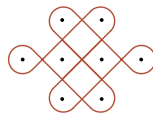


AUROVILLE IN CRISIS

&

THE WAY FORWARD



A Report by

The Auroville Global Fellowship

January 2025



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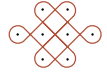
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*“Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics, and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.”*

**The Mother**

The universal township of Auroville in South India was founded by Mirra Alfassa (1878-1973), commonly known as the Mother, spiritual collaborator of the Indian philosopher and sage, Sri Aurobindo, who played a central role in the development of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry.

Based on Sri Aurobindo’s vision of the evolution of human consciousness, Auroville is dedicated to the principles of unending education and the material and societal manifestation of an actual human unity.

Auroville was inaugurated on 28th February 1968, when young people representing 124 countries and all the Indian States placed a handful of earth from their homelands in a marble-clad urn near the centre of the future project, symbolising the creation of a town dedicated to human unity and international understanding.

Today, Auroville is home to 3,300 permanent residents from more than 60 nations, the only experiment of its kind in the world.



## PREFACE

Conflicting narratives have made it difficult for concerned observers to grasp the dimensions and meaning of the multifaceted crisis that has overtaken Auroville. This report presents its essential elements and recommends a practical plan of action to resolve it.

To understand the nature of the crisis, it is necessary to understand the Auroville Foundation Act. (Annexure A)

The Auroville Foundation Act was passed by the Indian Parliament on September 29, 1988, establishing the Auroville Foundation as an autonomous statutory body for the purpose of protecting, preserving, and advancing Auroville's ideals as an international township dedicated to human unity and the evolution of consciousness based on the philosophy and teachings of Sri Aurobindo.

The intent underpinning the Act, summarized in Chapter 3(21)(4)(a-b), is to ensure that

*“... the ideals for which Auroville has been established are encouraged, and the residents of Auroville are allowed the freedom to grow and develop activities and institutions for the fulfillment of the aspirations and programmes envisioned in the Charter of Auroville.”*  
(Annexure A)

The Auroville Foundation consists of three governing authorities with interdependent responsibilities: a Residents' Assembly, comprised of all registered adult inhabitants, which is responsible for Auroville's daily management; a Governing Board, responsible for promoting the ideals of Auroville and “coordinat[ing] activities in consultation with the Residents' Assembly for the purposes of cohesion and integration of Auroville;” and an International Advisory Council, responsible for advising the Governing Board on matters relating to Auroville's development and management.

The Auroville Foundation Act established the three authorities as a checks-and-balance system with no one entity possessing overriding authority over the others. All three are intended to work together to advance Auroville's mission through collaboration, consultation, and shared decision-making.

Governing Boards are appointed by the Indian Government every four years, most recently in 2021. The arrangement functioned in a balanced manner for more than 30 years. But on August 22, 2022, the Board's Secretary submitted a filing with the Madras High Court that unilaterally and radically restated the roles of the Governing Board and Residents' Assembly.

It asserted that the community of Auroville did not have the right to help determine its future, govern itself, or have a voice in its development, as the Act intended. Auroville, it said, “is not a democratic assembly of residents claiming rights to self-rule.” Rather, its residents are simply “voluntary workers.”

Moreover, the present administration stated, “the entire lands [of Auroville], properties, and undertakings” do not, as the Auroville Charter states, belong “to humanity as a whole.” (Annexure A) Instead, “all Auroville assets vest with the central government, and the central government has delegated all its powers to the Foundation, which is in turn managed by the Governing Board.” Therefore, it asserted, the Governing Board alone is the “Supreme Authority” of Auroville.

These unprecedented claims, and the actions stemming from them over the past three and a half years, dramatically diverge from the letter, spirit, and intent of the Auroville Foundation Act.

They deviate profoundly from the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the vision of the Mother, Auroville's founder. They repudiate the values and principles that Auroville has operated under for half a century, and overturn precedents of collaboration exemplified by previous government-appointed administrations for more than thirty years. (See pps 15-22)

Actions undertaken by those who advocate for this new interpretation of the Auroville Foundation Act have undermined long-standing achievements built up over more than half a century and threaten to cause lasting harm to the unique value Auroville represents to India and the world.



This report brings together events and information in a single brief that we hope will bring clarity to the facts of the situation, enable greater understanding, and spur constructive action. It encapsulates information in three sections that address the most essential aspects of the crisis:

- » governance and misgovernance relating to powers and functions of the three governing authorities established by the Auroville Foundation Act;
- » documented misuse of authority by the present administration in six key areas of governance, financial management, planning and development, communications, safety and security, and impact on local communities;
- » a practical set of recommendations to resolve the crisis and set Auroville once again on a path to a positive future.

These recommendations involve all three governing authorities, including changes that the Auroville community itself needs to make in addressing well-known concerns about governance which emerged in the years before the takeover in 2021.

This report has been produced by the Auroville Global Fellowship, an independent network of more than fifty national and international supporters who have contributed to the world in diverse fields related to the evolutionary ideals of Auroville.

A subgroup of Fellows spent several months researching events and timelines, conducting a detailed review of more than 2,000 pages of reports, legal filings and rulings, newsletters, speeches, journals, presentations, financial reports, and other documents. Our review covered dozens of letters to the Governing Board from Auroville's Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly, Governing Board Minutes, and statements from individuals justifying the administration's actions. We studied communications from International Advisory Council members to the Governing Board, and interviewed individuals who worked closely with both previous government-appointed administrations and the present one.

The administration that took over in 2021 maintains that its interpretation and implementation of the Auroville Foundation Act is opposed by only a handful of disaffected residents. That is incorrect. A large majority of residents and outside supporters have been alarmed by its assertions and do not support its actions. The administration has used a campaign of disinformation to create a fabricated version of reality to legitimize actions that contravene the Auroville Foundation Act and the community's established procedures for participatory development.

As representatives of Auroville, friends in India and around the world, including members of Sri Aurobindo and Auroville centres and concerned members of numerous other organizations, we are deeply disturbed by the administration's many violations of Auroville's most fundamental principles; and by the way it has dishonoured the *dharma* itself – the ethical, moral, and cosmic law that India's timeless wisdom tells us governs individual and societal behaviour and guides one toward righteousness and harmony.

We deeply value the Indian government's understanding and support it has provided Auroville for more than half a century. Previous Governing Boards and the Government of India have positively contributed to Auroville's development in innumerable ways, reinforcing Auroville's deep roots in India as the Mother envisioned.

Today there is a pressing need to restore the principles of the Auroville Charter and the integrity of the Auroville Foundation Act so that this unparalleled endeavour dedicated to human unity and grounded in India's spiritual tradition and the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, may be re-established on a positive path to the future. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi put it, Auroville has been and should continue to be a "beacon of hope" to humanity. Tragically, actions by the present administration have led it far from that goal.

It is therefore with a sense of the utmost urgency that our report calls upon the Government of India to prevent further damage and reverse the direction of the Auroville Foundation's current administration so that Auroville can fulfill its purpose for India and the world in bringing about a brighter future for humankind.



## REPORT SUMMARY

For 56 years, the remarkable project of Auroville in southern India has been a pioneering hub of social, cultural, educational, technological, economic, and spiritual innovation, a living laboratory for lifelong learning and material and spiritual research for the embodiment of an actual human unity.

It has attracted more than 3,300 permanent residents from more than 60 nations who have found there inspiration, practical guidance, and training, and who have themselves made wide-ranging contributions to India and the world. It has been worthy of the deep understanding and protection India has given to Auroville for more than half a century, and it has earned the trust of many organizations and thousands of supporters around the world. (Annexures C and D)

Yet over the past three and a half years Auroville has been engulfed by a governance crisis that threatens to undermine its value to India and the world. The new administration appointed in 2021 under terms of the Auroville Foundation Act, passed by the Indian Parliament in 1988, unilaterally changed the governance principles established by the Act. Previous government-appointed administrations adhered to the terms and spirit of the Act for more than thirty years.

Asserting absolute authority, the Auroville Foundation's Governing Board and Secretary launched a series of peremptory actions that violated multiple provisions of the Auroville Foundation Act and the Auroville Charter and subverted Core Principles of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga.

These violations have been extensively documented in a multitude of publicly available reports, letters, legal filings and rulings and other material. They are summarised in this report in six areas: governance, financial management, planning and development, communications, safety and security, and impact on local communities.

The Governing Board's justifications for its actions have been rejected five times by the Madras High Court: first in August, 2022, followed by a modified interim order in September 2023, two interim stays in February 2024 on two sets of regulations, and an additional ruling in March 2024. The court ruled that the Governing Board transgressed key provisions in the Auroville Foundation Act and principles of the Auroville Charter. It rejected the Board's claims that it is the "supreme authority" for Auroville, and dismissed its contention that it alone holds "absolute power" over all decision-making.

Specifically, the court rejected the Board's assertion that it has the authority to exert "complete control and management" over the Residents' Assembly, a statutory body established by the Act to represent Auroville's residents. The Governing Board's appropriation of power violates the Act's explicit stipulation that "the residents of Auroville are allowed the freedom to grow and develop activities for the fulfillment of the aspirations and programs envisioned in the Charter of Auroville" – a principle at the heart of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and practice of yoga.

Rather than comply with the court's directive to stand down from its contentions and engage in constructive dialogue, the Governing Board has appealed the court's rulings and rejected all proposals to collaborate while it continues to pursue unrestricted rights of ownership and control of the project.

These actions are not limited to the principles of the Auroville Foundation Act and Auroville Charter. The Governing Board has compromised the universally accepted rights and protections of Auroville residents, breaching fundamental standards of ethics, morality, and natural justice.

There are viable solutions to resolve this crisis. They include steps that can guide Auroville toward a future that upholds its Charter, honors its Indian heritage, and aligns with the aspirations of its supporters in India and around the world. They include changes that the Auroville community itself needs to make in addressing self-governance challenges that emerged in the years before the takeover in 2021.

The Residents' Assembly has repeatedly expressed its readiness to engage in productive discussions about these matters with the Governing Board and government authorities. So have members of Auroville's International Advisory Council.

A successfully negotiated resolution of the crisis will lead to three outcomes essential to a positive future:

- » restoration of operational balance among the three statutory authorities of the Auroville Foundation Act and the re-establishment of Auroville's core values and principles;
- » a collaborative updating and revision of the Master Plan: Perspective 2025 in response to the reality of Auroville's bioregion and today's global challenges, including methodologies, commitments and accountability to ensure the creation and timely execution of Detailed Development Plans;
- » the completion of an internal self-governance assessment and development plan led by the Residents' Assembly, leading to effective structural and operational reforms.

Conditions are required to achieve these outcomes. These include the cessation of all coercive measures used against Auroville residents and the establishment of an atmosphere of trust, confidence, safety, and openness where collaborative problem-solving can occur. For such an environment to be created there must be:

- » an agreement among all parties to restore, honour, and renew the principles and terms of the Auroville Foundation Act;
- » a halt to all forceful and adversarial measures directed at Auroville residents and the community;
- » a reaffirmation of Auroville's core values, including the governance principles of fidelity, respect, and mutuality among the three statutory bodies as upheld by all prior government-appointed administrations.

An enlightened intervention by the Government of India through its Ministry of Education is required to establish the conditions necessary for successful negotiations. Only its thoughtful engagement can help reestablish effective governance in alignment with the rule of law as outlined in the Auroville Foundation Act, the Auroville Charter, the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, and the guiding principles of India's *dharma*. A formal negotiation may be needed involving one or more outside mediators, agreed to by all parties.

This report concludes by appealing to the sympathetic understanding and active engagement of those in positions of responsibility and influence to support the re-establishment of principled, balanced governance in Auroville, thus paving the way for a renewed future for this exceptional experiment whose significance to India and the world remains invaluable.





# I THE AUROVILLE FOUNDATION ACT

*“...this Act has very unique features, which you will not find in any Act in the country..you have an Act in which the individuals constituting the totality have the freedom to grow, and if it is laid down in the Act itself that this freedom is to be ensured, the residents of Auroville should feel free. And if any attempt is made to curb this freedom, then there is a provision in the Act itself on an authority whose very duty is to advise the Governing Board in such a way that this freedom is not curbed.”*

**Dr. Kireet Joshi**  
**Architect of the Auroville Foundation Act**  
**Ex-Chairman of the Auroville Foundation**  
**19 July 2003**

To understand the crisis in Auroville it's necessary to understand the Auroville Foundation Act. (Annexure A)

The Auroville Foundation Act was passed by the Indian Parliament on September 29, 1988, establishing the Auroville Foundation as an autonomous statutory body to protect, preserve, and advance Auroville's ideals as an international township dedicated to human unity and the evolution of consciousness based on the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

The Act provided for the Auroville Foundation to acquire the assets of Auroville without cost for the long-term management and, as its Preamble states, for “further development of Auroville in accordance with its original Charter.” The intention of the Act is for the Foundation to serve as the custodian of Auroville's principles and development, starting with the first line of its Charter: “Auroville belongs to no one in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole.” (Annexure B)

In introducing the Auroville Foundation Act to the Rajya Sabha in 1988, Shri Shiv Shankar, Minister of Human Resources Development, said, “Auroville is to be looked upon as a vision which has great potentiality, and this can be of tremendous service to our country and the world. [The Mother, Auroville's founder] declared that the earth needs a place where the difficulties of human nature can be dealt with in the context of an arduous process of the change of human nature. In such an endeavour, difficulties can be expected, but the Government is determined to help the process of development of Auroville in such a way that the aims and goals of Auroville are made more and more realizable.” (Annexure C)

The Auroville Foundation consists of three governing authorities with interconnected functions: (1) a **Residents' Assembly**, comprised of all adult inhabitants of the community entered into the register of residents, (2) a **Governing Board** and (3) an **International Advisory Council**. Members of the Board and Council are appointed by the Government of India. (Annexure A)

The Act calls for the Central Government to appoint a Secretary to support the Chairman of the Governing Board, “to exercise such powers and perform such duties under the Chairman... as may be prescribed or as may be delegated” by the Chairman. All previous Governing Boards treated these duties as administrative functions. They did not consider the Secretary to be an executive-level position of operational control, nor is it presented so in the Act.

Chapter 3(18-20) of the Act establishes the authority of the Residents' Assembly in specific ways, including the stipulation that the Residents' Assembly will appoint a Working Committee to help manage “all activities relating to the residents of Auroville.” The Working Committee also represents the Residents' Assembly to the Governing Board and other organisations.

- » The **Residents' Assembly** is responsible under the Act for the daily management of Auroville, ensuring that the voice and experience of Aurovilians is at the core of decision-making.
- » The **Governing Board** is responsible for “promot[ing] the ideals of Auroville and to coordinate activities of Auroville in consultation with the Residents' Assembly for the purposes of cohesion and integration of Auroville.”
- » The **International Advisory Council** is responsible for advising the Governing Board on matters relating to Auroville's development and management.

