this a sign of being business-oriented?

You seem to ignore that here many people have sunk whatever personal funds they had into the house they built, the enterprise they created, the service they created, the land they helped to purchase, the maintenance of some farm or forest or some project benefitting the community. Is this a sign of being profitoriented?



In spite of meeting "several hundred Aurovilians", you seem to ignore that those enterprises, houses, lands, farms, will never belong to them. They will all be part of Auroville assets. Where do you find something similar in any township? Please tell us Sir, where do you find the equivalent of that? Is this the sign of people working for their own benefit?

With all due respect, Sir, you seem to ignore that the depth of sadhana cannot be judged by one's outer work any more than it can be judged by the color of the skin.

You seem to ignore also that a large majority of Aurovilians know well that they have not attained the high level of realization that the Mother asked; they are acutely conscious -- and more than anyone else from outside -- that there are deficiencies in Auroville. But the Mother said that what we are doing here is something that had never been done in the history of humanity: to search and find the spiritual within the most material.

So please, Sir, kindly allow us some leeway.

It took 1000 years for Bhagiratha to make Ganga descend on earth. Permit we take a few more years for achieving the goals of Auroville.

Thank you for reading this letter.

Sincerely, ...





## Letter #I6

"[My] work is my karma yoga and sadhana, the vehicle to offer myself to Mother and Auroville while sustainably creating products of beauty and perfection which serve as ambassadors of what Auroville stands for in matter.

Units and profits belong to Auroville."

Your Excellency, Namaskar Sir,

At the 7th Nov community meeting in Auroville, you invited us to write to you our views and suggestions for ways forward to concretely realize this remarkable Dream of the Mother - Auroville.

### India & Visa Security

At the meeting you said that Auroville is also the identity of India. This is what Mother and Sri Aurobindo, the Founders of Auroville, had foreseen.

On 15th August 1947, the day of India's Independence and Sri Aurobindo's own birthday, he enunciated his 5 dreams... The 1st two relate to India's freedom and Asian resurgence, while the latter three (a World-union for a fairer, brighter, nobler life for humanity... with international spirit and outlook, forms and institutions, perhaps dual or multilateral citizenship; the spiritual gift of India to the world; a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness) could be said to be a sort of early blueprint for Auroville.

In 1954, Mother penned the inspiring vision on which Auroville is built, The Dream.

On 3rd Feb 1968, 2 weeks before Auroville's inauguration, Mother had a vision of the role of India in the terrestrial world:

"India has become the symbolic representation of all the difficulties of modern mankind. India will be the land of its resurrection—the resurrection to a higher and truer life. And the clear vision: the same thing which in the history of the universe made the earth the symbolic representation of the universe so as to concentrate the work on one point, the same phenomenon is now taking place: India is the representation of all human difficulties on earth, and it is in India that the... cure will be found. And then, that is why — that is why I was made to start Auroville. It came and it was so clear, so tremendously powerful!"

[Mother's Agenda, 3rd Feb 1968]

It is clear that India is the only country which can host an international experiment like Auroville (which is both evolutionary and revolutionary), while also understanding the imperative necessity for visa security for non-Indian residents. The Indian Govt has hence granted a special visa status for Auroville (as you spelled out for us).

However, since the past year, this protection has been selectively suspended for certain people and what should be a routine granting of visas has instead been used as an instrument of coercion and intimidation, causing several Aurovilians deep anguish and uncertainty. But no true sadhana and progress can be made on the basis of fear and a lack of freedom.

On 15th August 1954, Mother made A Declaration wherein she requested the Indian Government for dual citizenship:

...From the first time I came to India -- in 1914 -- I felt that India is my true country, the country of my soul and spirit...

This feeling of deep connection and belonging to India is certainly echoed by many foreign-born Aurovilians.

Thus this is my first request - that Visas are not used as a means of wielding power to force a certain narrative or viewpoint. Further, that the unwarranted FIRs against individual Aurovilians are lifted, only then can trust be built and a way forward found.

#### Adherence to Auroville's Charter and Ideals

You told us that the quality of the sadhana happening here was grossly deficient, that whether Aurovilians have been here for 40-50 years or are 2nd/3rd generation is unimportant, that we are not committed to the ideals or the Charter of Auroville, we are not genuine sadhaks/devotees... Respectfully Sir, the inner life and spiritual experiences of Aurovilians is not for display in public meetings. Whether it is visible or not, inner growth and sadhana is definitely our aim, but only the Divine can judge its genuineness. Moreover, lived experience cannot simply be dismissed, and it is a lived experience of several decades that we are aspiring willing servitors to the Divine Consciousness, brought here by the Grace of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, that our lives are dedicated to attempting to live their yoga in the minute details and chaos of daily life, and that despite all our differences, there is a deeper brotherhood in Auroville as we are children of The Mother, chosen and accepted by Them. It is only because something real and true is actually happening here, that Auroville continues to exist and even be a beacon in many fields.



With regard to Mother, it is enlightening to read what Sri Aurobindo wrote in a letter to a disciple in 1934:

"The opposition between the Mother's consciousness and my consciousness was an invention of the old days (due mainly to X, Y and others of that time) and emerged in a time when the Mother was not fully recognised or accepted by some of those who were here at the beginning. Even after they had recognised her they persisted in this meaningless opposition and did great harm to them and others. The Mother's consciousness and mine are the same, the one Divine Consciousness in two, because that is necessary for the play. Nothing can be done without her knowledge and force, without her consciousness - if anybody really feels her consciousness, he should know that I am there behind it and if he feels me it is the same with hers. If a separation is made like that (I leave aside the turns which their minds so strongly put upon these things), how can the Truth establish itself - from the Truth there is no such separation."

Sri Aurobindo 13-11-1934

### Becoming a self-supporting township

In your address to us, you dismissed craft and other income generation units as merely carrying out commerce or trade, and that too not in a spirit of 'nishkama karma'. But how will Auroville then become self-sufficient? Auroville's economy is largely supported by her units. Here again Sir, I respectfully put forward what Sri Aurobindo wrote in a letter to a disciple in 1934: "I may say, however, that I do not regard business as something evil or tainted, any more than it is so regarded in ancient spiritual India... Even if I myself had had the command to do business as I had the command to do politics I would have done it without the least spiritual or moral compunction. All depends on the spirit in which a thing is done, the principles on which it is built and the use to which it is turned."

Since I happen to work in this sector, I can unambiguously state (on behalf of other unit holders and sectors of work also) that the work is my karma yoga and sadhana, the vehicle to offer myself to Mother and Auroville while sustainably creating products of beauty and perfection which serve as ambassadors of what Auroville stands for in matter. Units and profits belong to Auroville. For Auroville to truly succeed, both spiritually in terms of ideals and materially in the manifestation of the city, it needs to be given full freedom to grow, with a minimum of control from external bodies.

As you said, Auroville should be managed by the Aurovilians. This is my plea to you.

Thank you. Sincerely, ...



Letter #I7

"The Auroville Foundation approach to the development of the city prevents the golden opportunity to bring the community together in jointly engaging in Karma Yoga."

#### Dear Sir,

In yesterday's gathering at the Unity pavilion you didn't give a chance to respond to your serious concerns and invited written comments. I submit two to you though I would have preferred to express them to you in person.

1. The Auroville Foundation approach to the development of the city prevents the golden opportunity to bring the community together in jointly engaging in Karma Yoga. When in the beginning of Auroville it was suggested to find a project which could unite all those different people who had followed The Mother's invitation, it was pointed out that the work in building the Matrimandir was such a project. Those who wanted to have a fast result suggested that the building of the Matrimandir should be contracted out to ECC, but we were able to convince The Mother that Aurovilians were able to build the Matrimandir.

Similarly the building of the crown, an essential element of creating a city, could be the next project to bring us all together. The foundation for such a co-creation is that all the elements of fear, blackmail and existential uncertainty by withholding visas and maintenance are removed and the very body of Auroville, the land, is actively protected.

2. The difference between the Ashram and Auroville was explained as follows: To join the Ashram you have to individually take up Sadhana, while to join Auroville a simple Good Will is sufficient. It was also said that Auroville is a collective attempt. In order to prevent Auroville from becoming a religious institution, Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's pictures should not be displayed in public places. Serious allegations were made yesterday and we were not given a chance to reply.

Kindly give us an opportunity to do so.

Yours respectfully, ...



"Auroville is essentially a laboratory - an experiment - wherein enough representatives of the positions, approaches, attitudes and modes of action and thought that are current in the present human condition must be presented to the Consciousness which has come to take the lead of evolution."

Sir,

You have invited individual responses to your speech addressed to all residents of Auroville, to be sent to you in writing within a week time.

You are a very busy person, charged with heavy duties and hardly in a position to consecrate the time needed to read attentively those responses; yet one must have the faith that, if you have indeed extended this invitation, there must be on your side a readiness to reflect, along with us all, on the destiny of Auroville.

So, here I shall try to present, in a broad and summarized manner, those aspects and perspectives which, from the contents of your speech, seem to have been ignored or underestimated.

### The perspectives:

First, the simplest and most telling perspective, in this yoga of the earth as evolved by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, is that all of life is to be offered to the Truth-Consciousness; all of its parts and movements and activities and tendencies, so that each and every one is touched by the Force of Consciousness and included in the movement of change; it is thus necessarily an all-inclusive process which must be integrated in the progress of the collective awareness of Auroville. Secondly, all the difficulties and contradictions that beset human consciousness, need to be worked on by the same Consciousness-Force: and as the Mother stated, if India is the field where the difficulties of the world must be resolved in the true Light, so is Auroville a concentrate of these and a site of resolution for India itself.

Auroville is essentially a laboratory - an experiment - wherein enough representatives of the positions, approaches, attitudes and modes of action and thought that are current in the present human condition must be presented to the Consciousness which has come to take the lead of evolution.

Auroville is not a community of like-minded people gathered for some research in, for instance, some alternative way of life, although discoveries may be made on the way that will be useful for the whole; it is not either a selective "spiritual" endeavor with its own precepts and regulations.

Its raison d'être and purpose are more profound and crucial; it is meant to become an environment for the birth of a new being, an environment of comprehensive harmony in all fields of human existence, so that the new being may be welcomed upon earth.

#### Historical, social and environmental context:

Now there are a number of factors, historically and socially, that have determined much of the present reality of Auroville and they cannot be ignored; it is easy of course to criticize and even to regret or deplore some of the features presently apparent, but it is also imperative to remember the context at its different levels.

Here I cannot possibly go into all of these factors, but let me just offer a few examples in relation to your own observations or comments.

Commercial units: As a collective, without any funds or even legal or social support, we very early on had to create productive activities which would enable us to organize ourselves and these were actually one form or expression of service to the whole; I do believe that the same spirit has remained active and alive in most of those who are earning profits for collective use.

Labor: Again, very early on, we could not possibly attend to all the work that needed to be done by ourselves and soon found out that the local villagers were not only willing but eager to help us and thus improve their own situations, particularly the women who usually face the most hardship; one may refuse such help, and insist out of a sort of moral principle to do every work oneself and attend to every chore, as a field ot awareness, but it is not so easy to deny someone in need the opportunity to ameliorate their lot, particularly when one can be more obviously useful for a task requiring different or learned abilities.





As for environmental concerns, one must remember that such model of collective building as illustrated in the spectacular proposal of the "Galaxy" (which was preceded by the one called "Nebulae" more directly inspired by the Mother), soon became objectionable for environmental reasons, given the increasing over-exploitation of resources almost everywhere upon earth and the ensuing degradation and, therefore, more attention was directed towards the possible solutions that would respect and help regenerate the integrity of Nature's fabric; Auroville has always been meant to become eventually the city the earth needs, the city at the service of Truth, this was never disputed; but how to achieve this in new and truly harmonious ways was and remains to be explored by all of us together, integrating all what has been done and the basic structure of agreed upon.

There are a number of your views, as expressed by you on that day, that will find a resonance in many of us, but here I am trying to convey a sense of perspective, so that one remains aware of the crucial importance of the principle of "self-determination" as explained by Sri Aurobindo. (When, for instance, you deplore the predominance of tourism as regards the Matrimandir, you will certainly find an echo in many of us and yet, to be fair and objective and actually discern where help is needed, one must hear a description of the various constraints and pressures at play.)

Now, this is already too long a message and, although one would surely be ready to elaborate on any of the points above, the first condition is your own will to do so, to spare the time for it and eventually to welcome an open and truly collaborative sharing.

(It is perhaps in order that I introduce myself briefly: I came to the Mother in 1969 and She named me \*\*\*\* in 1970, on my twentieth birthday; I have lived continuously in Auroville since 1973.)

Thanking you for the openness you declared, with the hope that you will find in these words some meaningful elements useful to your task.





Letter #I9

"Roger called me the consciousness of Auroville because of my loyalty to Mother's guidelines(...) Mother's true Auroville is a group-soul striving to achieve the Auroville consciousness through the guidelines she set for us."

#### Dear Dr. Ravi,

Two references in your speech struck a chord. Devotion to Swami Vivekananda, concern for the betterment of society – and mentioning the triple transformation of the Integral Yoga, as a true Aurobindonian researcher. Hence this writing, open heart: my love story with Mother's Auroville.

I reached the Sri Aurobindo Ashram forty-nine years ago; great sadhaks were still alive, teaching me by example. Twelve years later I moved to Auroville where I live for the past thirty-seven years. I have published thirteen books: nine compiling from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and three on archival research, Auroville during the Mother's years; they are also distributed by SABDA. I have displayed some thirty photographic exhibitions, of which nine on contemporary architecture.

After working for one year on the roof of Matrimandir I joined the Laboratory of Evolution/Centre of Human Unity, instituted by Kireet Joshi and funded by GOI grants. Our scope was to restore Mother's guidelines for the town, Matrimandir and life in Auroville. My compilations, discussed and signed by all the members, were distributed along with the News. The Auroville Archive did not yet exist and I was handed over by Roger Anger copy of the most important documents he had; copy of the Suresh Hindocha archive (systems engineering and Ford Foundation); the entire Auroville Gazette archive; Ajit studies on a tubular metal structure for Matrimandir cum movable light-weight Teflon disks (as in the original fundraising brochure the Mother blessed), and other relevant material from Aurovilians.

Roger called me the consciousness of Auroville because of my loyalty to Mother's guidelines. He wished that I gave up all research and publication to concentrate exclusively on architectural exhibitions so that the residents would interact on a cultured base. It was a totally different, brave world; most of us lived in huts and the Galaxy was still feasible; there was not a single car, the summer holidays to the West did not exist and we lived in bliss with nothing, fraternally, the Ideal was all. I had surrendered 'paradise upon earth' (as Nolini Kanta Gupta called the Sri Aurobindo Ashram) to join the "minimum needs" sadhana: the core of Mother's Auroville, taught by the pioneers' example.



Day in and day out I learnt that the two issues are bound together: "the Avatar's model town" and the Mother's guidelines, without these her town cannot manifest. When Kireet Joshi visited my first Hi Tech exhibition he wrote: "In every form I see the Supermind". But architecture, if the collective soul is not ready, cannot evince the supramental society of gnostic beings you refer to. If that was all, the futuristic architecture I exhibit at the Town Hall would solve the riddle; but where is the sangha which it is the Avatar's mission to rescue and lead? Mother's true Auroville is a group-soul striving to achieve the Auroville consciousness through the guidelines she set for us; the journey starts with the admission form, now obliterated, which she had to sign, followed by all her other messages to be put into practice. Then, yes, we are ready to build the town, their town.

The manifestation in matter of Mahasaraswathi, perfection in work down to the least detail: in 1968 the Mother choose the systems engineering, which NASA had just adopted to reach the moon. A feasibility study taking one and half year was to precede the building of the Galaxy, in five years, via the systems engineering; a (temporary) Auroville Industrial Corporation was to raise the capital needed for acquiring all the land; to build underground the complete infrastructure according to the planned development was the second priority before anything else could be commenced. A green belt acting like a true buffer zone would encircle the town, all cars and polluting vehicles were to halt outside it; two outer parking appeared already in a 1967 map of the yin/yang model (the two macrostructures) preceding the Galaxy. All speedy, heavy traffic happened underground; at ground level mobile sidewalks were envisaged, collective and emergency transport, cycles and electric vehicles at no more than 15 kms by the hour. The Galaxy would have been the first town in the world banning the car. The city's material perfection was matched by social and ethical perfection. There were no servants or paid workers; the residents lived in minimal spaces and did all the work. The flats ranged from 30 sqm for singles to 75 sqm for a family of four plus the collective spaces. Everything was at walking distance.

"An adaptation of the communist system" the Mother told Satprem; in her town, self-sufficient in terms of economy and production, everything belonged to all for the wellbeing of all; the citizens were taken in charge according to minimum material needs for, the Mother writes, these drop spontaneously as the spiritual consciousness takes over. Needless to say, if Auroville supported them, the citizens had to surrender any alternative income/possession: the concept of 'salary' did not arise. The Galaxy is "the Avatar's model town" whose inhabitants are willing servitors of the divine consciousness. In the long march towards the ideal society that only the gnostic supramental consciousness will make true, Mother's town is a first signpost.

But, as Sri Aurobindo expounds in "The Human Cycle", this demands leaving behind the infrarational age with its cravings and greed.\* Then the subjective age too is to be overcome, fully entering the spiritual age. The gnostic supramental society is the ultimate journey. Not by chance, the admission form to be signed by the Mother commences with the text "To be a true Aurovilian", which you have quoted: psychic being to the forefront leading the journey.

### "Arise, awake and stop not until the goal is reached."

Apologies for having taken your precious time, but it is necessary to clear all misconceptions regarding Mother's town that, if faithful to the original vision, would have been the first futuristic town in the world entirely car-free, fifty years ahead of how new towns are now built or restructured. Never forget, the Galaxy and Mother's guidelines fit like hand in glove: one cannot be split from the other, as I have been relentlessly documenting since the Centre of Human Unity years, 1986-1990. And alas, I had no other way to show you how profoundly different we are from how we are portrayed, at times ferociously, which is part of what Sri Aurobindo, answering to Kishor Gandhi submitting him a text by C. G. Jung, calls 'the evil persona' – and the Mother, 'projection of the shadow'. Each of us has a shadow; this being the place of realisation, the Mother warns, the shadow turns even more devastating if not faced; then the collective shadow takes over and destruction ensues. I hope others too will open their heart, showing who we are, so that the journey together may commence anew, in mutual trust and delight. There is no other way but surrender to Mother's guidelines, offering the shadow too.

Bhakti, the parabhakti of Jnana are the safest way. At Their lotus feet.

...

PS: In "The New Being and the New Society", 2012, I list and expound Mother's guidelines for life in Auroville. In "The Process of Integral Yoga", 2018, from p. 451 onwards I have added an Appendix reproducing texts by Sri Aurobindo explaining the spiritual transformation – the second of Integral Yoga, my major theme of research, stretching up to Advaita – also in terms of kundalini.

\*In the present Auroville, besides those that are legal offenses, the infrarational age translates into owning villas/large flats/guesthouses; getting maintenances while yearly holidaying abroad, owning cars, running business within and without Auroville, getting extra revenues in multifarious ways etc.





## Letter #20

"I will urge you, please, develop your procedures in such a way that you can discover the Divine's will. Our search must be to create such a system, or such a lack of system, such a lack of machinery—because machinery always blunts the life force—such a procedure, which is not a procedure, so that there is delicacy in the development of relationship of people—there is tact, flexibility, plasticity, swiftness and there is a possibility of variation of the system according to the situation."

#### Your Excellency,

As we have been asked to write to you about the way forward for Auroville in a positive and constructive way, I would like to say a few words about the organization of Auroville.

We do know for a long time here that the way Auroville has been organized in the last few decades didn't correspond to the ideals we are seeking for and throughout all these years we did many researches and experiments about new ways like the studies about Prosperity, the Active Residents' Assembly, the Citizen's Assembly, DreamWeavers and many others.

But we are here in uncharted territories and everything needs to be discovered, invented, experimented and, as in any real adventure, mistakes and wanderings are bound to happen and when they come, they always come to teach us something. But truly, we are looking for Something Else. We do not know what, we do not know how and we don't want to pretend anything but we are all here seeking and aspiring to a New World, despite all our shortcomings.

Not a spiritual society, not a materialist society, as they are both opposite and exclusive to each others, but a **third position** which as been called Divine Materialism and which much reconcile these two opposite poles of existence into a more complete expression of life and evolution...

Today, as it stands at the centre of Auroville, Matrimandir can be seen as a good expression of our collective sadhana to manifest this Divine Materialism through Karma Yoga. But there is much more too... our schools, kitchens, forests, communities, farms... and all what has been done in the last 54 years with an urge to express perfection in matter.