Shri Shiv Shankar explained that *as far as the day-to-day activities are concerned, they will be looked after by the residents through appropriate autonomous arrangements, which will include the Residents' Assembly and its Working Committee. The idea underlying this arrangement is that the residents of Auroville should have autonomy so that the activities of Auroville can grow under an atmosphere conducive to harmonious growth.*” (Annexure C)

A history of the Auroville Foundation Act is included in Prof. Raag Yadav's report, 'Governance in Auroville: A Framework Study, 2023' (Annexure E) including the seminal roles of industrialist J.R.D Tata and educator Kireet Joshi in formulating the Act as well as the support of governmental action by Auroville residents.

The Auroville Foundation came into existence in January 1991. The assets were vested in the Foundation on 1 April 1992, including all of Auroville's immovable assets, units, activities, and projects. The Auroville Foundation is recognised as an autonomous institution of higher education under the Ministry of Education, Government of India.

## CORE PRINCIPLES

The Auroville Foundation Act established the three bodies as a checks-and-balance system in which none has overriding authority. All three are expected to work together to advance Auroville's mission through collaboration, consultation, and shared decision-making. The Act envisions minimal governmental interference except for the requirement of auditing of the Accounts by the Comptroller and Auditor General for purposes of ensuring transparency and accountability. (Annexure A)

This understanding was the harmonious basis for Auroville's growth for thirty-three years under the Auroville Foundation Act across seven Governing Boards, six Secretaries, and six International Advisory Councils.

The distinguished individuals who served in these positions shared the same understanding and applied the same governing principles laid out in the Auroville Foundation Act with probity and care. They included individuals like B.V. Doshi, Kireet Joshi, Dr. Karan Singh, J.R.D. Tata, Dr. Doudou Diene, Dr. Irvin Laszlo and others who weren't only important in Auroville's development but were renowned in the wider world. As a result, Auroville achieved remarkable progress in many areas that were recognised worldwide and cited by multiple Indian governments. (Annexure C)

In 2018, for example, in a speech marking Auroville's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Prime Minister Narendra Modi compared Auroville to India's great ancient centres of global learning, Nalanda and Taxila, citing its “first high principle, that it belongs to all humanity” and its impressive achievements as an international “hub of social, cultural, educational, economic, and spiritual innovation.” He expressed his hope that Auroville would continue to “serve as a beacon to the world.”

The reciprocal, three-part governance structure was designed precisely to respect and support Auroville’s remarkable global diversity while advancing the principle of India’s ancient credo, *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, “the world is one family”.

The wisdom that informs the structure and expected management of the Act is reflected in three governing principles which are required if Auroville is to flourish and fulfill its promise to India and the world. These are fidelity, respect, and mutuality.

## Fidelity

“Fidelity” means loyalty or faithfulness, and holding true to facts and standards. For Auroville it also encompasses accountability, adherence to the law, and a commitment to Auroville’s spiritual purpose, all of which are essential criteria for those managing its assets, units, and projects. They guided the Governing Board and Secretaries from 1988 to 2021. They have not been upheld by the current administration.

Before 2021, multiple Governing Boards and Secretaries:

- » respected the reciprocal relationship between the three governing bodies established by the Act and the requirement to collaborate as equal custodians of the Act and the Auroville Charter;
- » executed their roles as the Act intended: not as bosses, landlords, or enforcers but as helpers, facilitators, advisors, and mentors whose role is to support, encourage, and correct as needed but never to denigrate or disparage;
- » respected the need for free progress, experimentation, and self-organisation, recognizing both the challenges and achievements that come with inner growth and lifelong learning at the collective as well as individual level;
- » appreciated the spiritual purpose of Auroville which is not just to construct roads and buildings, which can be done anywhere, but to build a new human being with a higher, wider consciousness and a new kind of society also motivated by an aspiration toward a higher consciousness;
- » fostered an environment of safety, trust, and peace that is required for the project to prosper.

## Respect

“Respect” for an organisation like Auroville means possessing a sincere admiration for its guiding values, mission, and achievements, including a commitment to support its values in actions as well as words. Respect means being considerate of the opinions, rights, and feelings of others with an effort to ensure that words and actions don’t harm or disregard those with whom one may disagree. Respect means honouring positions of responsibility that are rightfully held by others and treating them with dignity.

Governing Boards and Secretaries before 2021:

- » recognised the Auroville community as a self-managing body, a polity that gives shape to the aspiration, growth, and direction of its residents: a “group soul,” to cite Sri Aurobindo’s concept;

- » appreciated the necessity for residents to participate in deliberative decision-making through the Residents' Assembly, Working Committee, and other working groups, and its need to collaborate with the other two statutory bodies of the Foundation in making decisions and taking action;
- » respected the role and responsibility of the residents to manage the community's day-to-day affairs and initiate projects while the Governing Board and Secretary advised and approved plans and provided administrative support;
- » valued engagement with the Residents' Assembly and welcomed the counsel and assistance of the International Advisory Council, which contributed to decision-making.

All these definitions apply to the stewards of the Auroville Act who served respectfully as Governing Board members and Secretaries from 1988–2021. They do not apply to the current administration.

### **Mutuality**

“Mutuality” means shared responsibility, benefit and cooperation in a relationship characterised by balance, interdependence and reciprocity. Mutuality assumes a level of equality where neither party dominates or subordinates the other. Mutuality encourages cooperation and collaboration in working toward a common goal. It involves a sense of interdependence, where the parties rely on each other for support in the belief that each party's well-being is tied to the well-being of the other. Mutuality depends on fairness, trust, and reliably moral and ethical behaviours.

All these definitions apply to the stewards of the Auroville Foundation Act as Governing Board members and Secretaries from 1988–2021. None fit the administration that took over Auroville in 2021.

As called for in the Act, former Governing Board members and Secretaries were individuals of personal integrity whose values, character, and life's work were deeply grounded in principles aligned with the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. (Annexure A) Board members and Secretaries translated values into action in ways that embodied the spirit of mutuality envisioned by the Act. This included:

- » hosting three days of meetings twice a year in Auroville with two days of presentations and active discussion with the Residents' Assembly's Working Committee and other working groups about their projects and developmental roadmaps;
- » visiting projects and meeting with residents across Auroville, presiding over the inauguration of new projects which it had approved based on proposals by the community, and meeting with the Residents' Assembly for an open exchange of views and questions;
- » meeting with the International Advisory Council on the third day of its on-site meetings to review the community's plans, presentations, recommendations and requests, and later producing a report which was made available to the community in a timely manner;
- » hosting a dinner at the end of its stay to which many residents were invited.

The administration that took over in 2021 has rejected the need to do any of these things.

Fidelity, respect, and mutuality are core values anchored in moral purpose. They come from an inner centre that inherently recognises right from wrong, truth from falsehood, and always strives to uphold what is right and true. Across millennia, Indian culture has referred to these attributes as the *dharma*: right action that advances the cause of justice, virtue, ethics, and the cosmic order.

As detailed in the following pages, the administration that took over in 2021 overthrew these values and replaced them with ones that are antithetical to them. The extensively documented actions that have occurred since then are not just a matter of contravening universal moral, ethical and spiritual standards, however. A disturbing number of them also violate Indian law.

## A RADICAL SHIFT

Starting in October 2021, the new administration initiated a series of coercive measures that have continued to assert overriding authority over the Foundation's two other statutory bodies, in violation of legal provisions specified in the Auroville Foundation Act.

These actions overturned decades of precedence set by prior Governing Boards and subverted the principles that Auroville was founded upon, imposing a form of governance that contrasts sharply with the principles outlined in Auroville's Charter and the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

The present Governing Board's actions are detailed in the remainder of this report. Its actions fall within three main categories of violations cited by the Madras High Court:

- » violation of core principles of the Auroville Foundation Act;
- » violation of specific provisions delimiting powers and functions of the three statutory bodies;
- » violation of responsibilities and rights accorded to Auroville residents.

The Board's actions are incompatible with the principles and purpose of the Auroville Foundation, which was established to serve as a custodian of Auroville rather than its owner. The Act does not grant the Governing Board unrestricted control over Auroville's assets – many of which were created through private funds and donations – nor does it permit sidelining the Foundation's two other governing authorities and subverting their roles in shared governance.

It's important to note that the present Governing Board and its members are inherently extrajudicial. The Auroville Foundation Act lays down three clear qualifications to be a member of the Governing Board. The current members do not fulfill any of these qualifications. (Annexure A)

Board members' unfamiliarity with the nature and purpose of Auroville, compounded by their lack of engagement with residents or visibility of their work and achievements, contributes to fundamental misconceptions and the acceptance of false narratives which prevent them from being able to guide Auroville in the manner specified by the Act.

## High Court Orders and Judgements

In several orders and judgments from August 2022 to March 2024, the Madras High Court ruled that the administration's assertions and actions do not conform to principles of the Auroville Foundation Act and the Auroville Charter. Judgments of 2022 and 2024 are pending before the appellate courts at the time of writing.

Several attempts by the Governing Board and Secretary to take control of Auroville were blocked by the Madras High Court as being outside the scope (*ultra vires*) of the Auroville Foundation Act.

For example, the court specifically:

- » stayed the administration’s attempts to assert control of admission and termination regulations and selection of the Working Committee as being in contravention of provisions of the Act;
- » prohibited any further interference with the Working Committee and the Residents’ Assembly in recognition of their statutory character.

This can be seen as a de facto rejection of the Board’s claims in affidavits filed in the High Court that it is the “supreme authority” for Auroville, and as a dismissal of its contention that it alone holds “absolute power” over all decisions.

More specifically, the High Court rejected the Governing Board’s contention that it alone possesses “all [the] powers of [the] Foundation,” including the assertion that it has the right to exert control over the Residents’ Assembly, and dismissed the Governing Board’s assertion that it has the right to “complete control and management of the affairs of all undertakings and the right, title and interest thereon of Auroville...” (Annexure A)

The Governing Board’s appropriation of power violates the Auroville Foundation Act’s explicit stipulation that *“the residents of Auroville are allowed the freedom to grow and develop activities and institutions for the fulfillment of the aspirations and programmes envisioned in the Charter of Auroville.”*

The Auroville Foundation Act gives residents the responsibility and autonomy to:

- » choose their representatives in whatever manner they choose, including the Working Committee;
- » devise the Master Plan for approval by the Board;
- » establish committees for carrying out their responsibilities in the development of Auroville;
- » approve and admit new residents; advise the Governing Board in respect of all matters relating to the residents.

The Governing Board, on its part, is required to consult with the residents in carrying out its duties. (Annexure A)

Contrary to the clear intent of the Act, the present Governing Board has stated its belief in court that Auroville residents are workers at the bottom of a hierarchy with itself at the head. In its view, Auroville is equivalent to a corporation, a religious order, or an autocracy whose governance isn’t determined by a participatory process in which the residents are engaged in debate, discussion, and decision-making. Rather, it is directed by a central authority that makes decisions and passes down orders through a chain of command. That is why it asserts that Auroville residents are only “voluntary workers”: the Governing Board believes that Auroville residents are no different than employees or inmates who must follow orders or be subject to disciplinary measures including dismissal.

Such a governance model is antithetical to Sri Aurobindo’s teaching and the purpose of Auroville.

### **Violation of Assigned Powers and Functions**

The Madras High Court ruled that the Governing Board’s claims and actions violate specific powers and functions the Auroville Foundation Act assigns to the three governing bodies in Chapter 3(17-19):

- » it rejected the Governing Board’s claim that it has the authority to discard the balanced three-part governance structure established by the Act in which none of the bodies has the right to nullify the powers and functions of the others or to unilaterally assert exclusive authority over the two other governing authorities;
- » it rejected its assertion that the Board has the right to override the Residents’ Assembly’s decisions, which by statute include “all activities relating to the residents of Auroville;”
- » it rejected its contention that the Board can dismiss the rights and functions the Act assigns to the Residents’ Assembly to establish working groups required to manage Auroville’s operations. The administration’s continued assertion of the authority of its hand-picked committees puts it in contempt of court.

In its order of 4 September 2023, the court affirmed that the Residents’ Assembly is a statutory body and “may not be restrained from functioning” by the Secretary and Governing Board.

- » The court rejected the Governing Board’s proclamation that it alone can determine how the Assembly’s Working Committee is to be selected and managed, as announced by the Secretary in a self-published “regulation” in the Gazette of India on 12 January, 2024 (stayed by the court, with final ruling pending). This amounts to an attempt to change the Auroville Foundation Act, which no body of the Auroville Foundation, be it the Residents’ Assembly, the Governing Board, or the International Advisory Council, is permitted to do.
- » The court ruled that the Governing Board cannot infringe upon the right of the Residents’ Assembly to formulate Auroville’s Master Plan as executed through its Town Development Council (TDC), and that the Board violated the Auroville Act by unilaterally dismissing the Residents’ Assembly’s TDC and establishing its own planning and development group accountable only to itself. (The Secretary of the present administration appealed this ruling to the Supreme Court and received a stay order but the final hearing and ruling are still pending.)
- » The court ruled that the Governing Board cannot deprive the Residents’ Assembly of its statutory authority to allow the admission or cause the termination of persons in the register of residents through its appointed Entry Board. The Board violated the Auroville Act by creating regulations that in effect arrogate that responsibility to itself, which it announced in the Gazette of India (stayed by the court, with a final ruling pending).

The Governing Board has not only overridden the assigned powers and functions of the Residents’ Assembly and its Working Committee. It also has sidelined the other statutory body established by the Act, the International Advisory Council. It has curtailed meetings and limited members to perfunctory remarks without meaningful dialogue. The Council’s written and verbal advice, especially about initiating genuine dialogue between the Foundation’s three bodies and between it and different Auroville groups, has been brushed aside and ignored. The Governing Board has not acted on any request or suggestion received from the Council, nor has it discussed any of its decisions with the Council or consulted with it on any issue of relevance to the current situation. In fact, despite repeated requests from the Council, official records or minutes of its meetings with the Governing Board have apparently not been kept.

Related court cases are ongoing, including the Auroville community’s requested stay of the Governing Board’s large-scale transactions of land transfers, including land exchanges, without consultation or following the procedures set down in the Auroville Foundation Rules 1997 and General Financial Rules of India 2017. These transactions have been conducted in an opaque and unilateral manner without accountability, incurring a major loss to the Auroville Foundation,

as well as damage to Auroville farms, environmentally sensitive and protected areas, and other valuable lands. (See pps 24–29)

## **Violation of Residents' Protections and Rights**

The Governing Board has systematically undermined protections and rights of Auroville residents which are the universal norm in any democratic society, let alone for an experiment whose purpose is to create a new type of society based on the ideal of human unity. These fundamental rights and freedoms include:

- » the right to fair and equal protection and treatment under the law;
- » protection against unjust seizure of assets;
- » freedom from unjust punishment, oppression, persecution, criminalisation and harassment;
- » freedom from restrictions on freedom of speech, assembly, thought and expression;
- » freedom from corruption, along with the right to expect transparency and accountability from governing bodies.