This being said, it is clear that Mother had seen Auroville has being organized on her idea of Divine Anarchy, a society that is governed by the soul. The individual soul and the collective soul. This is the whole meaning of a Gnostic Society as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo in The Life Divine.

And this is why, as stated by the Mother in Her Dream, Auroville should be a place "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".

These statements are profound and not easy to understand. What is this Supreme Truth, for instance? But fortunately, we have the great chance to have the recording of one of Shri Kireet Joshi's talk about Self-Governance in Auroville, a talk in which he clearly explained the meaning of what the Mother envisaged as Divine Anarchy. I would like to invite you, Sir, to read a short extract of this talk as it might be of crucial importance for the future re-organization of Auroville if we truly wish to do in the spirit of the Charter and the Dream:

#### Shri Kireet Joshi's Talk - 19 July 2003 (extracts)

"When The Mother declared the Charter of Auroville in 1968, She declared it very clearly: "Auroville does not belong to anybody". This was the underlined idea for proclaiming true self governance of Auroville. When She declared "to live in Auroville one must be a willing servitor of the Divine consciousness", She defined what is self governance, true self governance of Auroville. It is soul governance, it is governance by the Divine. To declare that this Auroville has to be governed only by one authority, the authority of the truth, the authority of the Divine. And there is a true meaning of self governance.

"Now this proposition is completely new in the history of the world. Never was any group, any country, created with this declaration that this whole concept, this land, this experience is dedicated to the Divine and Divine alone. So, to my mind, the real conception of self governance is: Auroville governed by the Divine's will, in which the Divine is recognized as an authority and, therefore, no other authority at all... This is the starting point.

"Today we need urgently to prepare a procedure so that people from Auroville can take decisions freely even without the need of temporary and small intervention of the Governing Board in the future. Let such a situation not arise. And let us therefore create such procedures by which we can have arrival and fulfilment of the Divine's will.

"Now many people say we are not ready for Divine's will, we are still very ordinary. May answer is: this is a very superficial understanding of Auroville. I have seen hundreds of people in Auroville totally dedicated to the Divine's consciousness. I have seen myself and I can tell you truly... even this morning I had a meeting with young people and they all have given to me their personal statement, and I am very happy to say that all of them are very happy to be in Auroville. This is a very great thing. When the youth of a society is happy with the society, all is well. All of them have written to me they are very happy to be in Auroville. It's a very good finding, you might say. And this can come about only if the inner spirit is burning. Therefore if some people say, oh, we are not ready for it, I will say: no, please, you are not right. I will urge you, please, develop your procedures in such a way that you can discover the Divine's will. Our search must be to create such a system, or such a lack of system, such a lack of machinery—because machinery always blunts the life force—such a procedure, which is not a procedure, so that there is delicacy in the development of relationship of people—there is tact, flexibility, plasticity, swiftness and there is a possibility of variation of the system according to the situation. A machine cannot vary according to different circumstances but a machinery created by human beings dedicated to the Divine's will can create a system by which it can vary according to the needs, according the circumstances, according to the people—and this task is given to us as a matter of experiment.

"Sri Aurobindo wrote a very important essay in "The Ideal of Human Unity": Inadequacy of the State idea. Now, remember, we are not to make a State when we make the Residents Assembly and its functioning. The State is an inadequate idea and we should not create a state. Auroville should be a living body. And this is (the) experiment and if this is not attempted, I would say we are doing nothing. If you are going to create the kind of machinery which every parliament is doing everywhere in the world then we are not making any experiment, we are not moving forward according to what we have to create.

"I will read out to you the sentence that Sri Aurobindo has written, how the state normally acts and, therefore, by implication how we have to avoid it: "The State is bound to act crudely and in the mass; it is incapable of that free, harmonious and intelligently or instinctively varied action which is proper to organic growth. For the State is not an organism; it is a machinery, and it works like a machine, without tact, taste, delicacy or intuition. It tries to manufacture, but what humanity is here to do is to grow and create." Sri Aurobindo, the Ideal of Human Unity.

"I would like to say that all people should think about it, study, create such a procedure in Auroville that Divine's will is manifested. I would like to say very clearly, I do not like when it is said that the Residents' Assembly is the Authority. No. The Authority is only one in Auroville—the Divine. And do not say the Divine is some abstract idea, not at all. It was said in the Supreme Court by somebody that when The Mother declared that 'Auroville belongs to nobody in particular but to humanity as a whole', it was contended that this was only a platitude written by The Mother. It's not true. It's really meant.

"Therefore how shall we make our procedure in such a way that the Divine's will is manifested? But if you don't do it we are not working for Auroville at all. There is only one authority, The Mother has said in the very first line of The Dream, there must be a place somewhere where nobody can claim authority except the Truth. And this is where we are. We have to do it. And I'm happy to say all this because I know that in Auroville there are hundreds of people who are very-very keen that this Ideal is realised. Therefore we are here for that purpose and nothing else. We don't want anything short of it. How many people have come to me and told me this? Therefore if anybody says "Oh, this is not possible", I will categorically say: this is not true. If you can't do it, it means you haven't made the effort. Actually Mother has said: "Do not attempt, succeed". And I think we have to do it. And I think we can do it."

- Shri Kireet Joshi

Today, at this important crossroad of our life, I can only agree with what Shri Kireet Joshi told us in 2003 and I would like to urge you to consider this possibility as an opening to a higher perspective for the present crisis.

Sincerely yours, ...

"All life is yoga. Therefore, one cannot live without practising the supreme yoga. The opposition between spirituality and material life, the division between the two, has no meaning for me, for in truth life and the spirit are one and it is in and by physical work that the highest spirit must manifest." The Mother

"Yoga is skill in works." Bhagavad Gita





# Letter #2I

The Chairman's active support for the reinvigoration of the dream weaving process with the engagement of the Vastu Shilpa Foundation to produce the DDP as appeared to be settled would show goodwill. It would dispel any notions that it was a mere publicity stunt to placate Auroville residents.



I respectfully submit the following suggestions for the consideration of the Governing Board, its Chairman and the IAC. To meaningfully address the issues raised will, I believe, go a long way to fostering a sense of amity between the three Authorities of the Auroville Foundation and help re-establish the Auroville safe space in which the ideal of human unity can be nurtured.

- 1. Finalise ROR asap: In the ruling of 12 August 2022, HHJ Quddhose displayed a keen understanding of the need to finalise the updating of the RoR as soon as possible. He said that only then could the "democratic set up of the [Auroville] foundation..." be achieved. The Chairman's help in seeking the immediate conclusion of that exercise would generate goodwill and help dispel the belief that its protracted nature is a result of strategizing to ensure the silencing of the Residents' Assembly.
- 2. Allow Residents to choose their own WC now: Further to point one, please could the Chairman permit no further excuses for preventing the Residents' Assembly from choosing their own Working Committee. This would go a long way to bringing about the more collaborative spirit that he spoke of on 7 November.
- 3. Investigation and declaration to community about the processes of the Competent Authority: I was grateful to see the Chairman's focus on the importance of "due process" in his talk of 7 November (when talking about the Masterplan). I assume this translates into a more general value for the necessity of due process. An identification of the "competent authority" and a publicly shared independent review of their decision making would help deal with fears that the appointment of persons to key posts has been arbitrary and unfair and that there has been no recognisable due process regarding the actions they have taken.



- 4. Show the due process for the Secretary's selection of Working Group members: I was grateful to see the Chairman's focus on "due process" in his talk of 7 November. There is widespread concern that concealment of any meaningful due process in the appointment of Working Group members (by the Secretary) and people performing key functions (such as the management of Auroville emails, Auronet and Auroville Archives) is the complete antithesis to the principles of open self governance. Please could he use his influence to ensure the Secretary's transparency about these matters and that she fully supports his wish for due process. If there are, as some people say, a "silent majority" who support the Working Group members she has appointed, then her and the Chairman's active encouragement to all Aurovilians to vote would obviously facilitate a meaningful plebiscite. It would be due process at its best.
- 5. Investigate how the Secretary assigns privileges to herself and to people she knows: I was grateful to see the Chairman's focus on "due process" in his talk of 7 November. Please could he use his influence to make the Secretary disclose the due process she followed regarding the apparent award of housing to her driver and, if rumours be right, the allocation of several cars to service her needs? I am happy to stand corrected but I believe her actions are unprecedented in Auroville's history under the Auroville Foundation. They certainly have a direct bearing on the extent to which Auroville's ideals are being honoured by government officials that residents are meant to look up to and trust.
- 6. Support DreamWeaving and engage Vastu Shilpa Foundation: The Chairman's active support for the reinvigoration of the dream weaving process with the engagement of the Vastu Shilpa Foundation to produce the DDP as appeared to be settled would show goodwill. It would dispel any notions that it was a mere publicity stunt to placate Auroville residents.
- 7. Prevent business in Matrimandir Gardens: The Chairman's focus on 7 November on the sanctity and importance of the Matrimandir was welcome. Please could he order his Secretary to prevent people, including herself, from using the Matrimandir gardens for photo opportunities and the conduct of Foundation business and the holding of meetings. It is, as the Chairman knows, a place to find one's soul.

- 8. Consider the words of Governing Board members: On 7 November, the Chairman highlighted the Governing Board's, and not just his, wish for collaborative working with the residents. Please can the Chairman actively see if Shri G.G. shares his good will? His fitness to be a Governing Board member for Aurovilians whom he seems to hold in open contempt is a cause of much concern. Some of his well publicised social media comments are a matter of much anguish, i.e. he has referred to an "anti development squad in Auroville" the majority of whom he has designated as "hardcore criminals." He has no evidence for such reckless accusations. They only make one doubt whether he has the wisdom requisite to fulfil the important function the government has asked of him.
- 9. Stop the Secretary lecturing in schools: In these troubled times, there is a deep concern that we do everything we can to ensure that our children's souls be allowed to flourish without the taint of politics. The Chairman is aware how polarising the Secretary is. Her visits to Auroville schools (always with an entourage) to lecture children or with a view to taking classes are deemed by many parents as an unsubtle form of politics. I am not aware of any former Secretary doing what she is doing. Please make her stop. Her duties as an IAS officer should be more than enough to keep her busy.
- 10. Support road safety for our children's sakes: Putting aside the issue of how the Crown Road should be developed, I am sure the Chairman would be appalled at the idea of Auroville Roads being upturned (particularly as monsoon arrives) so that they are dangerous for our children to cycle to school and back. It does not help when the only response to parents concerns are notices saying people who photograph the debacle could be prosecuted. Please can he use his influence to ensure the safety of our roads pending their ultimate fate and hold accountable those who have let them get into the state they are in?
- 11. Establish what is happening to the paving slabs that are being removed: Returning to the issue of due process, this time concerning the Auroville Roads, please could the Chairman see how it is that paving from upturned roads that leaves our children vulnerable to injury appears to re-manifest near the homes of people deemed to be closely allied to the Secretary.