Extensive violations of these and other protections and rights are detailed in the following pages, along with violations of core principles and powers and functions assigned by the Auroville Foundation Act.

## **SUMMARY**

The present Governing Board has abdicated its responsibility to uphold the fundamental principles needed to administer Auroville in accordance with its Charter and the Auroville Foundation Act. It has cast aside the values of fidelity, respect, and mutuality that characterised the work of government-appointed administrations for more than thirty years and upon which Auroville's future depends.

The Governing Board's seizure of assets and appropriation of power has violated multiple provisions embodied by law in the Auroville Foundation Act, affirmed by the Madras High Court, including the assertion that it alone has "supreme authority" over all aspects of Auroville, along with numerous specific actions that have overridden the powers and functions of the Act's other two statutory bodies and violated fundamental rights and responsibilities accorded to Auroville residents.

A positive way forward is required to restore balanced governance, redress the wrongs, and set Auroville on a positive path to the future. A roadmap to achieve those objectives is outlined in Chapter III: "A Positive Way Forward".





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## II THE PRESENT CRISIS

Auroville's crisis emerged from actions taken by a new Governing Board and Secretary that took over administrative responsibilities in 2021 under terms of the Auroville Foundation Act.

What follows is a synopsis of these actions. They have been extensively documented in nearly 2,000 pages of publicly available reports, presentations, letters, court rulings and other documents. (Annexure E) The summary covers key actions in six categories: governance, financial management, planning and development, communications, safety and security, and impact on local communities.

### GOVERNANCE

*"A large liberty will be the law of a spiritual society and the increase of freedom a sign of the growth of human society towards the possibility of spiritualization."*

*"The community is a formation of the Reality, a manifestation of the spirit of man, and there is a truth, a self, a power of the collective being."*

**Sri Aurobindo**

Auroville is based on the philosophy and yoga of Sri Aurobindo, which is deeply rooted in India's ancient spiritual tradition. Auroville's Charter calls for it to be the site "of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity".

But Auroville is not an ashram or monastery. Its residents are not participants in a regimented religious order. Its aim is to create a new way of life with a new consciousness that joins spirit and matter in an integral endeavour to advance peace and harmony in the world. Auroville is not a place simply for individual spiritual development through inner discovery and growth. It is also a collective effort to build a new society, which requires experimentation and the evolution of new organizational models.

While Auroville reflects the spirit of universality and innovation that characterized ancient India's great global learning centres of Taxila and Nalanda, it also represents something new in the nation's, and the world's, history. Auroville, its Charter states, will be "the bridge between the past and the future ... Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations."

Auroville is also unlike secular organisations that have workers at the bottom of a hierarchy who must be directed and controlled. It is a living and evolving collective entity—in Sri Aurobindo's terminology, a "group soul"—which, like the individuals who comprise it, is called upon to develop the law of its own being from within.

Finding the right governance model for such an undertaking is exceptionally challenging, requiring much from those attempting it and much from those wanting to help guide it. The question for Auroville's governance always is: What will help advance Auroville's purpose, and what will impede or negate it? What approaches should be supported and what need to be rejected?

It is against this philosophical and practical background that the events of the past three and a half years need to be understood.

## Annuling Self-Organisation

The administration that took over in 2021 has annulled Auroville's ability to evolve its own self-organisation by forcibly taking over community-led governing bodies and functions and reconstituting them with new groups using the same names under the unilateral control of the Secretary. It did so without due cause or process and in contravention of the Auroville Foundation Act (1988) and the spirit of the Auroville Charter by:

- » imposing top-down controls through executive orders, pronouncements, decrees and actions that have stripped Auroville's residents of the right to manage Auroville's affairs and guide the community's development, eliminating its voice in all matters relating to self-organisation;
- » rejecting the Residents' Assembly's statutory authority to manage the community's daily affairs and to be consulted in all decisions affecting Auroville's residents, as specified by the Auroville Foundation Act, asserting that the Governing Board alone is Auroville's paramount power;
- » forcibly taking over Working Committee Offices and filing a police case with false criminal charges against six residents, including three Committee members, for trying to defend the rights of the Residents' Assembly and its Working Committee as set forth in the Act;
- » taking control of all major Working Groups of the Residents' Assembly, including the Funds and Assets Management Committee, Town Development Council, Budget Coordination Committee, Housing Board and Service, Visitors' Center, and almost all of Auroville's internal and external communications platforms and channels as well as the Auroville Archives;
- » locking the offices and blocking online accounts and files of Auroville services and units that do not follow orders;
- » dismissing the principles of mutuality and participation as called for in the Act and Charter by repeatedly refusing to discuss, respond to, or collaborate with the Residents' Assembly or its selected representatives;
- » rejecting rulings of the Madras High Court in which it: (1) affirmed the rights of the Residents' Assembly and its committees; and (2), struck down the Governing Board's and the Secretary's actions as illegal:
  - » abrogating Auroville's right to appoint its own representatives in the Working Committee;
  - » dismantling the Town Development Council without Residents' Assembly consultation and forcefully replacing it with its own council controlled by the Secretary;
  - » arrogating to itself functions proper to the Residents' Assembly concerning the admission and removal of residents.

Over the past three years, the current administration has unilaterally determined which individuals it wants placed in various positions of responsibility, dismissing without cause dozens of long-standing residents with technical expertise and replacing them with unqualified salaried staff or hand-picked residents who are not supported by the Residents' Assembly. In several cases, replacement staff have no background, knowledge, or commitment to Auroville's values or Sri Aurobindo's teachings.

The attempt to centrally control Auroville by paying salaries to favored individuals while arbitrarily dismissing capable and dedicated Aurovilians is directly at odds with Auroville's purpose and values.

## Refusing Good-Faith Dialogue & Problem Resolution

For more than three years the Governing Board has rejected repeated invitations from the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly to engage in authentic dialogue and collaborative problem-solving, dismissing requests without discussion and most often without acknowledgement. A well-publicised performative gesture by the Chairman in 2022 inviting residents to a forum that was, in fact, a lecture. Residents were told to provide feedback and suggestions by email. Many responded, but their suggestions were unanswered. No further such offers were forthcoming while the administration continued to denigrate Auroville's accomplishments and perpetuate false narratives.

The current administration has:

- » rejected the existence of the community of residents as a legitimate collective entity and a statutory body in justifying its dismissal of sincere engagement;
- » rejected the need for collaborative approaches to community governance, development, and problem-solving, replacing it with a top-down, centrally controlled governance model;
- » rejected the Madras High Court's directive to engage collaboratively in working with the Residents' Assembly and its Working Groups and appealed its rulings, which has led to a continuing state of intentional confusion while it pursues appeals;
- » refused to recognize the Working Committee selected through approved community processes and dismissing without consideration proposals to collaboratively address city planning and development;
- » dismissed environmentally sound and responsibly balanced proposals prepared for the Governing Board by town planners, architects and other experts in participative processes such as the Auroville-developed "Dreamweaving" methodology, an innovative planning model designed to align foundational ideals with practical, sustainable development goals while fostering unity and syncretic thinking in shaping a shared vision for urban and community development. Led by a core team of architects and informed by technical experts, Dreamweaving is a structured process to find concrete, practical solutions to planning and development that reflect the spirit and nature of Auroville.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

After seizing control of Auroville's Funds and Assets Management Committee in 2021 along with its budget coordination and housing subcommittees, the new administration took over Auroville's funds and assets through a group reporting directly to the Secretary. Residents selected through approved community processes were removed from involvement in financial matters and transparent financial reporting ceased, including accountability for the use of collective funds.

Over the past three years the administration has been responsible for a financial downturn including a large loss in land exchanges, irregular fiscal practices, and abuse of financial and administrative authority. The resulting damage to Auroville's reputation has contributed to a significant economic downturn for Auroville, including a decline in revenue from its income-generating units and donations and a loss of livelihood among residents and employees from surrounding villages.

The administration's forceful assertion of ownership rights and control of Auroville assets, including its efforts to commodify them without consultation with the Residents' Assembly,

violates a fundamental principle of the Auroville Foundation Act, which is to entrust lands and other assets to the Foundation as a whole—including the residents—to serve as custodians.

## Land Exchanges

The administration has caused a serious financial loss for Auroville due to opaque land exchanges made without due consultation for the purpose of consolidating lands in the proposed city centre. Several were rich in assets such as borewells, water and electrical installations, and buildings. Some, like AuroOrchard Farm, were very productive. No government funds were used to procure these lands, which were acquired on Auroville's behalf with funds donated by benefactors, independent groups, and residents.

Everyone concerned about Auroville's future, including the Residents' Assembly and International Advisory Council, supports the need to consolidate lands within the designated city area. But how is the goal to be achieved? And how to ensure fairness, including criteria and procedures used for such exchanges, in future transactions?

Actions by the administration that have generated concern and alarm include:

- » exchanging lands for amounts dramatically less than market value, resulting in massive losses to Auroville;
- » not providing transparent accounting of the exchanges to the other two statutory bodies of the Auroville Foundation;
- » disposing of Auroville lands with excellent infrastructure and access to main roads in exchange for small parcels of land without infrastructure or road access;
- » falsely asserting that outlying lands are being exchanged to consolidate land in the "city area" when in fact many of the parcels obtained are located in far corners of the Greenbelt area outside the Master Plan's "city limits";
- » giving away lands purchased long ago thanks to offerings by Indian and international donors without consulting Auroville's land experts or Auroville residents in those properties, leaving them without a home or job;
- » discontinuing the practice of negotiating only with ancestral land owners, while encouraging negotiations with speculators who purchase land from villagers and then demand exchanges at exorbitant rates;
- » allowing unauthorized land encroachments and land grabs by unscrupulous real-estate speculators, and not taking timely action against them;
- » disregarding the agricultural, historical, and environmental contributions of the lands considered for exchange, including the earliest properties acquired with the Mother's blessing.

Prior to 2021, Auroville's land exchanges were guided by a protocol established by an earlier government-appointed administration to ensure fair, open, and honest dealing. It included an independent evaluator and participation by the Resident Assembly's Working Committee and its Funds and Assets Management Committee (FAMC).

Departing from this transparent process, the new administration created a so-called "Land Committee" reporting directly to the Secretary and Governing Board that bypassed the Residents' Assembly and its Land Board. This committee was later superseded in practice when the Secretary hired a retired District Revenue Officer (DRO) as special officer for land matters reporting only to her. None of the land transactions have been transparent or accountable.

### **International Advisory Council Concerns**

In an online meeting of 12 December 2023 with the International Advisory Council (IAC), the Chairman of the Governing Board stated that the matter of land exchanges should be left to the Governing Board, and that the International Advisory Council should not inquire into land transactions. But the IAC had grown increasingly concerned about irregularities in land exchanges and persisted in expressing its concerns over the course of several more online meetings. After its questions were repeatedly ignored, on 17 March 2024, four of the five IAC members issued a strong statement to the Governing Board calling for a halt to land exchanges until its concerns were addressed.

Again, on 31 May 2024, in an online meeting with the Governing Board, three IAC members expressed deep reservations about the handling of land exchanges. On 30 September 2024, in an urgent communication to the Governing Board, the same three IAC members underscored their apprehensions about the disparity between the values of the lands given away versus lands received, providing an analysis that showed an actual loss of INR 247 crores (almost 30 million USD) against the market value of 30 acres in recently exchanged lands. Receiving no response from the Governing Board, this analysis was later shared with the Residents' Assembly.

In some cases, detailed analysis showed, tracts were traded at a rate one hundred times below market value. In one instance, the new owner, not related to Auroville, immediately parceled and resold the land at a rate several hundred times higher than the one at which the exchange was registered.

The IAC statements questioned both the nature of, and rationale for, claims about these transactions. They granted that the urgency of land exchanges could, in theory, justify an acceptable loss in value. However, using only the most conservative market rates, even if a loss of 10 percent is deemed strategically acceptable, and even if the market rate is placed at 20 percent lower than the listed rate, the data still shows a stunning estimated loss to Auroville of INR 170 crores, or about USD 20M for 30 acres exchanged.

### **Protecting Auroville's Assets**

It is wrong to suggest that the value of any land acquired within the Auroville Master Plan area justifies bypassing standard financial and legal practices and due process. A former Governing Board Secretary established a rigorous process to assess and account for proper evaluation of lands on both sides, a protocol which the present administration has not followed.

The Residents' Assembly's selected representatives and International Advisory Council members believe that the Auroville Foundation as a whole, including the Governing Board, has a responsibility to:

- » protect Auroville's assets and work out exchange deals that are to the community's advantage in every way;
- » conduct transactions using a precise, fair, and transparent protocol;
- » consult with Auroville residents living on and taking care of the lands and other Auroville experts in land matters;
- » assess each case on its own merit, taking into account historical, developmental, agricultural, and environmental factors when estimating a particular land's actual contribution to the community.

The IAC urged the Governing Board not to proceed with further land exchanges until it has had a chance to hold a thorough discussion, not only with members of the Governing Board and the Foundation's administration, but also with a concerned section of Auroville residents. None of the IAC's communications to the Governing Board have received an adequate response.

### **A Pattern of Improper Financial Practices**

The land exchanges appear as part of a larger pattern indicating negligent and/or non-compliant financial practices and abuses of financial authority by the present administration in other areas. These include:

- » appropriating control over funds generated by the Auroville community through units, individuals or donations, and determining spending priorities without transparency or consultation;
- » outsourcing construction in Auroville by hiring commercial and governmental contractors who have performed substandard work at exorbitant costs with neither transparency nor accountability;
- » not transparently accounting for sales or other disposition of excavated materials and wood from thousands of trees it ordered to be felled;
- » auctioning off the harvest of fruit trees on Auroville farms to commercial parties without consultation, justification, or compensation, undercutting the community's drive toward self-sufficiency and destroying income-generating capabilities of the farms;
- » peremptorily appropriating Auroville assets for personal or administrative use, including public buildings and personal lodgings;
- » applying irregular accounting practices in recording a huge (INR 57,88,44,761) but unidentified increase in "other income" on the Foundation's balance sheet between FY 2021-2023 along with other anomalies;
- » singling out and summarily dismissing sixty-two forest workers without notice or compensation under the pretext of budget reductions, and then refusing to pay their gratuity fund.

During this time, the administration has nearly quintupled its staff, expanding it from less than ten to a workforce of about forty paid employees, many of whom are active or retired government officials without previous knowledge of Auroville or the principles that inspire it. The unprecedented increase in administrative headcount has not resulted in any improvement in effectiveness or any other discernible benefit to the Auroville community. Rather, it has added major overhead expenses and led to the requisitioning of residents' homes and teachers' staff quarters.

The Governing Board directed that this paid workforce should be treated on a par with Aurovilians and given free services including education and medical, as well as discounts at community restaurants, despite the disparity between the ample salaries paid to these hired employees and the minimal stipend allocated to many committed Auroville residents which constitutes a subsistence allowance.

The takeover by the new administration in 2021 corresponds to a steep decline in Auroville's economic growth and a change in cost structure. Data in the Auroville Foundation Annual Reports for FY 2021-2023 indicates that changes the administration made to Auroville's income-generating units combined with increased overhead costs has led to:

- » a loss of 7.93% in sales of INR 4,14,93,992 (approximately USD 490,000);
- » an increase in the cost of paid administrative staff by INR 15,33,82,005 (approximately USD 1.8M);
- » an overall loss of income to Auroville of 9.43%, or INR 38,47,19,810 (approximately USD 4.5M).

### **Abuse of Financial and Administrative Authority**

When it dismantled the services created by Auroville residents, the administration also discarded Auroville’s ideal of creating a moneyless internal economy. Instead, after appropriating its collective income, it began charging residents for internal services, systematically monetizing every aspect of life, and applying financial pressure to intimidate, threaten, and unjustly punish Auroville residents.

Without warning or rationale, for example, the administration cut off monthly stipends for approximately 200 targeted residents, including many with families working in farming and forestry, leaving them unable to cover the cost of basic necessities.

At the same time, these residents, many without financial means, were told to pay a previously voluntary Rs 3,800 monthly “city services contribution,” including residents who had a previous waiver from having to pay such a tax. In some cases, the amount demanded of residents was backdated by three years, meaning that they had to pay an additional 1 lakh rupees (approximately USD 1,200) at the same time they were being cut off from their only source of income.

Abuse of financial authority extends to the extortionary use of the administrative power to grant or refuse letters of recommendation for visas. Non-Indian residents of Auroville — many of whom include Auroville’s pioneers who have lived in the community for decades and have no other home to return to — depend upon visa extensions to continue staying in and/or to travel outside India. A “No Dues Certificate,” issued by the administration’s appointees in charge of budgets (the Budget Coordination Committee), is now required to receive a visa recommendation letter. If the amount calculated by this Committee, often backdated three years, is not paid, the resident is denied a visa recommendation letter.

Many non-Indian residents have been threatened with withdrawal of their visa recommendation if they don’t meet the administration’s approval. Often, they have been subjected to months-long delays with no explanation. Most who have received an extension have been given a substantially reduced and limited one, leaving them in a continued state of anxiety and insecurity. A few prominent residents have been evicted from India as a warning to others.

Such practices are antithetical to Auroville’s values and contrary to the moral, ethical, and spiritual principles at the heart of Auroville and the Auroville Foundation Act.

## **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

*“Auroville is an intentional city. People join because they share an aspiration towards change and a divine Life. It has to become a global role model for the future. For this reason the growth of Auroville should be in terms of quality of people and not only in terms of quantity and numbers. We should consider that Auroville is a different city and the development is not driven by market force. Planning is based on human factors and*

*aspirations, and a new strategy has to be brought forward. The Plan is not only [the] placement of buildings and infrastructure. It should be the creation of an environment conducive to a transforming spiritual experience.”*

**B.V. Doshi, 2014**  
**Former Chairman of Auroville’s**  
**Town Development Council and**  
**Member of the Governing Board**

*“If the people who come for this profession of faith are not able to build their own environment it would mean that Auroville is a failure. It is essential that it is being built at the level of individual experience. One could say that the Auroville concept is the opposite of a contemporary urbanism. In our urbanistic conception, one makes a city on paper. The conception is as intelligent as it can be and then one asks people to come and live there. Here the process is inverted: people live the experience and it is from the experience that the environment is created.”*

**Roger Anger**  
**Chief Architect for Auroville, 1972**

Less than two weeks after her appointment on 4 June, 2021, the new Secretary sidelined Auroville’s Town Development Council and reconstituted it with a new planning group reporting not to the Residents’ Assembly, as called for in the Auroville Foundation Act, but directly to her.

She and the new Governing Board soon began issuing a series of administrative orders authorising radical changes to the composition, nature, and powers of Auroville’s planning and development function. The Residents’ Assembly was stripped of its responsibility to develop the Master Plan, eliminating the community’s ability to plan for its own future. The Governing Board and Secretary assigned themselves the authority to select members of the reconstituted Town Development Council and direct all aspects of planning and development.

On March 15, 2024, the Madras High Court ruled that the Governing Board/Secretary had engaged in an illegal seizure of power and had disenfranchised the Residents’ Assembly of its responsibilities in the planning, development, and execution of Auroville’s ‘Master Plan: Perspective 2025’ as specified in the Auroville Foundation Act.

Representatives of the Residents’ Assembly reached out to the Governing Board and officers in the Ministry of Education to propose a harmonious way forward through respectful dialogue. Ignoring that outreach and the court ruling, the Secretary filed an appeal to India’s Supreme Court. The case is ongoing.

Planning and development are at the heart of the principles underpinning Auroville’s experimental and evolutionary purpose as envisioned by the Mother and the Auroville Charter.

For decades, residents debated how to approach building the city and the Mother’s intentions for its inner and outer development. Lack of funding, large gaps in contiguous lands, and the need to develop the infrastructure thoughtfully in harmony with environmental, cultural, and social realities contributed to large-scale physical development proceeding more slowly than anticipated.

Frustration grew among some residents who wanted to build the town more rapidly and exactly, in accordance with their understanding of the Mother’s vision. Others believed her vision was more flexible, and that the concept needed to be adjusted based on lived experience, environmental realities, and evolving knowledge about best practices in urban planning. The community tried to reconcile these positions through meetings, dialogue, and other attempts to find common ground. In the meantime, plans proposing the creation of Detailed Development Plans (DDPs) for Residential Zones 1 and 2 and the Green Belt Development Plan were not acted on along with other plans that proposed DDPs.



Rather than work collaboratively with the Residents' Assembly and International Advisory Council to overcome this challenge, the new administration bypassed the participatory approach altogether. Asserting that progress had "stagnated" and growth was being blocked, it seized control of the planning function and issued a directive to "build the city" in an accelerated, literal manner according to fixed interpretations of the architectural concept conceived sixty years earlier without consultation with the wider body of Auroville residents.

Contrary to the administration's portrayal, a large majority of the Residents' Assembly supports Auroville's accelerated growth and development, including the development of the 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025'. It is incorrect to frame the issue as a binary choice of either sustainability or development. The issue contains several dimensions: the outcome envisioned, the way in which growth is to be achieved, and how to overcome rigid positions.

The community as a whole affirms the need to respect the planning and development principles it has followed for the past decades, which were supported by all previous government-appointed administrations and continue to be supported by a majority of Auroville supporters and urban-rural development experts in India and around the world. Those principles, reflected in the 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025', include:

- » an integral, balanced, and participatory community-led development approach focused on sustainable growth, human welfare within the larger bioregion, and scalability to ensure a resilient, harmonious future;
- » respect for development goals *and* preservation of the natural environment, developing sustainable practices to inform urban planning in preventing further degradation and establishing a base upon which secure growth can happen;
- » respect for India's environmental regulations;
- » respect for community-led development;
- » responsible, ethical management of Auroville's assets;
- » transparency and probity in land dealings;
- » non-commercialisation of Auroville's mission and purpose.

In overriding the statutory planning responsibility of the community, the administration chose to impose an outmoded top-down, central-planning model characterised by development at any cost that is inconsistent with contemporary national and international standards. It has led to the widespread destruction of Auroville assets and damage to the long-term interests of its residents and bioregion and undermined Auroville's reputation as an inspiring urban-rural development experiment for India and the world.

## Approaches to Planning and Development

*"There cannot be a complete freedom for individuals, groups of individuals or institutions to carry out developments without consideration for the surrounding environment...Development proposals will be considered only if effectively eco-friendly and environmentally appropriate...Innovative models in the field of afforestation, land development, water conservation, rainwater harvesting, building technology, community participation, energy saving etc. incorporated in the Master Plan would be integral to the township development and management.."*

**Auroville 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025'**

The Residents' Assembly approved a Master Plan in 1999. This document was later thoroughly readjusted and rewritten to produce the conceptual Auroville 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025',

which was created by the Auroville Planning Office and approved in 2001 by the Indian Government's Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation.

This was in keeping with Chapter 3(19) and (19) (2)(c) of the Auroville Foundation Act, which stipulates that the Residents' Assembly shall "formulate the master plan of Auroville," establishing committees such as the Town Planning Council "which shall represent it in relation to the functions to be performed by the Governing Board." (Annexure A) In other words, the Act calls for the residents to lead the planning and development process and participate at every step with Governing Board approval. The plan is meant for the residents and should be formulated by them.

Although termed a "Master Plan," the Auroville 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025' is in fact only a broad framework for township development. It calls for updates and revisions to be made at regular intervals, including the creation and execution of Detailed Development Plans (DDPs). It proposes a broad municipal planning effort with an emphasis on flexibility: "it will be neither traditional nor rigid." Formulation of the Master Plan is the duty of the Auroville residents under terms of section 3(19)(c) of the Auroville Foundation Act. Auroville took many steps toward building the necessary infrastructure for the future city in alignment with the guiding framework of 'Perspective 2025' (see pps 36-39).

That changed, however, with the administrative takeover in 2021. While professing adherence to the 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025', the new administration has dismissed Auroville's lauded achievements in afforestation, water management and rural development programmes in pursuit of unrestrained, large-scale growth and development projects without consultation, proper planning, environmental impact assessments, or a regional transportation circulation plan, among other important considerations.

### **Irresponsible Road Building and Tree Cutting**

Shortly after gaining control of the planning and development function, the administration took charge of a road-building project called the Crown Road, a key circular major road halfway between the city center and the border of the green belt. It had been under development through Government of India funds, made of handsome pavers, strong, durable and made in an Auroville factory by Auroville-related workers, led by an Auroville engineer who had won several awards in India.

For no understandable reason, after the administration took charge, it destroyed much of the already 60%-finished road that carried the bulk of Auroville vehicles and took the pavers off the road to make walkways to their homes.

The Secretary signed a contract with an outside contractor that was far more costly than anything Aurovilians had ever made, but which resulted in a road of unacceptably shoddy, substandard quality undertaken without local accountability, community involvement, clear justification, or obtaining permissions and proper procedures to demolish assets and dispose of materials generated through government grants.

Moreover, the administration disregarded requests to pause until proper Detailed Development Plans (DDPs) were in place. No consideration was given to the road's impact on existing homes, lives, green cover, and other community assets. Some of the land required for completion does not belong to Auroville, but to private parties, leading to a huge escalation in land prices.

Despite assertions to the contrary, the Auroville community is not opposed to roads. Roads and road maintenance are essential. Auroville is not "anti-development". Many successful develop-

ment projects prior to 2021 were undertaken by Auroville planners and architects in partnership with the government. The issue concerns non-consultative decision-making, unnecessary approaches that damage human communities and natural systems, and the use of inappropriate methods and materials.

Detrimental actions by the present administration include:

- » using bulldozers in a deliberate show of force to demolish buildings and destroy forested areas;
- » negligently filling in and paving over of vital waterways, damaging the water drainage system across the Auroville plateau, negatively impacting aquifer recharge and undermining the increasingly urgent need to fortify water security for the bioregion's future;
- » ignoring planning requirements to study the impact of motorised traffic within Auroville and larger mobility and environmental impact concerns for the larger bioregion;
- » using private commercial contractors without financial transparency or accountability, resulting in sub-standard work, rather than employing Auroville's own trained road service workforce and local labour;
- » clearing land and cutting hundreds of trees to make way for a VIP road into Auroville, razing an area the size of approximately two football fields, allegedly for a large visitor car park, neither of which are elements of the 'Auroville Master Plan: Perspective 2025', and which endanger two farms as well as several families who were instructed to move without giving them viable alternatives or funding to make such a move possible;
- » irrationally insisting on perfect circles for Auroville's Crown and Outer Ring roads, and on 12 radial roads, which has unnecessarily destroyed thousands of trees and degraded the very environment that the Master Plan put at the centre of Auroville's development;
- » imposing wide concrete roads and planning for high-density concrete buildings, disregarding Auroville's commitment to sustainable, innovative architecture and housing and human-scale solutions;
- » destroying large sections of the environmentally sensitive Darkali Forest Park area by paving a main road through the 50-acre park, resulting in the devastation of rare tree species and the park's sophisticated rainwater conservation system, which serves as a vital contributor to aquifer recharge for the Kaliveli watershed and the future ecological sustainability of Auroville and its neighbouring villages;
- » destroying large sections of the Revelation Forest Sanctuary, which is home to rare and protected species endemic to the Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest.

The administration has engaged in or supported other actions that are contrary to Auroville's values of integral development and the principles of the 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025'. It has undermined the future of the Pebble Garden preserve through secretly negotiating a land exchange that would destroy the viability of this award-winning model of environmental restoration in India which features a forest of over two hundred indigenous species, endangered tree groves, a vegetable seed diversity conservation garden, and vital water sources and harvesting ponds.

It also has permitted the excavation of an enormous lake surrounding the Matrimandir at the centre of Auroville, ignoring concerns and repeated appeals from the community at large about

the environmental impact on surrounding villages, and rejecting the community's proposal for an integral lake development plan appropriate for long-term, sustainable water resource management for Auroville and the bioregion, including ways that the Mother's guidelines can be fulfilled in an environmentally sensitive, humanely inclusive, beautiful, and timely manner. Specific appeals that were largely ignored or rejected outright include:

- » obtaining proper building permission from the community;
- » conducting and sharing environmental impact assessments for the lake excavation and landscaping;
- » pausing tree-cutting and excavation;
- » considering the integration of the alternative lake proposal that addresses ecological and aesthetic values;
- » integrating community feedback and engaging in constructive dialogue with community volunteers.

Disregarding participatory and collaborative processes, the administration has permitted work to proceed in a hasty manner using an unrealistic completion timeline and insufficient safeguards, leading to a breakage of the lake wall, which has raised serious questions about engineering accountability and the use of donor contributions.

The result of all these actions has been unwarranted destruction that could have been avoided by more thoughtful planning to spare Auroville assets, including buildings and structures that were built with permission given by previous planning groups, natural resources, and green spaces that should be woven into any urban fabric.

In addition, the administration is implementing a monetised approach to Auroville's organic farms and forest lands using industrial-style agricultural and agro-forestry methods that will degrade the land, taking no account of the large pool of expertise the stewards of these lands have accumulated, their hard work for decades, and the manner in which they have transformed the environment of Auroville's bioregion in the face of huge challenges, eliciting praise from state and central governments and beyond.

Auroville's experts proposed feasible alternatives to these unnecessary approaches, including a road building proposal that would allow roads to be constructed with minimal impact on community assets and prevent more damage to Auroville's assets and residents and further degradation to both its environment and spirit.