- 12. Consider commercial activity in Auroville: On 7 November, the Chairman expressed what can at the least be described as deep ambivalence about commercial activity in Auroville. Putting aside the ideal of self sustenance in Auroville (and the Mother's designation of Industrial Zone to facilitate that process), it would benefit the values of transparency and due process if he looked at the involvement of the Foundation Office in commercial decision making. A stark example is the AVFO's approval of the creation of a commercial cafeteria outside its doorstep and by allowing the conversion of a long standing area of carpark for that purpose. The move invites questions regarding the propriety of such a move.
- 13. Take question in open forums, apart from lecturing residents: On 7 November, I was heartened to hear that the Chairman has met hundreds of people. However, there is always a suspicion that there is a vetting by certain individuals in Auroville who are expert in sidling up to people of influence and that they steer the Chairman towards who he meets. It would foster much good will if the Chairman would periodically come to a meeting with the residents where, like on 7 November, he spoke to us but also took questions from the floor. Regardless of the goodwill, an invitation to send an email to him (of which we have no knowledge of what will happen once sent) is never going to replicate the power of direct physical interaction in a public forum where no one has the opportunity to misconstrue his words.



# Letter #22

Remove the groups appointed by the Foundation Office. Most of the people in them do not have the competence for their role and none are supported by a large portion of the community.

Dear Honorable Chairman of the Governing Board,

Thank you for giving us the opinion of the GB, it was interesting to hear this point of view, especially that the government wants Auroville to govern itself. With that in mind, there are just a few things that could to be done to correct this course:

- 1: Conduct audits (of everything, not just using Foundation Office appointed suggestions)
- 2: Remove the groups appointed by the Foundation Office (most of the people in them do not have the competence for their role and none are supported by a large portion of the community)

This would ensure that Auroville, and therefore the Government's image regarding Auroville, has its accountability and functionality restored and that Auroville can progress as it was envisioned.

In Sincerity, ...





## Letter #23

I want Prosperity in Auroville for everyone in all dimensions of our life.
I want synergy of human beings in on all levels of human life including unity with nature.

#### To Sri R.N. Ravi, Chairman of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation

I was deeply touched in my heart by your speech as chairman of governing board of Auroville Foundation at the last community meeting. It reminds me of my expectations when I first came to Auroville in 2009. At that moment I was very inspired by the charter and dream of Auroville and at the same time very disappointed by the level of its realisation. But I decided to be here. I stayed in Auroville because it is a good place for personal progress, and in a hope for collective yoga as well.

Since then, not much has happened on a collective level. I feel that Auroville and obviously Aurovilians are stuck in many dimensions of our life. Some people are stuck in their comfort zone and individual house/work/business/car/travelling/life. Some people are stuck in a discomfort zone, where they can't bring new, better things on a collective level because of the way our working groups, services are functioning or rather say dysfunctioning. Working groups are stuck in their work because of different mindsets, opinions, personal interests between members of groups and between groups on a bigger level. There were many events, workshops, plans, ideas, and subgroups, especially before the 50th Auroville birthday, but as I see, almost everything remains the same for years.

The biggest positive changes in Auroville in the last years are the works of our Resident Assembly Service, and much better organised community meetings, changes in Auroville policies for selection of working groups. I don't want to criticize Auroville's current situation but rather concentrate on solutions, on how we can move faster on a collective level.

So here are some ideas and directions which may speed up our progress and in which I would like to be part of a collective experiment. Most ideas are interdependent on many levels and will boost each other when implemented.

### • Spirituality:

Here is the need to reawaken aspiration for human unity. On an individual level, the possibility to achieve human unity is rooted in our inner experience, in our experience of ourselves as being with constant origin in the divine, as well as everything else in the Universe. And even on a deeper level to see everything as myself. On the collective level of Auroville society to change the paradigm of individuals from "I want prosperity in my life" to "I want Prosperity in Auroville for everyone in all dimensions of our life, where everyone will benefit most. I want synergy of human beings on all levels of human life including unity with nature."

#### • Economy:

Farms and urban farming - in the current situation of lands in the green belt and as a general approach I see that we can develop urban farming (small plots next to our houses, on the roofs, etc) to grow short term growing crops like spinach, and other agricultural species. The farm can provide us with food which requires more space and technological solutions to grow rice, dal, mushroom, chicken, and so on. This point will benefit energy and water saving, reducing transport load for our roads, reducing plastic usage, and so many other small interconnection (health from physical activities, emotional stability from connecting to nature, sharing successful experiences in growing plants to improve human connections, sharing excess of food from own gardens, working together with neighbors, etc.) For a multilevel building urban agriculture has to be incorporated in building design. Pre-cooking, and recyclable eco-packing is another important aspect of food production and distribution. We should have farms not for food only, but for building materials, fiber for cloth production, industrial and construction materials, like bamboo, plants to make eco - petrol, gas, etc.

Housing - reformulation from institution of "I am steward" to institution of Auroville staff quarters. Auroville needs to have a team of its own builders, architects, engineers etc. as service. Stop all commercial building projects and make them only Auroville based. No more private constructors, architects, supervisors. All housing new or old become staff quarters and provided for free, for people who work in Auroville. Permanently unless a person wants to make an exchange with someone. Free of cost even for newcomers.

Money - money has to be seen as a collective asset which can be used to develop our economy then, satisfy our material needs. Shifting to no money inside Auroville, money will be used only for exchange with the outside world for things which we cannot produce in Auroville yet. Aim to self sustainment, then independence on material level.

**Services and Units** - all have to become one non-commercial organisation to serve Auroville, for now I see that most of Auroville services can't really hold a name of Service as they are all oriented to gain profit.

**Food** - all eateries ideally need to provide food for free, introducing a diversity of healthy food. Shifting from cooking at home to cooking for the community. Diversity (multinational, non veg, veg, vegan, gluten free, sattvic, etc.)

**Water** - harvesting rainwater for domestic use and reusing it for gardening, etc. If enough energy, makes a community air water harvest facility. No usage of any toxic substances in home or in production zones. Ground water only for emergency cases.

**Energy** - We live in one of the sunniest places in the world, so, eco-energy for eco-transport and eco-production. Need to make an Auroville solar panels production plant, put solar panels on every surface not dedicated for something else. From here we can produce a lot of Auroville resources from glass, steel, plastic (recycling), and so on. Storing energy for night time and selling excess for outside.

**Individual consumption** - minimizing what we really need on a collective level, but still have individualism.

**Travelling** - What if Auroville has farms and gardens in the Himalayas or in Ooty? Where people who can't withstand summer heat can come to work and have vacation at the same time? Produce something that can't grow in local climate conditions like almonds, walnuts, carrots, etc...

#### Ecology:

Roads and transport - ecoroads needed for urban farming. Access for lorries, emergency transport if needed. Have a common parking space outside of the city if you need to go out. Public transport inside the city. Production of own transport, for Aurovillians. When we aim for 50 000 people we will need 2 level roads - underground metro trains for fast pacing and small radials to reach our destination. Transportation has to be free in Auroville.

**Recycling** - it is a very big topic and very important for our planet, for India, for Auroville. If organized well with production from recycled materials, production can also be very profitable. We may even recycle someone else's garbage (villages, Pondicherry?), education has a big role in this topic.

Energy - only clean energy including gas for cooking, etc...

### • Social aspects:

**Security** - Limited access to the city. Who, where, why. But still be friendly and open for people from outside. Video monitoring.

**Youth** - Child growth has to be based on Auroville values. Youth need to see their future in Auroville in terms of house, education and work. Auroville has to be a city of exciting progress, research, innovations, attracting the best young people from all the world.

**Education** - aims for a purpose and much more, on practical aspects, directly on working spaces.

Entry and exit policy - It is a sensitive topic for me. I asked people about it at meetings, and in working groups, but nothing was going on. Basic approach for me should be that it is an easy way to join Auroville for newcomers, no newcomer contribution, free schools, but big responsibility for staying in our society and easy way out if someone misuses Auroville for their own profit, other than Progress of humanity.

**Drugs and alcohol** - against spiritual progress for my point of view as a doctor. Here a lot of education has to be done.

#### Governing and organisation:

I feel that we have to know each other much better. Not that each of us have to know everyone in the community, but we need to have interconnections between all the people here. So, maybe some kind of multi-centered human society based on working place, place of living, and other personal interests. It is to be the main experiment in Auroville. After individual yoga. The more we advance in our own yoga, the closer we can come to the model of Divine Anarchy.

I may have much more to say, but it is more interesting to move on with any of what I write here, and bring it to reality.

On a collective level the only need is to find/create a group of people who have familiar vision of Auroville development and are ready to work. It can be a group of people which will start and make transformation of Auroville in different aspects of our life, topic by topic. Such a group of people need to become first an example for others, implement and experience everything on themselves first. I would call this group Auroville Repair Service. When it becomes successful I would call it - Service of Auroville.

Thank you for reading this.

PS: I need some starting point to continue to work with... Do you have any suggestions? With expectations for Auroville to become the city of the Future.



# Letter #24

Biweekly call to the Auroville community to gather ideas for the next two years, and for next five years, harvesting our collective wisdom and also passing it on from seniors to youngsters.

To Shri R.N. Ravi, Chairman of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation

I really don't know if the one week for constructive proposals is a true offer, but, anyway, I would like to propose the following as steps forward. These are just my ideas, not discussed with anyone, but hopefully resonating:

- 1. Five projects to which we all agree, and which develop Auroville. Some ideas are:
  - International conference on integral education free progress approach, sharing 50 years of experience
  - Training programs in organic farming seed funding from Auroville for educational materials, benefits to return to farmers (farm group, individual farms).
  - Film- Theater Artist in residence seed funding from Auroville, crowdfunding
  - Infrastructure improvements research in suitable building materials for roads, community mapping and signage, gates and fencing
  - Water conservation in the larger bioregion AVAG and water conservation experts from AV
- 2. Biweekly call to AV community to gather ideas for the next two years, and for next five years, harvesting our collective wisdom and also passing it on from seniors to youngsters.
- 3. Fundraising services for each sector: Green projects, Education, Organisation and Community, Building and infrastructure, Art& Culture, Craft & Technology.
- 4. Forming a Land protection group under the WorkingCom with those active in this sector past years, and inviting Youngsters to join e.g. YouthLink members, etc.