Finally, Auroville's principle of community-led development includes consideration and partnership with local communities and bioregional organizations, which the present administration has largely ignored. (See "A Cooperative Model of Development," p. 37-38; "Villages and Bioregional Development," p. 39)

The Residents' Assembly's Working Committee and the International Advisory Council have repeatedly requested a balance that respects both development goals for the township *and* preservation of the natural environment and true partnership through a bioregional approach. The administration has ignored those requests.

### **Repudiation of Auroville's Integral Planning & Development Approach**

The administration has repudiated Auroville's integral planning and development ethos and methodology which takes an inclusive, long-term approach to township development in the context of evolving human needs and environmental conditions. That ethos includes:

- » developing sustainable solutions for the bioregion’s natural and human resources through stewardship of water, soil, flora, and archaeological heritage in line with the principles of the Auroville Charter, the Auroville ‘Master Plan: Perspective 2025’, and the laws and environmental regulations of the state of Tamil Nadu and the Government of India;
- » integrating bioregional development, economics, culture, and other factors as an essential part of the planning and development process, requiring strong relationships, trust, and collaboration among diverse stakeholders;
- » envisioning Auroville’s work as a custodian, trustee, and steward rather than that of an owner or landlord;
- » valuing the Mother’s emphasis that building a city implies more than just physical infrastructure.

The administration has rejected the community’s participatory planning strategies like the innovative Dreamweaving methodology in creating developmental roadmaps (see p. 24, 39). It has also disregarded the extensive planning work and decisions made by the community over the past decade, including:

- » proposals from the **Vision Task Force** (2015), which involved participants from the Governing Board, International Advisory Council, and Residents’ Assembly, including nearly 165 experts from multiple disciplines;
- » **Greenbelt Development Plan** (2014–2016), facilitated by a leading landscape architect, Mr. David Stein, in collaboration with Auroville experts;
- » **Detailed Development Plan for Residential Zones 1 & 2** (2020) to accommodate a density of 5,000 new inhabitants, including infrastructure for roads, wastewater treatment, drinking water, energy and communication;
- » **Participatory Water Development Exercise** (2021) to address serious issues of water stress in the township area and region, which involved a number of Auroville water experts and members of the larger community and incorporated guidelines provided by the Ministry of Urban Development;
- » **Development Priorities Exercise** (2021) with residents and experts from multiple sectors including education, water, economy, culture, health and wellness, and bioregional development, leading to the creation of a detailed, action-focused report with priorities for each sector;
- » **Dreamweaving the Crown Exercise** (2022), which sought to visualize and harmonize the many views of Auroville experts and residents around the concept of the Crown Road as a 75-metre wide band connecting all zones of Auroville and sectoral areas of community life;
- » core components of the ‘**Master Plan: Perspective 2025**’, which includes a comprehensive and integrated approach to Auroville’s growth and development within the context of the bioregion, including the incorporation of innovative models and techniques in the fields of forestry, land development, water conservation, rainwater harvesting, building technology and energy saving.

## Rejection of Environmental Regulations

The administration appealed the judgment of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), a specialised judicial body established by the Government of India in 2010 to handle cases related to environmental protection and the conservation of the nation’s forests and other natural resources. This

was in keeping with other actions contrary to responsible development detailed in this section:

- » refusing to abide by the NGT’s April, 2022 judgement to halt road building in Auroville areas containing trees and to replace trees already taken down;
- » disregarding the NGT’s directive that any development in Auroville can only proceed based on proper town plans and must include Environmental Clearance before implementation can start;
- » carrying out secretive tree cutting at night in defiance of the NGT’s injunction;
- » spurning the NGT-appointed Joint Committee’s initial report and recommendations ordered by the NGT to limit the width of the Crown Road through the Darkali Forest Park area (the full survey and report by the Joint Committee was never completed);
- » ignoring legal requirements for environmental clearance for tree cutting and clearing.

### **Commercialisation & Privatisation**

The administration has acted unilaterally to monetise Auroville on a large scale, violating the non-commercial principles of Auroville’s Charter, the Mother’s intent, and Auroville’s own Master Plan. Actions include:

- » launching an expansive privatisation scheme to turn Auroville into a large income-generating project by outsourcing community services and assets to external entities, starting with the privatisation of Auroville’s health sector:
  - » inviting private hospitals in the area in January, 2024 to submit expressions of interest in acquiring and running a new hospital within Auroville without needing to construct new buildings – a proposition calling for the requisition and privatisation of existing Auroville land and health facilities;
- » initiating the development of a large tourism infrastructure and promoting Auroville as a national and international tourist destination:
  - » taking control of the Auroville Visitors’ Center, rewriting print material given to visitors with distortions and inaccuracies;
  - » using Bharat Nivas and Savitri Bhavan as conference centres to host outside groups, presentations, exhibitions, politically-oriented events, personalities, and youth groups who have no connection to Auroville;
  - » implementing paid entrance fees at some public spaces, overturning the principle of free access to arts and culture programmes, which have been distinctive assets of Auroville;
  - » creating a paid “wildlife” theme park with cement and resin animals while actual Auroville wildlife is being endangered by indiscriminate bulldozing and paving over habitats (see ‘Impact on Local Communities,’ p. 43-44);
  - » halting financial support to places that welcome cultural events, forcing them to adopt an income-generating strategy at the expense of Auroville’s practice of supporting and encouraging free access to art and culture.

The attempt by the administration to convert Auroville’s municipal services for roads, healthcare, information technology and other such services into new, income-generating units registered as commercial entities is an important part of this pattern of commercialization. Not only does this display a fundamental lack of understanding of the non-commercial nature of municipal services required for any township’s functioning, but it also violates the community’s statutory right under

the Auroville Foundation Act (Section 20(4)) to organize these departments to manage its day-to-day activities without external restraints and interference.

### **An Integrated Approach to Growth**

Auroville's many accomplishments are nationally and internationally recognized in multiple fields, from ecological restoration, renewable energy, and architecture to education, research, and culture. What's less appreciated is the community's systematic approach to preparing the material base needed to manifest a large municipality.

It is false to assert that the residents of Auroville haven't made progress in "building the city," just as it is wrong to state that most residents don't want to accelerate progress toward establishing a larger township.

These allegations are based on an insufficient or deliberately falsified understanding of Auroville's history, achievements and integrated approach to growth. Auroville residents have worked systematically to establish the infrastructure needed to develop the city over many decades.

### **Achieving Sustainable Growth at Scale**

The idea of rapidly building a conventional urban development to house a hypothetical population of 50,000 on the Auroville plateau cannot ignore the need for a physical and socioeconomic infrastructure capable of sustaining growth at such a scale.

That is one reason why Auroville has insisted that sustainable use and preservation of natural resources must continue to be an integral part of township planning and development. Despite Auroville's enormous accomplishments in land reclamation and ecological restoration, water use—to cite one example—remains a critical issue not just for Auroville but for the entire bioregion.

- » The Kaliveli basin, which includes the Auroville plateau, is home and base of livelihood to more than one million people. The only source of potable water in this area is groundwater, which is threatened by overuse, population growth, and saline intrusion into the Kaliveli aquifer, which is being drained to meet expanding agricultural, industrial and domestic needs.
- » Preserving tree cover and developing water catchments must be done to preserve water and arable soil necessary for a flourishing collective life for all, not just for today but for the generations to come. They are an essential part of any responsible urban plan.

### **A Cooperative Model of Development**

Auroville seeks to address developmental needs through a bioregional approach. Its multi-stakeholder strategy for successful urbanisation has the potential to showcase India's leadership in developing innovative rural-urban partnerships on the global stage.

Experience worldwide shows that sustainable development relies on participatory approaches that prioritise people, land, culture, and environment. Failure to include stakeholders in development planning can lead to conflict and compromise long-term sustainability.

The administration's shift from the attempt to evolve a cooperative development model toward a rigid, top-down approach threatens to unravel 56 years of work to build such a model and imperils the future of both Auroville and the bioregion. Without doubt, the collaboration between Auroville and its neighborhood has not always been easy and could have been better in

many ways. But much effort has been put into this shared approach to development and should be encouraged to continue.

### **Building Auroville's Civil and Civic Infrastructure**

Long-term planning for any successful urban development effort relies on the establishment of a civil and civic infrastructure. Civil infrastructure includes the physical structures, facilities and services needed for the operation of a society or enterprise, such as roads, water supply systems, and power grids. Civic infrastructure encompasses facilities, systems and services that support community life, personal engagement in the community, and a flourishing collective existence, such as community centers, public parks, libraries, and other cultural and recreational spaces and activities.

Over the past fifty-five years Auroville has worked under uniquely challenging circumstances to develop the community's civil and civic infrastructure as the foundation upon which sustainable urban growth can happen. Two reports provide extensive documentation of Auroville's accomplishments in these areas: 'The Development of Auroville's Assets' and 'Auroville, the City of Dawn' (Annexure D).

Auroville's impressive civic and civil planning and development work has taken place across eight key sectors:

**Material Infrastructure & Municipal Services:** Development of an expansive municipal infrastructure, including: renewable energy and electrical systems and services; road-building and transportation services; water management and supply services; healthcare facilities and wellness services; waste management systems and services, including upcycling, recycling and sewage treatment; kitchens and food services; and municipal services for housing, land, and more.

**Buildings, Public & Residential:** Development of climate-responsive sustainable architecture and building technologies, including world-class applied research centres for sustainable housing and development.

**Economic Development:** Creation of more than 170 diverse social enterprises that help sustain Auroville financially as well as providing employment, training and education to more than 5,000 people from the surrounding area.

**Natural Resources:** Multiple initiatives in sustainable conservation and development of land, water, habitat protection, environmental regeneration, watershed planning and water security, and afforestation including 47 forest services.

**Agriculture:** More than 20 farms growing only organic food, along with the development of food-based industries and 22 farm services.

**Education:** An extensive education system supporting youth within the community and surrounding villages, as well as continuing education and informal education for adults. From pre-creche through high school level, Auroville's 22 schools and educational centres serve more than 2,300 children of the community and the bioregion.

**Arts & Culture:** Arts and cultural activities are an essential part of civic life and municipal infrastructure. They are a necessity for human flourishing, especially in Auroville, which is dedicated to the integral development of consciousness, the manifestation of beauty in all life, and the pursuit of lifelong learning. Public facilities and services built by Auroville include:



- » community libraries and research centres, such as Savitri Bhavan and the Auroville Language Laboratory;
- » facilities for fitness, sports, and physical education;
- » facilities for the embodied and performing arts like the Pitanga Cultural Centre and CRIPA Centre for Research in the Performing Arts, and the Kalabhumi campus for arts activities;
- » centres for Indian Culture and Tamil Heritage and Culture, as well as other cultural centres such as the Mohanam Village Heritage Centre.

**Villages & Bioregional Development:** Auroville supports numerous community cultural, training, and educational centres and services dedicated to supporting the population of the bioregion, including:

- » six outreach schools serving nearly 2,000 village youth, one vocational training center and college (the Auroville Institute of Applied Technology), and a centre for children and youth with special needs (Deepam);
- » three major vocational training centres: the ‘Life Education Centre’ for girls; ‘Illaignarkal,’ an educational and training centre for Auroville’s employees from the surrounding villages; and ‘Reach for the Stars’, an organisation that finances higher education for young people from the villages;
- » seven health clinics, a dental centre and multiple village outreach programmes such as Auroville Village Action Group, an NGO founded in 1983 which implements programmes across the four critical areas of community development, economic development, capacity-building and psychosocial services serving approximately 4,000 villagers.
- » Sustainable Livelihoods Institute (SLI), a joint venture with the Tamil Nadu Dept. of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj between 2015–2020, which trained over 8,000 village women and government officials from across Tamil Nadu, creating new jobs and generating more than INR 3 crores through several green enterprises and sustainable agriculture ventures.

All this has been accomplished with fewer than 2,500 long-term adult residents who have not had access to anything close to the funding required to build an urban centre in rural India. That the community has achieved what it has through its own efforts, experimentation, and innovation is an accomplishment that should be celebrated, not derided.

## Conclusion

An integral and future-facing approach to planning and development is needed for Auroville in the context of the bioregion of which it is a part. To posit an either/or choice between an exclusively rural “eco-village” or an exclusively urban “city”, in the way that “city” is generally understood, is to create a false dichotomy. Deliberately stoking differences to foster divisions, strife and hostility on this issue is antithetical to Auroville’s ethos and ideals.

Auroville’s work is not simply to build an infrastructure or a municipality for their own sakes. It is, among other things, to bring together best practices and innovations from various fields to serve, as its Charter suggests, as a hub “of unending education, constant progress ... [and] material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity”.

A higher ground above and beyond polarised extremes is needed for planning and development in keeping with Auroville’s purpose. It is precisely such a synthesis that the community was

pursuing before the administrative takeover in 2021. A promising collaborative methodology like Dreamweaving represents a way that urban planning and rural development can move forward together in accomplishing a new, integrated model for India and the world in keeping with Auroville's mission.

The only way that can be accomplished is by restoring the Governing Board's proper role of supporting the development of Auroville in a genuine partnership with the community of Auroville through its Residents' Assembly and the International Advisory Council.

## COMMUNICATIONS

For more than five decades, Auroville developed robust internal and external communication systems to meet needs essential to its functioning as an international community dedicated to human unity. These evolved to include:

- » digital platforms facilitating internal governance and collaboration;
- » channels for engaging with media and the public;
- » archives preserving the community's history and development;
- » mechanisms for transparent information sharing among residents.

These communication structures and information channels supported Auroville's statutory requirement for collective decision-making through its Residents' Assembly while enabling the community to document its unique experiment in evolving new forms to manifest a new consciousness of human unity.

These systems were grounded in principles aligned with Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga: commitment to truthful and accurate information sharing; transparency and accountability in governance; universal access to information; protection of individual expression; inclusion, tolerance, and respect for diverse viewpoints while maintaining safeguards against defamation, hate speech, and incitement to violence.

### Dismantling Auroville's Communication Infrastructure

Beginning in December 2021, the administration initiated a series of coordinated measures to seize control of Auroville's information channels and platforms and change the principles underpinning its communications.

It has systematically used mistruths, falsehoods and disinformation to create a fabricated version of reality to justify actions that contravene both the Auroville Foundation Act and the community's established procedures for participatory development. Its false narrative particularly disregards the Mother's emphasis on Auroville as a place for conscious experimentation to create new forms of collective living, thereby promoting a conventional approach to development that contradicts Auroville's founding principles.

The administration's actions include:

#### Internal

- » taking over the community's email domain name (@auroville.org.in), restricting access to personal and organisational accounts without due process;

- » blocking the selected representatives of the Residents' Assembly from accessing their official working groups' email accounts and shared digital resources;
- » appointing new administrators for internal forums without justification, transparency or accountability;
- » monitoring and censoring content that differs from official administration positions;
- » surveilling private communications in violation of basic privacy rights;
- » using coercive measures, including visa threats, to silence dissenting voices.