Voila, ...





## Letter #25

Sri Aurobindo wrote,
"The Mother is not a disciple of Sri Aurobindo.
She has had the same realisation and experience as myself. ...
She has helped and is helping to give a concrete form to my yoga.
This would not have been possible without her co-operation."

To: The Chairman of Auroville Foundation, Honourable Governor of Tamil Nadu, Shri R. N. Ravi

Dear Sir, Namaste!

I am grateful to you for inviting me to offer my suggestions. I would venture to give my humble suggestions from a perspective of someone who has been a long-term student of Sri Aurobindo. I was an inmate of Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Puducherry from 1987 to 2007, an Aurovilian since then and have conducted over two thousand workshops and retreats introducing the Integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo in Auroville as well as around the world. I have authored a well-received book on the subject. Naturally, my suggestions are in the light of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's teachings as I understand them.

The recent take-over of Auroville by the Governing Board has caused a lot of pain, conflict and destruction which seems to grow every day and I have wondered if any misinterpretation of the teaching of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo has played a part in it. My suggestions are based on contemplation on this subject.

The first suggestion I would make is, to encourage everyone to study Sri Aurobindo's teaching but also the Mother's methods of applying his teaching to life. Studying Sri Aurobindo we understand the importance of the Mother in the Integral yoga. The Mother is the pivot around which all the practices of Integral yoga move.

Sri Aurobindo wrote, "The Mother is not a disciple of Sri Aurobindo. She has had the same realisation and experience as myself. ... She has helped and is helping to give a concrete form to my yoga. This would not have been possible without her cooperation."[1]

The Mother saw her role this way, "The task of giving a concrete form to Sri Aurobindo's vision was entrusted to the Mother. The creation of a new world, a new humanity, a new society expressing and embodying the new consciousness is the work she has undertaken. By the very nature of things, it is a collective ideal that calls for a collective effort so that it may be realised in the terms of an integral human perfection.

The Ashram founded and built by the Mother was the first step towards the accomplishment of this goal. The project of Auroville is the next step, more exterior, which seeks to widen the base of this attempt to establish harmony between soul and body, spirit and nature, heaven and earth, in the collective life of mankind."[2]

As the Mother created fields to practice Sri Aurobindo's yoga, she also made a clear distinction that Auroville is not an Ashram and is not meant to be one. In the inner works it receives inspiration from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram but in the collective manifestation Auroville inspires Ashram as well as many other spiritual institutes. The guidance Sri Aurobindo and the Mother gave for Sadhana in the Ashram, Auroville and normal life are distinct for each and cannot be applied indiscriminately to each other. The play of human nature is very different in each environment and with good reasons. From the Mother's message quoted above I would like to draw your kind attention to the text marked in bold. There are distinct principles of Auroville to which harmony, inclusivity and patience are core elements and there are several messages of the Mother where she shows the method by which her vision is to be manifested. The practice of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo gets a unique emphasis here when Auroville "seeks to widen the base of this attempt". I hope this is well understood and respected.

My second suggestion would be to encourage everyone to recognize the Mother's vision of Auroville primarily in its psychological guidelines. Unfortunately, the recent emphasis of the Governing Board speaks of the Mother's vision as if she spoke of Auroville only as a material construction site.

The Mother wished Auroville to be, 'the cradle of the Superman'[3]. In a later talk she said, 'the creation of a city like Auroville has more weight in the earth's history than all the groups of the world... Once I asked Sri Aurobindo... and he answered me this: "It [Auroville] is the best chance men have to avoid a general conflict." There.'[4]

The practical reality of Auroville today is its numerous achievements along its path including its international fame for the Matrimandir as well as its forestation. But the passage of Auroville's progress is also marked by its following the inner path charted by the Mother's guidance and to have been able to walk on this may be Auroville's areatest achievement by far.

From the same talk we have her words of wisdom, our guidance on the path, on how to understand and approach Auroville.

'At bottom it is "The art of building unity out of complexity." Without uniformity, you understand: unity through harmony in complexity, with each thing in its place.... It's very difficult.

...

And as the formation descends in order to manifest, all oppositions arise, contradictions arise, complications arise, and within you clearly see that they don't understand. So I spend my time telling them, "Don't try to organize, don't try, you are going to fossilize the whole thing before it's begun."

For my part, I wanted it to grow like that, spontaneously, with the full play of the unexpected. But then, you are confronted with all the rules and regulations...' [5]

This shows the method we need to adopt towards developing Auroville, "unity through harmony in complexity" and allowing "the full play of the unexpected".

In this light, the recent drive to forcefully and centrally organise Auroville by the Governing Board's take-over is destructive and not as per the Mother's guidance and needs to be withdrawn. Please help Auroville not 'fossilize'. Please provide a harmonious space to Auroville for its growth so we can continue seeing the miracles unfolding moving forward.

Auroville is the material as well as psychological vision of the Mother, the practice of Integral yoga being the latter. If ever it comes to choose between what to do vs. how to do, her guidance is very clear and a right emphasis has to be given to what she has said, "It is not what you do but the spirit in which you are doing it that makes Karmayoga."[6]

Auroville's attempt to follow the Mother's wisdom has borne witness to its enduring years of struggles, sacrifices and dedicated service by thousands of volunteers every year for well over five decades. It has also steered Auroville through its human shortcomings apart from the complications the world presents to anyone who tries to transcend one's limitations and excel. Auroville has a long way to go and has its several difficulties to struggle through and solve but it has done well so far and shown all the promise to continue exceeding itself and moving forward.

Let this fact be emphasized as we aspire to work for the manifestation of the Mother's vision.

My third suggestion is, to encourage everyone to accept all Aurovilians holistically. Regardless of whatever information and personal experience one has of them it is necessary to always keep in mind the role they play in the larger scheme of things. The Mother's words, spoken for the Ashram youth has been applicable to all Ashram inmates and Aurovilians as well, "from the occult point of view it is a selection. There are here... one can say without being mistaken that most of the young people who are here have come because they have been promised that they will be here at the time of the Realisation. They do not remember this."[7]

All have come as Sadhaks of a higher life and carry appropriate amount of devotion, knowledge and service in them which they are here to offer to the divine consciousness in service and grow into. Very much like in the general practice of Sri Aurobindo's yoga where the first step is to find the divine being within oneself, the Mother's service too begins by finding a positive approach to the life around oneself. The Sadhak takes the attitude of being in the protection of the Mother; life around me is arranged by the Mother to help me with Sadhana, all are the Mother's children, all are here for the same purpose, the key to the higher life is for each one to find within oneself etc. By the very act of offering all to the Mother gradually one's surrounding also becomes more conducive to Sadhana.

A sorry thing to say but the take-over of Auroville is very much based on seeing Aurovilians in a negative light; fabricated narratives and disinformation have been circulated about this on one hand and on the other all the contributions and sacrifices of Aurovilians are demeaned or overlooked as their shortcomings are exaggerated. On top of that arrogant and insensitive remarks have been made on the spiritual quality of Aurovilians.

The practice of Integral Yoga shows that it is unnecessary and unhelpful to harshly judge others and base one's actions on that. We cannot force others and grow our favourite kind of spirituality in them and it doesn't make sense to focus on what we cannot change. Let the Divine be the judge, we are not here to judge anyone's inner movements. Besides, when we truly focus on service, the technicality of works can always be discussed without referring to others' spiritual status. Whenever our mind starts judging others, in all humility, we need to give ourselves more sincerely to the Mother's service.

In the last few months various false and divisive narratives have been made, Indians vs. Foreigners, Tamils vs. the rest, old vs. new etc. with the sole purpose of pulling the residents towards the hard stand of GB. But Auroville has no need of divisive politics, it has always appreciated variety as the sap of life and learned to live with such apparent differences. From the current setup of working groups which consists of almost all Indian citizens and hardly any foreigner it appears as if the current GB is afraid of variety in Auroville but then it is thinking against the will of the Mother as well as the inclusive spirituality of India.

Sri Aurobindo's letter on the nature of the Ashram collective is also applicable to Auroville, 'It is necessary or rather inevitable that in an Asram which is a "laboratory" ... for a spiritual and supramental Yoga, humanity should be variously represented. For the problem of transformation has to deal with all sorts of elements favourable and unfavourable. The same man indeed carries in him a mixture of these two things. If only sattwic and cultured men came for the Yoga, men without very much of the vital difficulty in them, then because the difficulty of the vital element in terrestrial nature has not been faced and overcome, it might well be that the endeavour would fail. ... Those in the Asram come from all quarters and are of all kinds; it cannot be otherwise.'[8]

Such being the nature of our community, it is well understood by the Sadhaks of Integral Yoga that problems are bound to come, especially with people, and whenever we encounter a problem, we have to rise higher to solve them and not fall lower. To escape from this exercise and find the easy solution and then justify oneself has brought the current state of take-over by a few. When there is a conflict with others it only means that one has to grow higher in consciousness oneself to contribute to an all-inclusive solution, not wait for the others to grow higher nor think of controlling or pushing others away. The emphasis of Integral Yoga is to work out a change within oneself first, asking others to change their ways because one cannot change oneself is not the right method and will only show an unwillingness and a shortcoming of achieving depth in oneself.

It has been said that the greater the discord, higher must one rise. It is not for us to shock others and call our violent actions Kali's force (as was often declared on Auronet by the handful but very noisy supporters of the take-over). The Mother says it very clearly, "For each problem there is a solution that can give satisfaction to everybody; but for finding this ideal solution each one must want it instead of meeting the others with the will to enforce one's own preference.

Enlarge your consciousness and aspire for the satisfaction of all."[9]

By default, to find a shortcut for not doing the inner work is very tempting. There is an urge in the human nature to control the surrounding. But one has to learn to see this as remote glimpse and a perversion of the original experience of the Self as the Lord of Nature in oneself. The Sadhak of Integral Yoga offers oneself to the Divine and learns to flow with the Divine Will instead of trying outwardly to control things in one's surrounding. It may be the idealist who wants to lead life towards greater life but here there is a failure to see that the deeper life can be inwardly offered but not forced by external control. This is so much relevant to the life of Auroville. Aurovilians have a flourishing inner life and they look for a deeper meaning in things. To accept them as they are may be the best method to connect with them inwardly and start working together.

Your excellency, thank you very much for your openness. I end with offering my sincere wishes and love to you and pray that you continue serving Mother India as well as Auroville for a long time.

Gratefully...