### **Media & External Communications**

- » taking control by force of OutreachMedia, Auroville's long-established interface with press and media;
- » appointing hand-picked spokespersons to control the community's public narrative;
- » restricting residents from speaking with journalists or sharing information about community concerns;
- » using seized media assets to promote narratives that mischaracterise Auroville's achievements and residents' opinions and beliefs;
- » spreading disinformation about community members and processes.

### **Historical Records**

- » taking over by force the Auroville Archives, established by retired Major General Krishna Tewari and built over many years through voluntary contributions of historical material from many residents and friends of Auroville, and dismissing long-standing and experienced archivists without cause;
- » restricting access to historical documents and records;
- » appropriating archival materials to promote preferred narratives about Auroville's development;
- » controlling access to public information and historical documentation.

All these actions severely impacted the Residents' Assembly's ability to function as mandated by the Auroville Foundation Act, which requires open communication for collective decision-making. They also undermine trust between administration and community members, an essential component for the Auroville Foundation to function in mutuality.

### **Promulgating False Narratives**

The administration launched a systematic effort to reshape public perception of Auroville and its residents, using media channels under its control to create a fabricated reality using mistruths, misrepresentations, and falsehoods. Its distorted narrative includes:

- » mischaracterising residents who raise concerns as "anti-city", "anti-growth", "anti-Indian", "anti-government", and many other epithets despite their demonstrated commitment to Auroville's development and their long-standing respect for Mother India;
- » falsely charging Aurovilians with criminal offences;

- » falsely asserting that only a small number of disaffected “radicals” oppose the administration’s actions, when in fact a large majority of residents and supporters refute its claims and object to its coercive actions;
- » misrepresenting the community’s position on development, claiming resistance to growth and an intent to preserve the status quo, when in fact it supports growth within a framework of balanced and sustainable planning aligned with contemporary best practices;
- » dismissing five decades of documented achievements in education, sustainability, and cultural integration, among other fields, to justify bypassing established planning processes and the takeover of management;
- » using derogatory terms to delegitimize residents who advocate for proper planning processes and environmental considerations.

### Community Response and Resilience

Despite these restrictions and the effort to silence and delegitimise the Residents’ Assembly and others who raise objections to the administration’s actions, the Auroville community has demonstrated remarkable adaptability by developing alternative communication channels:

- » creating new domains (Auroville.services and Auroville.community) to maintain essential digital services;
- » establishing secure platforms for community discussion, information-sharing and decision-making;
- » launching fact-based information sources including the well-documented ‘Evolving Galaxy Bulletin’, the ‘Voice of Auroville’ quarterly journal, and information ‘Dossiers’;
- » developing new channels for external communications through the Auroville Media Liaison Service.

Such initiatives demonstrate the Residents’ Assembly’s determination to preserve open dialogue and transparent governance in accordance with the Auroville Foundation Act.

## SAFETY AND SECURITY

The administration has created an environment of fear, insecurity, and intimidation by persecuting individuals and groups without just cause or due process. It has contravened policies and practices advocated by the Auroville Foundation Act and by the Residents’ Assembly and International Advisory Council. It has used threats, coercive measures, and aggression in attempting to force residents into compliance, including:

- » filing false and/or frivolous cases against individuals deemed to be threats or considered “undesirable;”
- » causing the eviction of highly capable and committed Aurovilians from India without sufficient cause, due process, or sufficient rationale as a warning to others;
- » revoking, delaying, shortening or withholding visa recommendation letters for unknown reasons, using visas as a means of intimidation and coercion;
- » threatening residents with the loss of their housing and employment, and evicting Aurovilians from homes and workplaces on short notice without due process;
- » using a show of force to physically destroy physical and natural resources;

- » barring access to public buildings by putting locks and chains around the doors and serving notice that it is the property of the Foundation Office;
- » appropriating residential and public buildings without warning for use by the Secretary and her staff;
- » dismissing skilled executives and firing workers without cause or compensation required by law;
- » discontinuing monthly stipends for approximately 200 residents without prior notice or justification;
- » forcing non-Indian residents to make payments for “arrears in individual contributions” before issuing visa recommendation letters, without any basis in previous policies, explanations, or procedures;
- » dismissing Auroville’s Safety & Security Services Team for no reason and replacing this provenly capable group with individuals aligned with the administration.

## IMPACT ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The administration’s actions extend beyond Auroville and impact a wide region and population.

Auroville’s 20 sq. km Master Plan area lies within a 40 sq. km. bioregion that includes 13 villages and approximately 40,000 residents. More than 20 percent of registered Auroville residents come from the local surrounding villages.

Auroville employs more than 5,000 people from across the bioregion in multiple sectors, providing fair wages and access to financial and educational opportunities for their children and themselves. It provides on-site training to develop professional and vocational skills in a variety of industries. Over the past five decades, Auroville has become one of the largest up-skilling centres in India.

In addition, Auroville anchors some 50 specific bioregional development initiatives in diverse fields including education, health, social enterprise, capacity-building, leadership, and cultural curation and preservation. Auroville has helped set new standards in environmental understanding and practices to the benefit of the entire region, whether through environmental restoration, water conservation, or alternative agricultural practices.

Auroville supports Tamil culture through centres and ‘melas’ which express local identity and nurture artistic talent. The connection between Auroville, its bioregion, and the state through traditional arts, crafts, music, dance, sports, cooking, natural remedies and more provides opportunities for people of all ages and nationalities to celebrate the local culture.

For over 50 years, Auroville has promoted bioregional development following its foundational ideal of human unity. There have been challenges and much remains to be done. Nevertheless, through this collaborative approach, Auroville has been able to:

- » bring together diverse sections of society, irrespective of social or cultural background, gender, and nationality;
- » help preserve and cultivate indigenous systems of knowledge while encouraging cross-cultural exchange and co-creation;
- » promote and engage in urban-rural partnerships through community initiatives like Auroville’s annual Endangered Crafts Mela and its Mohanam Village Heritage Centre, which highlight the rich heritage of natural living, creativity, food, language, and artistry unique to Tamil Nadu;

- » establish a wide range of social programmes focused on advancing the welfare of women in 40 villages across the region through Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG);
- » maintain health and dental services, schools, support for women’s self-help groups, livelihood development, and more;
- » pursue development that respects rural livelihoods and traditions as a pathway towards a sustainable urban transition, ensuring that urban development does not come at the expense of rural livelihoods or erasing local lifestyles, thereby demonstrating a model where progress and tradition coexist harmoniously, including through the programmes of Auroville’s Sustainable Livelihood Institute.

Auroville and the surrounding communities form a shared ecosystem increasingly strained by unplanned urbanisation, land encroachment, waste management issues, and over-exploitation of water resources. In the face of these challenges the need for collaborative planning and development is more critical than ever. That is why Auroville prioritises participatory approaches to urban planning and development which include all stakeholders. (See ‘Planning & Development,’ pps. 28-39)

### Concerns About Administration Actions

Local authorities and the Auroville’s Residents’ Assembly have expressed concerns about recent actions by the administration perceived as lacking consideration for community welfare and the shared ecosystem that adversely impact the bioregion. These include:

- » replacing skilled Tamil (and other) residents from positions in Auroville’s governance structures without adequate notice or justification, and rewarding pliant Tamil Aurovilians with land and project funds while sidelining capable leaders;
- » bringing in outside labor to execute road building and other projects, displacing locally-trained and often long-term and capable employees;
- » reducing budgets in the domains of education, forestry, and agriculture, resulting in nearly one hundred job losses without appropriate notice or compensation for Tamilian forest and farm workers, creating extreme hardship for families relying on their salaries;
- » harassing and removing Tamilian and other Aurovilians from positions of responsibility who have voiced concerns, resulting in forced job and housing loss;
- » taking over Auroville’s Tamil Heritage Centre to conduct programmes outside the building’s intended purpose, restricting community access, and placing valuable archeological artefacts at risk of deterioration;
- » neglecting environmental regulations, adversely impacting the larger bioregion with actions such as:
  - » authorising extensive forest, habitat, and watershed destruction;
  - » ignoring the 2022 judgement of the National Green Tribunal ruling on environmental protocols;
  - » damaging valuable archaeological sites on the Auroville plateau through coercive development, bulldozing areas with a rich cultural heritage, and failing to ensure the proper preservation of excavated archeological material;
  - » violating India’s Wildlife Protection Act, endangering protected species in the bioregion.

The administration's use of the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) for road-building and other large-scale projects has led to local unemployment and lost opportunities for skill-building. Auroville has always tried to grow in harmony with the surrounding villages by providing employment, skill-sharing and development wherever possible in construction, carpentry, masonry, environmental management, farming, and many other fields. The new policy—while outsourcing labor maximises profit for subcontractors—depresses local capacity, and leads to sub-standard work in Auroville.

Several Auroville units have been repeatedly requested to stop outreach work with the villages to focus only on projects within the physical confines of the township's centre as demarcated by the 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025'. Minutes from the Governing Board reveal a proposal to establish a physical wall around Auroville – later changed to a barbed wire fence – indicating a shift toward a gated community model, potentially disrupting Auroville's historically open and cooperative relations with surrounding villages.

The administration's shift from Auroville's cooperative development model to a rigid, top-down approach poses substantial risk to Auroville and the broader bioregion. Experience worldwide shows that sustainable development relies on participatory approaches that prioritise people, land, culture, and environment. Failing to engage local stakeholders in development planning can lead to conflict and compromise long-term sustainability.

Auroville's cooperative effort addresses developmental needs through a bioregional approach. Its multi-stakeholder strategy for sustainable urbanisation showcases India's leadership in innovative rural-urban partnerships on the global stage. This approach is jeopardised by actions taken by the present administration which are undermining 56 years of collaborative expertise built between Auroville and the surrounding villages.



### III THE WAY FORWARD

*“In this as in all great human aspirations and endeavours, an a priori declaration of impossibility is a sign of ignorance and weakness. For by the doing the difficulty will be solved.”*

**Sri Aurobindo**

On 19 October 2022, Auroville’s Working Committee appointed by the Residents’ Assembly met for two hours with the Chairman of the Governing Board to present a five-step roadmap to collaboratively resolve the project’s governance crisis in an atmosphere conducive to growth and progress. The Committee underscored the skills and expertise available within the community and its wish to work with the Board as called for in the Auroville Foundation Act.

As with many other attempts to engage the Governing Board over the past three and a half years, the Board gave no meaningful response and took no action.

Members of the International Advisory Council also have repeatedly made similar requests and recommendations to the Governing Board to no avail. Madras High Court orders and judgments also have called for the restoration of mutuality at the core of the Act. Its directives have been ignored as well.

Such a posture by the Governing Board makes constructive resolution of the crisis impossible.

Crisis resolution efforts require certain conditions to be successful, including the creation of an atmosphere of trust, confidence, safety, and openness where collaborative problem-solving can occur. Four specific steps need to be taken to create these conditions for Auroville.

1. There must be an agreement among all parties to restore, honor, and revitalise the principles and terms of the Auroville Foundation Act.
2. All coercive and confrontational measures directed at Auroville residents and the community must cease.
3. Auroville’s core values must be sincerely reaffirmed and rejuvenated by all parties, including the governance principles of fidelity, respect, and mutuality among the three statutory bodies as upheld by all other government-appointed administrations.
4. The Residents’ Assembly and International Advisory Council need a trustworthy and sincere negotiating partner in a Governing Board.

A plan to create such conditions is needed with the support of India’s Ministry of Education and other relevant stakeholders.

A successfully negotiated resolution of the crisis will result in three key outcomes that will set Auroville on a positive path to the future:

1. Restoration of operational balance among the three statutory bodies of the Auroville Foundation; and the re-establishment of Auroville’s core values and principles.
2. A collaborative updating and revision of the ‘Master Plan: Perspective 2025’ in response to the reality of Auroville’s bioregion and today’s global challenges, including methodologies and commitments to ensure the creation and timely execution of Detailed Development Plans.
3. The creation of an internal self-governance assessment and development plan by the Residents’ Assembly leading to effective structural and operational reforms.



## CONDITIONS AND ACTIONS NEEDED

The values and practices that guided all previous Auroville administrations need to be reinstated in keeping with the Auroville Charter, the teaching of Sri Aurobindo, and the Auroville Foundation Act. This requires the restoration of balance, mutuality, and collaboration among the three statutory bodies as specified by the Act.

Conditions and actions needed:

### Cessation of all actions at the root of the discord, including:

- » all acts of destruction, coercion, intimidation, and punishment against Auroville residents, including actions involving the filing of false or frivolous criminal cases;
- » spreading false narratives and undermining Auroville's achievements;
- » delaying, suspending or reducing the duration of recommendations for visa renewals by making sweeping allegations of 'anti-Government' activities against those perceived to be critical of the administration;
- » censoring freedom of speech, threatening people's homes and livelihoods, and maintaining control of Auroville's funds and assets without consultation with residents;
- » forceful seizure of Auroville's internal governance mechanisms.

### Restoration of operational balance by respecting and restoring:

- » the community's powers and functions through the Residents' Assembly and its committees as affirmed by the Auroville Foundation Act, including its freedom to experiment in accordance with the Auroville Charter;
- » the role of the Governing Board acting in partnership with the two other statutory bodies as called for by the Act;
- » the active role and recommendations of the International Advisory Council;
- » participatory and transparent decision-making at all levels of governance, while rejecting unilateral and unaccountable administrative orders;
- » community platforms for information-sharing, and communication channels to provide accurate information to the Indian Government and other relevant stakeholders;
- » protection for residents from unjust or discriminatory treatment.

### Re-establishment of core values and principles, including:

- » the foundational values of fidelity, respect, and mutuality upheld by all other administrations;
- » genuine dialogue, consultation, and participation among the three statutory bodies;
- » active participation by Auroville experts in planning, development, and all other essential services and units;
- » use of participatory, collaborative, and inclusive approaches like Auroville's "Dreamweaving" process to enable a synthesis of views in keeping with Auroville's mission to achieve unity in diversity.

## Dialogue and Reconciliation

Successful conflict resolution depends upon sincere dialogue and reconciliation. Each party must commit to finding mutually acceptable solutions. That condition does not exist in the current circumstances.

The Residents' Assembly and International Advisory Council have repeatedly reached out to the Governing Board to engage in sincere dialogue and participatory problem-solving, but the Governing Board has rejected all entreaties.

In claiming absolute authority for itself, the Governing Board has repudiated the legitimacy of the Residents' Assembly and dismissed the need to sincerely engage with the International Advisory Council in the manner laid out in the Auroville Foundation Act. It continues to support coercive actions against Auroville residents. After appropriating all of Auroville's statutory powers and functions, it has imposed destructive unilateral actions on disenfranchised residents and persists in unilateral, unaccountable decision-making.

The current Governing Board has never engaged meaningfully with Auroville's residents and its on-the-ground realities and has remained disconnected from them. Board members do not engage with the wider body of residents and do not meet the membership requirements specified by the Auroville Foundation Act, which contributes to a lack of understanding and an inability to guide Auroville toward its founding vision and mission. Breaking with tradition, and in contrast to the current International Advisory Council, the present Governing Board has not engaged even once with the community for a real dialogue.

A successful resolution of Auroville's governance crisis is within reach – but requires conditions of trust, confidence, safety and openness. Actions must be taken to establish such conditions. The Residents' Assembly and International Advisory Council are eager to proceed. The Governing Board has so far remained intransigent and adversarial. Its previous Secretary, Dr. Jayanti Ravi, who spearheaded the destructive actions detailed in this report, finished her term in July 2024, but the Board's appointees have continued to follow the same path.

A new Secretary is needed who is dedicated to dialogue and to understanding the residents' perspectives. At the same time, the Board needs to recognise and meet with the duly selected representatives of the Residents' Assembly, such as the Working Committee, to mutually establish a positive way forward.

The current Governing Board is due to end its term in October 2025. This provides an opportunity for a newly constituted Board to press forward with constructive changes. Such a Board, it is to be hoped, will be comprised of qualified members who are knowledgeable of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's teachings and the vision underlying the township, and who are dedicated to resolving the conflict in collaboration with the other two statutory bodies in the spirit of the Auroville Charter, the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, and both the letter and spirit of the Auroville Foundation Act.

## UPDATE AND REVISE THE MASTER PLAN

The 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025' needs to be updated and revised. Although titled a "Master Plan", this document is only a broad conceptual framework for township development.

Twenty-five years have passed since it was created. It needs to reflect today's socio-economic realities and environmental needs and integrate up-to-date studies, innovations, and best practices in urban planning and environmental sustainability.

This recommendation applies specifically to the Auroville community through the Residents' Assembly, since this is a requirement and duty of the residents as stated in the Auroville Foundation Act and is specified by the 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025' as work to be performed by the residents at regular intervals.

Of course, this requires that the rightful authority and space to undertake this responsibility are returned to the community and its selected planning and development group.

The 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025' proposes a broad municipal planning effort with an emphasis on flexibility: "It will neither be traditional nor rigid." Since its publication in 2001, Auroville has taken tangible steps toward building the necessary infrastructure for the future city – a process that was interrupted in 2021 with the arrival of the new administration and its takeover of the planning and development function, leading to a disproportionate focus on building unnecessary roads.

The new Master Plan should be aligned with Perspective 2025's conceptual framework, yet adapted to the evolving on-ground realities required to sustain a larger urban centre integrated with the surrounding rural communities, and included Detailed Development Plans (DDPs) which are effectively executed.

After taking control of the planning and development function, the current administration launched extravagantly costly road-building and opaque land exchanges, bypassing resident experts while bulldozing existing developments and uprooting over 10,000 trees. The plan to create a "perfectly circular road" before a Detailed Development Plan (DDP) was formulated for the future city, was hasty, unprofessional, and resulted in a poorly constructed road made of substandard materials. It did not take into account the damage that would be done to several important water catchment areas. Concerns expressed about such actions by the Residents' Assembly and members of the International Advisory Council were repeatedly rejected, violating both the practical needs and flexible spirit envisioned by the 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025'.

The Governing Board's attempt to rapidly increase Auroville's population to 50,000 inhabitants through unilateral and coercive measures has been protested by the Residents' Assembly and members of the International Advisory Council. Both have emphasized that growth should align with Auroville's long-term values and long-term sustainability goals, serving as a model to the world. Concerns about the administration's actions have been expressed by Indian and international experts in urban, land, water, energy, education, and social fields. Renewed attention from the Government of India is needed in keeping with its commitment to protect Auroville's development along with the welfare of the lands and peoples in Auroville and its bioregion.

A fresh start is needed to develop and effectively execute the Master Plan. Residents and experts from India and abroad should be involved in a collaborative, multidisciplinary effort spearheaded by the Resident Assembly's planning and development working group as called for by the Auroville Foundation Act. Several actionable steps were proposed and many studies completed by diverse experts and external consultants prior to 2021. They need to be brought back for review and incorporated in updating and revising the Plan.

In addition to in-depth studies by Auroville's own experts, Prof. Raag Yadava's work, 'Governance in Auroville' (2023), identified further steps to expedite the process, emphasising the need to align the original Galaxy concept with the development of a Detailed Development Plan (DDP)

and sub-DDPs through measures such as mobility systems analysis and the incorporation of socio-economic and ecological considerations for sustainable development. These recommendations have not been addressed by the current administration, whose plans are not openly shared with the community or other stakeholders.

Special attention needs to be given to methodologies and commitments to overcome obstacles to progress that occurred in the past, as explained below.

## **EXECUTE A SELF-ORGANISATION ACTION PLAN**

It's well known that the Auroville community experienced numerous challenges in developing an efficient system of self-governance before the takeover in 2021. Auroville residents acknowledge that mistakes were made, and things could have been handled differently. That said, these issues have been selectively distorted, exaggerated, and mischaracterized to legitimize the takeover, and continue to be cited as justification for the many unsupportable extrajudicial and coercive measures detailed in this report.

To establish a positive direction for Auroville going forward it's necessary to be clear about the nature of the challenges.

### **Confronting the Challenges**

Auroville residents follow Sri Aurobindo's teaching and the Auroville Charter in seeking to evolve adaptive frameworks of participatory governance that can express its goal of, as the Charter states, being a site of "material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity".

Experimentation in developing new forms of self-organisation is central to that mission. The complexities represented by a community containing nearly 3,300 people from more than 60 nations make the work uniquely demanding.

There's no question that Auroville has faced internal and external concerns about self-organisation problems that seemed intractable. The community readily acknowledges the hurdles and agrees that more effort must be made to surmount them. False claims by the present administration to the contrary, no one advocates a return to the status quo before 2021. Residents embrace the need for practical change reforms.

A successfully negotiated resolution to the present crisis requires support for the Residents' Assembly to conduct a diagnosis of the community's system of governance before the takeover, leading to positive structural and operational changes. Restoring mutual respect and harmonious functioning requires a transparent assessment that addresses root causes. A start was made on this in a 2015 Auroville Retreat. While there was some follow-up after the Retreat, much work is needed to deepen this initial assessment and implement changes according to the findings.

Experience has shown this to be an exceptionally complex, challenging undertaking. To be successful, it requires a committed three-way partnership and collaboration between the Residents' Assembly, the Governing Board, and the International Advisory Council – precisely as the Auroville Foundation Act envisaged. The process must be based on the principles of mutuality, respect, and inclusion. The intricacy of the task cannot be solved by diktat and coercion or by attempting to bypass the need for participatory engagement in the name of 'efficiency'.

## An Effective Action Plan

An effective self-governance assessment and action plan will forthrightly address community issues that arose in the past. These include: decision-making paralysis that derailed Detailed Development Plans (DDPs) caused by rigid positions held by a few residents at both ends of the “city” issue; lack of effective accountability and enforcement mechanisms and feedback loops; a frequent inability to translate ideas into action; and challenges in building consensus through the Residents’ Assembly as an umbrella organisation. The assessment will also need to address resistance to recommendations from previous Governing Boards, International Advisory Councils, and external experts.

These issues and proposals to overcome them are highlighted in Prof. Yadava’s report, ‘Governance in Auroville’, which underscores the need for a “clear distinction between legislative and executive domains [with] dispute resolution and enforcement mechanisms” and the introduction of “standardised and short-term reporting mechanisms”.

In short, a new framework of Auroville’s self-governance is needed that allows for the effective participation by residents at various levels, enables Working Groups to operate without bureaucratic entanglements, and allows the community to establish policies that link short-term needs to Auroville’s long-term vision, using clearly defined medium-term objectives as stepping stones.

Experimentation in new forms of participatory governance is part of Auroville’s *raison d’être*. It is essential that the community’s authority and responsibilities be restored. Space to experiment, to learn from mistakes, and to try again and again is essential. The freedom to make and correct errors is indispensable for both individual and collective development.

It is also necessary for the community to learn from the past and redouble its commitment to develop more effective forms of self-governance. The collaborative development of a transparent self-assessment led by the Residents’ Assembly, supported by the two other statutory bodies, leading to the creation and execution of a participatory governance-development and action plan is essential. It should be a major priority for the Auroville Foundation as a unified whole.

## CONCLUSION

Alone among nations, it is India that has allowed and nurtured the birth and growth of Auroville on its soil. It has done so for more than half a century. Only India has the capacity to truly understand and appreciate this bold experiment, which is rooted in its ancient tradition while pointing humankind and the community of nations toward the future. India deserves the world’s gratitude. It is right that the Indian government should reaffirm that Auroville is a welcome development on its soil, and fitting that it should ensure that its development reflects the highest values of the *dharma*, the Auroville Foundation Act, and the Auroville Charter.

The conditions and actions outlined in this section comprise a blueprint to inaugurate a positive future for Auroville and its mission of accelerating human progress. The blueprint is clear, actionable and achievable. It calls for the creation of a plan with four specific steps.

## Re-Establish Balance and Mutuality Among the Three Statutory Bodies

In accordance with the Auroville Foundation Act and the principles of the Auroville Charter, government officials must foster a new level of collaboration between the Residents’ Assembly, the International Advisory Council, and the Governing Board to manifest Auroville’s purpose as a living laboratory aspiring to realise unity in diversity.

## **Restore Roles and Responsibilities for Auroville Residents**

The rights, protections, and freedoms of Auroville's residents guaranteed under the Auroville Foundation Act to conduct activities promoting the Charter must be restored. This will attract new residents skilled in diverse fields who will drive sustainable urban-rural development and economic prosperity. A renewal of energy will be fostered through the affirmation and practice of the principles of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, positioning Auroville as both a global leader and a unique experiment for today's world grounded in India's immemorial spiritual principles.

## **Update and Revise the Master Plan**

The re-establishment of balance among Auroville's residents as well as between the three governance bodies must occur in tandem with collaboration in delivering Detailed Development Plans, ensuring that the conceptual 'Master Plan: 2025' is revised and a formal Master Plan is formulated with multidisciplinary expertise and implemented without further delay.

## **Complete a Residents' Self-Organisation Assessment and Action Plan**

With the support and guidance of the other two statutory bodies, the Residents' Assembly needs to carry out a transparent self-organisation assessment and implement an effective action plan that drives necessary reforms and opens new pathways for progress.

As these actions take effect, Auroville will thrive in its mission to evolve individual and collective consciousness, fully embodying the spiritual vision of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The values of its Charter will guide Auroville's governance and daily life, with all parties mentioned in the Auroville Foundation Act dedicated to translating its founding vision into reality and manifesting Auroville as a beacon of hope from India to the world.



# ANNEXURE A:

## THE AUROVILLE FOUNDATION ACT

The Auroville Foundation Act was passed by the Indian Parliament on September 29, 1988, establishing the Auroville Foundation as an autonomous statutory body for the purpose of protecting, preserving and advancing Auroville's ideals as an international township dedicated to human unity and the evolution of consciousness based on the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

The intent underpinning the Act, as summarised in Chapter 3(21)(4)(a-b), is to ensure that

*“... the ideals for which Auroville has been established are encouraged, and the residents of Auroville are allowed the freedom to grow and develop activities and institutions for the fulfillment of the aspirations and programmes envisioned in the Charter of Auroville.”*

The Act provided for the Auroville Foundation to acquire the assets of Auroville without cost for the long-term management and, as its Preamble states, for the “further development of Auroville in accordance with its original Charter”. The intention of the Act is for the Foundation to serve as the custodian of Auroville's principles and development in keeping with the first line of its Charter: “Auroville belongs to no one in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole.”

The Auroville Foundation consists of three administrative bodies with interconnected functions: a *Governing Board* and an *International Advisory Council*, whose members are nominated by the Government of India; and the *Residents' Assembly*, comprised of all adult inhabitants of the community entered into the register of residents. The Act calls for the Central Government to appoint a Secretary to support the Chairman of the Governing Board. It calls upon the Residents' Assembly to appoint a Working Committee to help manage the community's affairs and represent the Assembly to the Governing Board and other organizations.

- » The *Residents' Assembly* is responsible under the Act for the daily management of Auroville, ensuring that the voice and experience of the Aurovilians is at the core of decision-making.
- » The *Governing Board* is responsible for providing direction, coordination, oversight, and support for Auroville's general development.
- » The *International Advisory Council* is responsible for advising the Governing Board on matters relating to Auroville's development and management.

The Auroville Foundation came into existence in January, 1991. The assets were vested in the Foundation on April 1, 1992, including all of Auroville's immovable assets, units, activities and projects.

Auroville has been recognised as an autonomous institution of higher education, governed by the Auroville Foundation Act, under the Ministry of Education, Government of India.

## THE GOVERNING BOARD

The powers and functions of the Governing Board are specified in Chapter 3(17) of the Auroville Foundation Act:

- » “to promote the ideals of Auroville and to coordinate activities of Auroville in consultation with the Residents' Assembly for the purposes of cohesion and integration of Auroville”;
- » “to monitor and review” and give advice on “basic policies and programmes of Auroville” and its future development;

- » “to ensure proper management of the properties” vested in the Foundation by the Act;
- » “to record approval to the programmes of Auroville drawn up by the Residents’ Assembly”;
- » to help coordinate activities and services “for the purposes of cohesion and integration of Auroville”;
- » “to authorise and coordinate fund-raising” while securing “proper arrangements for receipts and disbursements of funds”; and,
- » after the Residents’ Assembly has formulated a Master Plan, to “prepare” the plan “in consultation with the Residents’ Assembly”.

The Act does not give the Governing Board veto power over the Residents’ Assembly’s formulation of the Master Plan. Neither does the Residents’ Assembly have the authority to reject preparation of the plan by the Governing Board. The Act envisions the two bodies collaborating in the formulation and preparation of the Master Plan, with the International Advisory Council serving as adviser and arbiter. (Chapter 3(19)(c); 3(17)(e); and 3(21)(3))

The Governing Board does not have the power to override the Residents Assembly’s decisions, which cover “all activities relating to the residents of Auroville.” Nor does the Act give the Board the authority to initiate and enforce unilateral actions affecting the activities of Auroville residents.

Instead, the Governing Board is charged with monitoring and reviewing policies and plans developed by the Residents’ Assembly, recording its approval, and, where it can help foster cohesion and integration, coordinate community activities in consultation with the Residents’ Assembly. (Chapter 3(17) (a)) Generally speaking, the residents initiate and the Governing Board approves, but the Governing Board cannot initiate on its own and must consult with the Residents’ Assembly.