#### References:

- [1] CWSA Vol. 32, The Mother: with Letters, P: 36
- [2] CWM Vol.13, P: 204
- [3] CWM Vol.13, P: 191
- [4] Mother's Agenda Vol. 08, October 25, 1967
- [5] Mother's Agenda Vol. 08, October 25, 1967
- [6] CWM Vol.13, P: 220
- [7] CWM Vol. 06, P: 295-96
- [8] CWSA Vol.35, Letters on Himself and the Ashram, P: 600-01
- [9] CWM Vol.13, P: 213





## Letter #26

The Auroville brand is of great value to India. If offers an instructive example of Western countries coming to India for a better life (not the reverse) and presents the philosophies of Sri Aurobindo in a tangible form. It gives India a place at the table in discussions of eco-focussed development and serves as yet another example of something wonderful which could only ever exist in India.

Dear Sir,

I listened with interest to your recent speech in Auroville and I am now responding to your request that those interested send in their thoughts on the situation now faced by Auroville, Aurovilians and the governments of Tamil Nadu and India itself in respect to Auroville.

There were several points in your presentation where I was struck by examples you provided and how different my experience was and has been while growing up in Auroville. I am not rejecting the basis of your words or the anecdotes you provided but I would like to offer a counterpoint to some of what you shared.

You mentioned an Aurovilian who claimed to be 'helping the farmers'. You questioned the basis on which he might make such a claim.

In my experience, my father, who has lived in Auroville since 1971, has done much of which you suggest would qualify as 'help'.

He has grown grains in demonstration fields, near to local farmer's plots, focussing on traditional but largely neglected crops such as ragi and comboo. These were not profit seeking enterprises but rather done in the hope that seeing how well these crops grow, that other farmers might try these crops too. To assist in this he developed and ran numerous events and activities involving both Aurovilians and local villagers centred around these crops. On harvests days he encouraged as many Aurovilians as possible, along with interested locals, to take part and benefit from both the grain and the experience. I must admit, as a child I found it a chore, it is hard work.

He has designed and promoted low tech solutions for locals.

These include numerous demonstrations of the Sterling Engine which requires only firewood to run an engine that can generate power or pump water. As a by-product it produces hot water.

Also, he's designed and demonstrated a small, local materials housing solution using keet, coconut rope and pakamarum (all the components used in traditional local roof building). He is a trained architect.

He maintains a daily yogic practice and the words of Sri Aurobindo are evident in his overall approach to Auroville and his role there.

As child I attended a school he ran. Looking now with adult eyes and comparing my experiences to the guidance offered by Sri Aurobindo, I can see how elegantly his approach matches the teachings of Sri Aurobindo on education. My wife and I have both sought to educate our own children on similar principles.

My father's, and my own, relationship with the people from surrounding villages is characterised by familial, long-term relationships. Manjini has worked with him for 45 years and a positive, respectful relationship has seen many such long term employees and numerous weddings attended. My childhood hero was the bullock cart driver who to me seemed the ideal image of an adult. A man of great character whom I admired deeply. According to my sister, who lives in Auroville, after she recently visited him at his home, long since retired, Kadaval remains so.

Meanwhile, my father has served as representative of both Auroville and the Indian Government's enlightened approach. He has appeared in Netflix documentaries, national US newspaper articles, best-selling auto-biographical books, and numerous other foreign media news reports and documentaries from Germany to Korea.

He has maintained a low tech lifestyle and relies on solar power exclusively, windmill-pumped water (wherever possible) and has trial grown numerous fruit and vegetable varieties.

He maintains a large forest and has always allowed passive firewood collection, acerola harvesting and access throughways.

He does not set himself above local village people or have them wait on him to provide a western lifestyle. Rather, he wears a lungi, a tundu and eats ragi. Security is maintained through positive relationships, not dogs and fences.

He has maintained a welcoming approach and hosts a lunch every Sunday where all are welcome. Thousands would have done so over the years. People who have lived with him have gone on to develop their own endeavours with lasting impact. The Auroville botanical garden is one such example.

Essentially, he walks the talk, and I take issue with your characterisation of 'all' Aurovilians being represented by the one person who you say is erroneously claiming to 'help' local farmers.

If you are to rely on negative anecdotal evidence then it is only fair that you include positive examples as outlined above.

I was struck by how you said you grew up poor. In as much as one can compare poverty in New Zealand and India, my own early childhood was characterised by being poor. Part of the reason for this was that for the most part, my mother raised my brother and I, alone, in New Zealand and Australia. The cause? My father has, as described, dedicated his life to Auroville. So, I feel that even I have made sacrifices for the good of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's vision. When I lived in India both may brother and I were raised as much by the community as any one person.

In your talk you brought up the idea of brand in the context of there not needing to be a focus on brand.

Given that brand building, brand development and brand equity are my own area of professional expertise, I know from experience that you would not have mentioned it if it were not of deep significance to matter at hand.

The Auroville brand is of great value to India. If offers an instructive example of Western countries coming to India for a better life (not the reverse) and presents the philosophies of Sri Aurobindo in a tangible form. It gives India a place at the table in discussions of eco-focussed development and serves as yet another example of something wonderful which could only ever exist in India.

India, however, is good at a great many things, but developing and maintaining brands which appeal to western aesthetics has not always been one of them.

The attitude and approach of the those who claim the authority to represent the governing board and those who claim to represent its aims will, if left unchecked, ruin that which is valuable to India in terms of brand equity. There are thousands of ashrams in India, and Auroville will eventually be regarded as yet another one if the same attitude is maintained.

Communities are built on shared beliefs and passions. Shared interests. To highlight and share these interests, community building events such as plays, festivals and themed gatherings, require the efforts of committed, creative people. Without good will and respect, creative people cannot provide value. My father has written over 40 plays, performed by young people in Auroville, covering whichever issue was prevalent at the time. Most recent was water. Past efforts have included waste and recycling, climate change and positive community engagement.

Given the current approach of those who are empowered by the governing board and the secretary, there is no place for creativity or mutual respect. They maintain their actions are justified by crimes and bad actions of people they erroneously call 'Aurovillagers', but fail to understand that you cannot build by only destroying, you cannot teach through disrespect and you cannot lead without providing a positive example to follow.

There appears to be little regard for what has come before, and it makes me sad as my experience of my own father's efforts, and the mantle of which, now adopted by my brother and sister, is one of selfless dedication to an ideal that has inspired the world. For those who claim to represent you to trash all before them and to aggressively demand full control, it will lead them not to a vibrant exemplar of Sri Aurobindo's vision but a community bereft of youthful energy and of little interest to the rest of the world.

#### Some recommendations:

You should implement a code of conduct for all who represent the governing board or claim to support it.

You need your people to lead by example, not lecture from a holier-than-thou pulpit. Division is being maintained and amplified. You need to control that which you can. Claims of divine guidance and love are made a mockery with low grade behaviour.

Yours sincerely,





Letter #27

The essence of the Auroville experiment is not to be found in the "what" is being developed but in the "how" it is being done.

Shri RN Ravi, Honourable Governor of Tamil Nadu Chairman, Governing Board, Auroville Foundation

Your Excellency,

After addressing Aurovilians on 07.11.22 you have requested feedback to be sent to you. I have this brief observation to share with you for your consideration.

The objective of the Auroville Foundation Act 1988 was to set up an autonomous body – the Auroville Foundation – to serve as a legally constituted interface for the Auroville project with the Government of India, to provide a legal body to hold the land and assets of Auroville, which would assure proper accountability and management.

It was never intended that the Secretary of Auroville Foundation would exercise executive powers and functions – the proof of this is that from 1988 until recently successive Secretaries would leave executive powers and functions with units and working groups created by the Residents Assembly. I speak from first hand experience of having worked with every Secretary so far, and prior to that with the Administrator and particularly the Deputy Administrator appointed under the earlier Auroville (Emergency Provisions) Act 1980, who specifically advised us along these lines.

I would respectfully suggest that there has been a phenomenon of "mission creep" in the functioning of the Foundation Office and the Secretary, in assuming and trying to exercise executive powers and functions – and that it is perfectly understandable how this could have happened, e.g. in good faith, out of a desire to accelerate the development of the Auroville project and achieve demonstrable progress.

However the essence of the Auroville experiment is not to be found in the "what" is being developed but in the "how" it is being done. I use this secular vocabulary because I am an empirical, down to earth, consciousness in matter, karma yoga type of person, not given to spiritual discourse. The "how" is to find and embody an entirely new way of functioning – it is not to achieve progress by a top-down hierarchical authority through the agency of its appointees. That would not be a new experiment, but a repetition of existing organisational patterns.

Therefore I request that the Auroville Foundation establishment is now scaled down to a minimum, and full executive powers restored unequivocally to the Residents Assembly, and working groups and units set up by it.

In previous years there was a mutual understanding between the Residents Assembly, the Governing Board and the International Advisory Council, and advice was freely given and taken between these three bodies – on the understanding that a mutuality and consensus needed to be maintained, that no one body could act in disregard of the advice of either of the others. That mutual understanding now needs to be revisited and refreshed – this would include a proper understanding of the role to be played by the Auroville Foundation office and Secretary.

I add that I fully identify with the letters sent to you by other writers more eloquent than myself, specifically those sent by ..... [Letter numbers 9, 12, 14, 15].





## Transcript of the Chairman's speech

Transcript of the original address to the residents of Auroville by

Mr. R.N. Ravi, Chairman of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation.

## 7th November 2022, at the Auroville Unity Pavilion

Note: Small words ("of", "it", "them" etc.) have been added in places to restore flow to a sentence otherwise spoken as a train of thought, and for grammar.

My dear friends from Auroville,

At the very outset I express my sincere sense of gratitude to all of you for responding to our request for the meeting today afternoon. You know, when this Governing Board was constituted about a year back, we had come and met you. At the time we didn't have such a large presence. And so it is a matter of delight that we have a larger presence today.

Having expressed my gratitude and thanks to you for coming over, I would like to state the objective of this meeting, the purpose why we are meeting this afternoon. The Governing Board has requested this meeting and the meeting is being held. This is essentially - you all know it at some level, but I would like to express on behalf of the Governing Board, the Governing body - that we have some serious concerns about the affairs at Auroville, and we are here to share our concerns with you and then leave you with these thoughts.

And I'd certainly like to have the benefit of your suggestions, your views, because being Aurovilian, you are the one who's supposed to be or should be the one who may be the most interested and primary stakeholder in the development and management of Auroville.

When this new Governing Body was constituted, we got on the job earnestly to carry out the responsibilities entrusted to us. And of our responsibilities, one was of course, to promote the ideals of Auroville. We have to help the people, Aurovilians and others, on how to promote it.

But one tangible part of the responsibility was to implement the Master Plan as duly framed by the Governing Body in consultation with the Residents' Assembly and duly notified by the government in 2010 through Gazette notification.

This process, in fact, when it started, unfortunately, there were developments which were unpleasant in nature. There was boisterous opposition to it.

Now opposition was of the nature of 'this is not the way to do it', that the Master Plan is not finalised as yet, that it is not consistent with the ideals of Auroville because it is against the environment... on various lines, opposition was expressed.

Of course, the matter then started going to the media, national and international, the projection was made that Auroville was in distress, Auroville was under siege, Auroville was being destroyed by totalitarian control. The matter also went to court, to litigation.

In fact, the way the whole thing erupted, it gave us a shock. And especially to me as an individual, because I have been a student of Sri Aurobindo right from my college days. I have grown in my personal life following the two great icons, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo.

So, I was shocked, what could be there, then we started going into the background - why.

Now, we also started meeting Aurovilians. And in the last one year, several hundred Aurovilians have met me at least, individually and in groups of two, four, fourteen. They have shared their concerns - some saying that this is not the way to do it, this should not be done like this, some saying that, no, we must not delay it, we must do it. So both kinds of views and opinions have been coming.

Then we started wondering - Why is it so? This small family is hardly 3000 people with so many differences.

When the governing body in the late 90s and early years of the first decade of the present millennium, they drafted the Master Plan. And they drafted in consultation with the Residents' Assembly, because these are all matters of records. And it took almost 10 years or so.

When the government notified the Master Plan, for some reason, it took time and it was not implemented. When the new Governing Body came, we thought we should go ahead and do it. And then the opposition started coming: don't do it. Some people for, some against.

Those who are against it say this is not the way, it should be tweaked, there should be some readjustment. There were ideas coming like that. Some people say that look, the fact that it has not happened shows that this is not the way, we must or will move forward.

A question haunted us as to why this small family is not able to collectively advise us on how to go about this.

Then we went into the background.

We all know that this unique experiment here began in the year 1968. And this experiment was essentially to translate the vision of Sri Aurobindo of creating a community of gnostic beings which Mother defined in terms of the Charter.

And it began.

In 1980, the government of India had to come up with the Emergency Provision Act 1980. And the very preamble of that Act says that the management of Auroville entered into such serious difficulties and differences that the government had to take over the management, and the government took over the management of Auroville.

At the time, for the next eight years till the Foundation Act came, the government managed Auroville with the advice of the International Advisory Council. There was no Residents' Assembly at the time, residents were associated but there was no formal body as Residents' Assembly. So, till 1998 [sic], affairs went on like that.

And then came the Act; the government thought the government should not be in it. So, they created a body corporate called Auroville Foundation. This Auroville Foundation created three bodies: International Advisory Council, Governing Board, and Residents' Assembly, to run the affairs of Auroville, to manage its affairs.

And we started the journey. And as a part of that journey, the physical manifestation of Auroville; Auroville has two parts: a spiritual evolution and physical manifestation; so to fulfil the physical manifestation of Auroville, the Master Plan was created. The Master Plan was drafted by the Governing Board in consultation with the Residents' Assembly, which finally the government of India approved and issued through Gazette Notification.

Now, when they started implementation, the problem again came. Questions were raised that it should be revisited. That is one part of it as far as the physical manifestation of Auroville is concerned, how the Master Plan has become a matter of debate.

There are differences, but when we started, I for one started looking into trying to understand, because as I told you, being a student of Sri Aurobindo, there was a deep anguish within me and I wanted to understand why is that? Where are we, how are things going on? We tried to understand and study Auroville, how it is functioning, how the individuals are functioning, how the institutions are functioning, how this collective is evolving.

In the process, I myself have gone through several areas, I have travelled to farms, I have travelled to the institutions where they are doing good things, manufacturing things. I have travelled to centres where they are producing things for the sake of Auroville.

A question that is lingering and very, very crucial: As far as the physical manifestation of Auroville is concerned, this is an area of concern in which there is a difference of opinion. But the core thing is the ideals of Auroville. We are not talking about the ideals of Auroville.

We know that we are all here as students of Sri Aurobindo. We have all been reading him and trying to understand and trying to evolve. The first thing that Mother's Charter makes very clear, that to be in Auroville, one must be a willing servitor of the divine consciousness.

And in plain and simple language, it means one has to be a bhakt, with total surrender to the Divine Consciousness, one must be a bhakta, a devotee, or a sadhak, who comes over here with a desire for further evolution to the higher level of consciousness. And that it's a place of constant education and progress.

Sri Aurobindo has also said - which we are all aware, and even Mother said, I myself have gone through the collective works of Sri Aurobindo, Life Divine and all. All of you, I'm sure many of you have gone through it, - that Auroville is different from other places because it is the place where collectively, through assisted evolution, one reaches the higher level. In normal course, it may take several lives to evolve. But by assisted living, Sri Aurobindo makes it clear it is possible it may be possible even to evolve in one lifetime. Sri Aurobindo lays down a process of integral yoga which is a combination of gyaana, bhakti and karma.

It is not one.

First and foremost, a stipulation is through the Charter, that a person coming to Auroville has to be a bhakta, a devotee, a willing servitor of the divine consciousness and then integrate the two - karma and gyaana, knowledge - evolving it.

Now, it pains me, when I moved around, the sadhana element of it, we find it is GROSSLY deficient, grossly deficient. You may find my statement very provocative, but I want to provoke because after all, we are here not for the brand Auroville but for the soul of Auroville. If the soul is not there, brand does not matter.

People often say, we have built the Matrimandir - wonderful. But Matrimandir, which is the soul of Auroville, should be the place where Aurovilians should be regularly going and meditating. It has become a place of tourist attraction, tourists come and visit and go.

Sadhaks I have met individually, there are very good people who actually, when I met them, tears started flowing, they just didn't utter a word. I could feel a sense of pain and anguish among them - where are we? Where are we going? They were not even able to speak.

Someone very elderly said - Mr. Chairman, we have lost the way.

Now, the question is, when I look here, I find a lot of commercial activities going on. Somebody is doing good business.

Is it a place of commerce? No, certainly not. Because karma is nishkaama karma, where it is not self desire. I am doing the work but the work is not for my profit and benefit, it is for the benefit of the community's desire, that is nishkaama karma.

I find it very strange. And I find it very strange that in a small family of 3000, we are not able to produce enough food for ourselves. This is something which is intriguing.

I've seen people here doing distribution business. Things are being brought from different agencies in Calcutta, Bombay, and so many places, some are doing for distribution of things which are coming from Israel and some other foreign countries - we are doing trading, we are doing business, we are doing commerce.

I'm not saying everyone - some of us are doing that. But is it consistent with the ideals of Auroville? I think we need to do some serious thinking on it.

As far as the physical manifestation of the Township is concerned - that is one part of it. But we are more concerned about the ideals of it.

Everybody comes and explains to me, 'we are for human unity.' And when I ask what is human unity, what do you understand? Someone says, well, we have got 500-600 people collectively, we have met and had lunch together.

Now human unity as we all know that Rishi Aurobindo said, is when I am standing here, a few 100 people are sitting here, and I see myself in each one of you as a divine manifestation of myself in all of you. When I'm able to see myself in all of you and you will start seeing yourself in me - that is unity.

Because we all know under what circumstances Rishi Aurobindo evolved this theory, his lifetime was a time when humanity was at its worst crisis.

The world has seen two devastating World Wars, the unleashing of atomic weapons, millions of people were killed. And the question that bothered him was - what is the fate of humanity? Is it self-destruction?

And then, through the long process of meditation and study, he realised that no, we are one stop short of evolution, we have to evolve to that level where we all see the divine which is present in all of us in the form of consciousness.

The consciousness evolves by disciplining the physical part of the being, and then I start seeing myself in all of you, and then differences will dissolve, then humanity will be able to live in peace. And individually while some people were doing it for thousands of years in this country, he wanted as an experiment that let it be a collective exercise where the collective community of gnostic beings.

I've met, as I told you, several hundred people. And again, I'm surprised that many people I met are not even aware of all of us in this small village of a community. Everyone is living, by and large, I won't say everyone but by and large, people are living in silos.

That is a Governing Board concern, and it should be your concern as well, that Auroville is not like any other place where we are free to do whatever we wish, here the freedom is the freedom of a sadhak. The basic essential condition is that I am a sadhak. So, I have a right to be here, and I have the freedom to pursue it following the broad compass, the directions which are illustrated by Sri Aurobindo through triple transformation and Sapta Chatushtaya, how to do the sadhana.

How we are going to do this, how to do this, those things have to be evolved. We are doing some excellent work, I must say this, somewhere I've seen very good work being done.

But these are good works in the material domain.

Where is that sadhana?

Who is coming?

You know, in 1988, when the Foundation came, even before in fact, in1980 itself, the government was treating it, because Auroville is also the identity of India, because this is India's spiritual identity, which says Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the world is a family, and that is based on the fact that everyone is a manifestation of the same divine.

So for the growth of Auroville, the Government of India gave a number of special relaxations - like Visa. Anyone who seeks to come to India has to go through a scrutiny. Everyone doesn't get it; after all, with foreign countries, there is a security dimension. But the moment Auroville recommends, there is a trust that this recommendation is conveyed to our embassy and mission, and the visa is taken for granted.

Relaxation also is that a visa is for a longer term, for five years, normally we give it for a short term six months or a year to any tourist coming visiting, or one who is coming for some kind of well approved functions. We give it for longer periods.

Relaxation was also given to be exempted from taxation, the remittances which are coming up free, all these extraordinary relaxations, disregarding the security concern of the country because who all is coming is not vetted by the security agencies. It is trust.

These all were done primarily with a belief that Auroville must grow and must grow freely. According to the ideals of Sri Aurobindo, and as defined by Mother.

There may be a lot of problems, a lot of issues, we can keep discussing whether the road should be built here or not, we may be concerned about whether the crown is built or which building is built where, these are one aspect of it.

But the ideal of Auroville has to be preserved, it has to live here, and in the most vibrant manner. You know, all these publications that happened, the adverse publications that went to the international press, it did create a very, very bad name for Auroville. It was not in good taste.

But the question is, this is one part of it. The image of Auroville, the image of Auroville is important, but more important than that is the ideal of Auroville. The ideal of Auroville, if it suffers, the image is a fleeting thing. If our substance is good, the packaging will take its own course, we don't have to worry about it.

When Mother was here, there was no need for branding it. Everyone accepted it, and people believed it.

On behalf of the Governing Board, I would request all my dear friends, Aurovilians, to think of how to restore the ideal of Auroville. And I can tell you for sure, so far in this last one year meeting, visiting, I have seen activities which are just the opposite of the ideal. Some of the Aurovilians told me which I don't wish to repeat here... people were doing activities.

When I talk to the agencies, they say - Look, we don't usually interfere in Auroville because we believe that Auroville is a special place. However, we have got cases of substance abuse, money laundering, embezzlement, fraud, land grab, I don't wish to go into detail of it. But these things don't edify us, these things don't bring us any closer to what we should be.

Neither I nor the Governing Board is here to give you a talk or lesson, no, you are all experienced. Some people say, 'I have been there for 40 years', some people say 'I have been here for 50 years'. Somebody says, 'I'm a third generation Aurovilian'. I wonder and we all wonder, is their being third generation something stipulated in the Charter? The Charter is whether we are committed to the ideals or not, that is important. Somebody says, I have met Mother - Yes, very good. You had that holy touch, you are blessed, but that should not be for you to tell me I have met Mother, so whatever I'm doing is perfect, because Mother has recorded it, Sri Aurobindo has recorded whatever he wanted, how he wanted the city to come. So it is not important.

How do you find stewardship being taken as ownership? Somebody who has been there at a particular place for, let us say, 40 years says 'it is mine'? Is it Auroville? Do we have that concept? I think there is a need for very serious churning.

And it is something which is not beyond redemption, it can be done and it has to be done. And the Governing Board has a responsibility.

Now the question comes: who has got the power? Now these are immaterial matters whether the power is with the Governing Board power or with the Residents' Assembly power or with the International Advisory Council. These are immaterial. As far as we are concerned, there are only two powers - one is the Constitution of India and the laws of India, and second is the Charter given by the Mother.

There is no other power. We don't recognize any other power, Sri Aurobindo's teachings and Mother's Charter: that is one, sacrosanct. And the Constitution and the laws of India.

It is not important whether the Residents' Assembly has the power or the Governing Board has the power. We have come down to the level where we are doing it for the power struggle. I think we have moved far away from being a sadhak.

Now, we believe, and sincerely believe, that any way forward should be, as far as possible, in consultation and taking everyone along, aboard. We don't like to create any sense of discrimination, or any impression that force is being used - NO. Auroville is not the place where force and coercion should be the choice; that should not be the choice. But we also have an obligation, since the Act tells us to see that the ideals of Auroville are to be promoted.

Now when we see that the ideals of Auroville are being compromised, and compromised in a big manner, I have no hesitation to say, because I have not come here to play music to your ears, I have come to tell you what I feel as a pain, it is the anguish of someone who has been a devotee of Rishi Aurobindo. The issue has to be confronted frontally; it cannot be just wished away by nice talking.

If my words hurt you, you are free to hurl at me, I will not mind it; but the issue has to be confronted. And I would suggest now that Auroville has to have a set of guidelines, agreed norms how to conduct its affairs, in terms of who should be allowed to come, who should be in Auroville, what are some common minimum activities which are consistent or necessary for being a sadhak in this process of our forward journey. These norms should and MUST be there.

We have 50 years plus. We have made some significant achievements, there's no doubt about it, but these achievements in the physical domain are not everything. The core has to be respected, the core has to be restored. So I would request every dear friend of mine present here, and those who could not make it due to some circumstances; let us not get passionate, let us not get angry at each other. Think over it.

Because I am telling it plainly: to let the status quo continue is not acceptable. Because India cannot afford for Auroville to decline, Auroville to move away from the ideal.

Auroville has to be spiritually strengthened, and of course materially reinforced as well, for which we need to have some set of norms...

I have always maintained that Auroville should be managed by Aurovilians; there should not be any external interference - this is the ideal situation. But when we see that the Auroville community, which is a small community, is not able to reach a consensus, and this is not the first time.

The Auroville Foundation Act's preamble states how the Emergency Provisions Act was brought in, because there were very serious internal difficulties in the management of Auroville and so the government had to step in. Now, we don't like the government to step in again. We would like Auroville to grow with the cooperation and goodwill of all the Aurovilians to make it what is its destiny.

But certainly Auroville is not a place for... Yes, some people said that we are helping the farmers. I asked how they are helping the farmers - they said they are helping them do productive farming. I asked, where did you learn farming? He was quiet. What is your expertise in farming? He says 10 years back, we were in Bangalore for 2 weeks learning something about farming.

First thing is, it is a 10 year old technique. Secondly, did you try it in Auroville? As a demonstration? We do not have any demonstration farm at Auroville for the farmers to come and see; so why should a farmer of the neighbouring village trust you? Simply for you to say that you are helping the farmers is not convincing. You don't have the requisite qualification to guide the farmers.

Somebody says yes, but for Auroville, I would have been lost. I come from a very poor background, my parents were very poor, and we have come. Very good - Auroville helped you and gave you a home and very, very noble land.

But tell me, how is it different from, in Tenkasi, there are people who from the last 45 years have committed themselves to rehabilitating the physically disabled, 24/7 they have been working, committing their own resources, and they have helped more than 40,000 disabled people. Their life is devoted to Seva.

How is it different from Villupuram in this very district, where there is a place where one young couple, for the last 12 years, have been helping the mentally disabled, intellectually deficient, autistic people. They also acquired a barren piece of land, and now they are growing into farming. They have rehabilitated more than 500 intellectually disabled people. They had invited me; I had to go over there and was so happy to see and touched by the sense of service, that as young persons after doing MBA and all that, they could have had a chance to go and do a good living. They chose to devote their lives to people who are marginalised and ignored by society: mentally disabled, autistic children. Both husband and wife. I was so touched when I found in front of me, one child of about 12 years, retching and the man went over and caught the vomit in his hand. That sense of service!

But that is not Auroville. Tenkasi, those who have helped more than 40000, is not Auroville. Auroville is for more than that, but here we don't see that.

I think there are people who are very, very anguished here. As I told you, when I met them, I saw their tears flowing. Their silence was so loud, so loud, they could not speak, but their silence... they were so anguished. I think we need to restore the ideal. We have to have some agreed norms for being in Auroville.

Following certain norms may not be strict, of course, nobody says it has to be a strict line that everyone has to follow, that independence has to be with every Aurovilian, but that freedom is that of the sadhak, not just of anybody else. We need to do that.

As far as the physical manifestation of the Master Plan is concerned, the question is, when the Master Plan was prepared, in consultation with the Residents' Assembly, and it was in process for more than a decade and then it was notified, the question is: Do we revisit it?

There are people in Auroville who tell me not to go ahead. There are people who say this is not the way, we have to change it. The question is, do we keep revisiting a decision arrived through due process? I think if we continue doing that, there will not be any end to it. Here today, we have come, the GB has come to you, to clearly spell out the concern that we have, and to appeal to you and urge you all to be dispassionate and think it over.

Think over it - how do we develop Auroville? How do we keep the ideals of Auroville?

We - when I say 'I', I am talking on behalf of the GB, it's not individual - would be very happy to have your mails. As I told you, several hundreds of Aurovilians have come and met me. We are open to meeting you all. I am open, I hear. We are not short of time as far as listening is concerned, and come up with your ideas. But we also cannot keep waiting endlessly.

I would appeal to you all, if you have some suggestions, please send us a mail in the next one week. What do you wish. How should it be according to you, and what should be the agreed norms for the sadhaks, for the Aurovilians to follow.

And let us come away from these arguments which are essentially materialistic in nature.

Those things are there, as far as the Master Plan is concerned, all those things there, those things are agreed, there will be problems, there can be litigation, we will try, wherever it is possible, wherever it is possible, to... You know, what is non-negotiable is the ideal. The ideal is non-negotiable.

And as for a decision taken through the due process, it should also be non-negotiable, but if there is a constructive suggestion, something that is in the interest and promoting the ideals, it is welcome.

It is not that we are pushing it.

But at the same time, I am telling you in very, very plain language, which may again hurt you: Auroville needs a shock, an external shock to bring it to its sense, bring it to its trail.

Coming from a layperson, you might feel offended, but be that as it may. I myself have been a disciple, as I told you, I have been to many of the Auroville ashrams, Auroville places, I have been studying it. I do feel about it.

A status quo business as usual will not work. In the best possible manner, each one of us has to now jolt ourselves and think.

It is essentially for this purpose that I requested in you, I thank you all, the GB is grateful to you all and appreciate your coming and listening to our concern. Please send your mails, individually, collectively, the choice is yours, you are free; we will very patiently examine allthose. Let me assure you, we are all well-wishers of Auroville. We cannot afford, even in our remotest dream, to do anything that be contrary to the very idea of this country, to the darshan, the very vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

We are all humans, sometimes we may err. And that is where we leave to others, not only here, we even have a consultation with a lot of people who have devoted their lifetime in the sadhana of this integral yoga, and how to go through the triple transformation, and through forming the Sapta [Chatushtaya], the seven quadrats, how they have dedicated their lifetime.

We have also been in consultation with them, getting their ideas.

But for heaven's sake, let us not have entitlement and rights, that "this is my right". This is not a place where we should claim rights and powers.

We are here collectively for a cause. And the cause is for each one of us, individually and collectively, to grow it.

Thank you, friends. Thank you very much for listening to me; I'll be very happy to receive your mails. Thank you.

Shri R.N. Ravi 7th November 2022, at the Auroville Unity Pavilion



We would like to thank all those who have written to the Chairman of the Governing Board, and have agreed for their letters to be compiled and published in this book. Our deep appreciation goes to the community members who have lovingly volunteered their time and energy for its realisation. The role of the Working Committee has been only that of a facilitator in the process of collecting the individual messages.

All these letters are an expression of the spirit of Auroville and how it diversely dwells in those who have responded to their inner call to join Auroville under Mother's guidance and Grace.

- Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly

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"Peace through human unity:

Unity through uniformity is an absurdity.

Unity must be realised through the union of the many.

Each one is part of the unity; each one is indispensable to the whole."

The Mother, Oct 1969



## From a reader:

It's luminous, soaring, beautiful, powerful, inspiring, true. It does exactly what the title suggests, capturing the true inner spirit in a precious way that no other kind of communication could do. I hope that everyone who has an inner connection with Auroville will read it. It is a thing of beauty and power."

- A resident of Auroville in the 1970s.