The Act specifies the qualifications needed to serve as a Governing Board Member. Qualified members are individuals who have: “rendered valuable service to Auroville; dedicated themselves to the ideals of life-long education, synthesis of material and spiritual researches or human unity; and contributed significantly in activities relating to environment, afforestation, arts and crafts, industry, agriculture, humanities, sciences and integral yoga.” (Chapter 3(11))

## **THE RESIDENTS’ ASSEMBLY & WORKING COMMITTEE**

The Residents’ Assembly comprises all Auroville residents who are entered in the register of residents. Its broad responsibility is “to organize various activities relating to Auroville” and to advise the Governing Board “in respect of all activities relating to the residents of Auroville.” (Chapter 3(30))

More specifically, the Act calls for the Residents’ Assembly to establish a Working Committee as a statutory body to help the Assembly manage the community’s affairs, collaborate with the Governing Board, and represent the community with outside organisations. (Chapter 3(2)(c) and 3(30)) Only residents of Auroville can be appointed to the Working Committee. The manner of choosing and term of office of its members is the exclusive prerogative of the Residents’ Assembly. (Chapter 3(20))

In addition to establishing the Working Committee, the Act also authorises the Residents’ Assembly to:



- » create and oversee working groups to direct the various aspects of community affairs and develop and represent those areas with the Governing Board;
- » “allow the admission or cause the determination of persons in the register of residents”;
- » “formulate the master plan of Auroville” before the Governing Board prepares the plan in consultation with the Working Committee and Residents’ Assembly. (Chapter 3(19) and 3(17(e))

## THE INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

The International Advisory Council comprises no more than five members of the international community nominated by the Central Government from among persons “devoted to the ideals of human unity, peace and progress.” (Chapter 3(21)(2))

The Council is tasked with advising the Governing Board “on any matter relating to the development and management of Auroville” (Section 3(21)3)) for the purpose of ensuring that Auroville remains true to its mission as outlined in the Auroville Charter and its principles of human unity, research, and cultural and spiritual development. (Chapter 3(21)(4a))

The Act calls specifically for the International Advisory Council to ensure that the residents of Auroville “are allowed freedom to develop activities and institutions” needed to fulfill “the aspirations and programmes” envisioned by the Charter. (Chapter 3(21)(4b))

# # #

## FROM THE AUROVILLE FOUNDATION ACT, 1988: THE RESIDENTS’ ASSEMBLY (CHAPTER 3(19-20))

**“19. Functions of the Residents’ Assembly** – (1) The Residents’ Assembly shall perform such functions as are required by this Act and shall advise the Governing Board in respect of all activities relating to the residents of Auroville.

“(2) In particular, and without prejudice to the foregoing powers, the Residents’ Assembly may –

- (a) allow the admission or cause the termination of persons in the register of residents in accordance with the regulations made under section 32;
- (b) organise various activities relating to Auroville;
- (c) formulate the master plan of Auroville and make necessary recommendations for the recognition of organisations engaged in activities relatable to Auroville for the approval of the Governing Board...

**“20. Working Committee of Residents’ Assembly** – (1) There shall be a Working Committee of the Residents’ Assembly which shall assist the Residents’ Assembly or, as the case may be, the Governing Board, in discharging its duties under this Act.

(2) The Working Committee shall consist of not more than seven members to be chosen by the Residents’ Assembly from among themselves.

(3) The manner of choosing the members of the Working Committee and their term of office shall be such as decided by the Residents’ Assembly.”



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## ANNEXURE B: WHAT IS AUROVILLE?

*“Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.”*

### **The Mother**

The universal township of Auroville in South India was founded by Mirra Alfassa (1878–1973), commonly known as the Mother, spiritual collaborator of the Indian sage and philosopher Sri Aurobindo, who played a central role in the development of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Puducherry. Based on Sri Aurobindo’s vision of the evolution of human consciousness, Auroville is dedicated to the material and societal manifestation of an actual human unity.

Auroville was inaugurated on 28th February 1968, when young people representing 124 countries and all the Indian States placed a handful of earth from their homelands in a marble-clad urn near the centre of the future project, symbolising the creation of a town dedicated to human unity and international understanding.

Today Auroville is home to more than 3,300 permanent residents from over 60 nations, the only experiment of its kind in the world.

## THE AUROVILLE CHARTER

The *Charter of Auroville* was written by the Mother. It outlines the project’s vision and ideals for a new way of life in four guiding principles.

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

## A DREAM

The Mother’s “Dream” was written by her in 1954. It is considered a foundational text of Auroville.

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

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

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

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

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

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



## ANNEXURE C: TESTIMONIALS

Auroville and its accomplishments have been celebrated by a wide range of distinguished individuals for more than half a century.

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*“Over the last five decades, [Auroville] has emerged as a hub of social, cultural, educational, economic and spiritual innovation... Be it unending education, environmental regeneration, renewable energy, organic agriculture, appropriate building technologies, water management, or waste management, Auroville has been a pioneer...”*

*“The first high principle of Auroville is that it belongs to all humanity. This is a reflection of our ancient credo of vasudhaiva kutumbakam – the world is one family... Indian society is fundamentally diverse. It has fostered dialogue and a philosophic tradition. Auroville showcases this ancient Indian tradition to the world by bringing together global diversity.”*

*“India has always allowed mutual respect and co-existence of different religions and cultures. India is home to the age-old tradition of Gurukul, where learning is not confined to classrooms; where life is a living laboratory. Auroville too has developed as a place of unending and life-long education.”*

*“May it be the guardian which calls for breaking down narrow walls of the mind. May it continue to invite everyone to celebrate the possibilities of humanity’s oneness... May Auroville serve as a beacon to the world.”*

**Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India (2014–present)**  
Speech on Auroville’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in Auroville, 25 February 2018

*“Outside this hall, I paid respect at the statue of a great Indian philosopher and sage, Sri Aurobindo. There is much that we can learn from his humanism and spiritualism, from his belief in the unity of individual consciousness with the world outside; the enlightened purpose of education; the service of science; and, the unity of the world, founded on national freedom, diversity of civilisations and autonomy of culture. It is a guiding spirit for the purpose of this institution – the defence of peace in the mind of men.”*

**Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India (2014–present)**  
Speech on UNESCO’s 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in Paris, 2015

*“Pondicherry was Sri Aurobindo’s place of political exile and spiritual unfolding. His effulgent message radiated to different parts of the world from Pondicherry. It is appropriate that seekers of enlightenment from various lands should found a new city [near] there bearing Sri Aurobindo’s name. It is an exciting project for bringing about harmony among different cultures and for understanding the environmental needs for man’s spiritual growth. May Auroville truly become a city of light and of peace.”*

**Indira Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India,**  
25 March 1969

*“It is unbelievable that within a short span, a comparatively short span of 12-14 years, all this has been created by the inhabitants of Auroville. I have nothing but admiration.”*

**Narasimha Rao, former Prime Minister of India,**  
23 August 1986, in Auroville

*“... as India stands poised to lead the world in providing lasting solutions to global challenges, the Auroville community could greatly contribute towards this endeavour.”*

**Smt. Draupadi Murmu, President of India,**  
Previously a teacher at Sri Aurobindo Integral Education and Research Center at Rairangpur in Odisha,  
8 August 2023, in Auroville

*“Friends, I have come as a pilgrim to this place, Auroville, and why I say pilgrim is because you have a mission bigger than mine; the mission you are having is larger than that of any individual. It is a vision that came from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and naturally, it is a very big mission.”*

**Dr. A.P.J. Kalam, former President of India,**  
1 November 2004, in Auroville

*“Heartiest congratulations and best wishes to the Auroville community and the Auroville Foundation for completing 50 successful years since its establishment.... Auroville is setting an example by acting as a bridge for connecting ancient knowledge in Indian culture with the present. Today, when efforts are being made at a global level for humanity, equality and peace, Auroville has taken the lead with its inspiring work.”*

**Amit Shah, Home Minister of India,**  
20 January 2018, in Auroville

*“Auroville is to be looked upon as a vision which has great potentiality, and this can be of tremendous service to our country and the world at large. Auroville aims to discover a new life, deeper and more complete, and to show the world that tomorrow will be better than today. The Government is determined to help the process of development of Auroville in such a way that its aims and goals are made more and more realisable.”*

*“Research is the watchword of Auroville, and the Charter of Auroville has underlined that Auroville will be engaged in the material and spiritual researches... Research in the field of alternative sources of energy has also made headway. The experiment in establishing a new ecological balance has succeeded to a very high degree. Above all, the atmosphere of Auroville has begun to vibrate with activities of youth and the ideal of unending education is being promoted in every field of activity in Auroville.”*

*“As far as the day-to-day activities are concerned, they will be looked after by the residents through appropriate autonomous arrangements, which will include Residents’ Assembly and its Working Committee. The idea underlying this arrangement is that the residents of Auroville should have autonomy so that activities of Auroville can grow under an atmosphere conducive to harmonious growth.”*

**Shri Shiv Shankar, former Minister for Human Resource Development**  
Introducing the Auroville Foundation Act in the Raja Sabha, 9 January 1988

*“One of the aims of Auroville is to bring together in close juxtaposition the values and ideals of different civilizations and cultures and these are in close alignment with UNESCO’s ideals. The General Assembly of UNESCO has unanimously passed in 1966, 1968, 1970 and 1983 resolutions of support to Auroville, inviting member states and international non-governmental organisations to participate in the development of Auroville as an International Cultural Township.... We envisage that the Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research (SAIIER), which is now being supported by us, would bring about a change in the educational system in India through the implementation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision of integral education...We are here to support Auroville as partners in progress.”*

**S.K. Tripathi, former Education Secretary, Government of India,**  
10 April 2003, Paris

*“Ancient India had spoken of the ideal of the whole world as One Family - vasudhaiva kutumbakam. It is, therefore, heartening that this ancient ideal has been given an experimental field in Auroville, which the Mother founded in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s vision of human unity. Auroville is an alternative to the conflicting strategies that aim at mere freedom that hurts the values of equality and equity... In this context, Auroville stands out as a promise that liberty, equality and fraternity can meet together in a large synthesis.”*

**Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, former Minister of Human Resources Development,  
January 2003**

*“I congratulate Auroville for the promotion of conscious living, and human values and for developing a higher inner self. The efforts put in by Aurovilians to apply the ideals of the Auroville Charter in their daily life, in policy development, and in decisions are laudable... It is a matter of pride for Tamil Nadu to have Auroville on its soil and it welcomes citizens of Auroville who have come from faraway corners of the world to live and serve humanity.”*

**Dr. K. Rosaiah, former Governor of Tamil Nadu,  
1 March 2015, Chennai**

*The chief minister pledged during the recent Puducherry campaign that “Auroville, an international city...will be implemented according to the dream of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.”*

**M.K. Stalin, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, May 2024**

*“I am firmly convinced that there is a great future for this World City...There is no doubt that this city shall shine as the guiding light for all the countries of the world at large. We are prepared to give our full cooperation and support for the ‘lakshyam’ (aims and ideals) of this city of unity. My best wishes for Auroville that it would shine in the world like a rising sun.”*

**Dr. Muthuvel Karunanidhi, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu,  
for 19 years, 28 October 1973, in Auroville**

*“Auroville is a dream, a concept, a symbol of a new way of life, a new way of perpetual education... The knowledge that is needed for the realisation of the psychological unity has been glimpsed by some advanced minds, but we have as yet no solid and sound science regarding the psychology of human unity. The Auroville system of education will address itself to the development of this new science.”*

*“I think Auroville as it exists today is the most precious gift that the earth possesses.”*

**Dr. Kireet Joshi, Former Chairman of the Auroville Foundation  
Former advisor to Narendra Modi and Indira Gandhi,  
Special Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1979**

*“Auroville was envisaged by the Mother as a concrete manifestation of the new consciousness, as an arrow pointed towards the future of evolution. And that is why Auroville is so extremely significant for the future of the human race. Never forget it is not only important to those who happen to live here. Certainly, you are important because it is you Aurovilians who are doing the work and making the experiment, but your work far transcends barriers of space and nationality and even of time. Because what is sought to be done here is nothing less than the transmutation of consciousness.”*

**Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman of the first Governing Board, Auroville Foundation  
28 February 1991, in Auroville**

*“Auroville is not just an idea. It is the future, the future of the World. It is the only model that I know of that has survived, and I believe in it more today than ever before. I have come here today to breathe the Auroville spirit. I am not an Aurovillian, but I have the Auroville spirit.”*

**J.R.D Tata, industrialist, philanthropist, aviation pioneer**  
**Former member of the Auroville International Advisory Council, 1993**

*“I feel that if there were a million Aurovilles in this world, on this earth, the whole of this earth will be better, and the example must spread throughout from here. Perhaps there is nowhere in the world where there is this kind of spirit and this kind of faith, a visible belief in oneself and in the goodness of people.”*

**J.R.D Tata, industrialist, philanthropist, aviation pioneer**  
**Former member of the Auroville International Advisory Council, 1986**

*“Auroville is an intentional city. People join because they share an aspiration towards change and a divine Life. It has to become a global role model for the future.*

*“For this reason the growth of Auroville should be in term of quality of people and not only in term of quantity & numbers. We should consider that Auroville is a different city and the development is not driven by market force. Planning is based on human factors and aspirations and a new strategy has to be brought for. Plan is not only placement of buildings and infrastructure. It should be the creation of an environment conducive to a transforming spiritual experience.”*

**B.V. Doshi, Architect, winner of the Pritzker Prize,**  
**Member of the 5th and 6th Auroville Foundation Governing Boards, 2014**

*“When Mother was asked why she had created Auroville, she said that India has become the symbolic representation of all the difficulties of present-day humanity, that India will be the site of its resurrection, the resurrection to a higher and truer life and that FOR THAT she had created Auroville. In other words, the problems of the world will also be present in Auroville. When I look at Auroville today I see that, inwardly, Auroville is blossoming. I feel its dynamism and force expanding way beyond its physical boundaries. There are an increasing number of people in Auroville who are manifesting that inner growth: in art, in education, in so many fields.”*

**Aster Patel, Member of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation**  
**for 20 years, January, 2019**

*“If the people who come for this profession of faith are not able to build their own environment it would mean that Auroville is a failure. It is essential that it is being built at the level of individual experience. One could say that the Auroville concept is the opposite of a contemporary urbanism. In our urbanistic conception, one makes a city on paper. The conception is as intelligent as it can be and then one asks people to come and live there. Here the process is inverted: people live the experience and it is from this experience that the environment is created.”*

**Roger Anger, Architect of Ile Verte in Grenoble,**  
**Chief planner and architect of Auroville, 1972**

*“The G20 theme, ‘One Earth – One Family – One Future’, dovetails perfectly with Auroville’s raison d’être, its meaning, and its purpose of being a material and societal expression of an actual human unity.”*

**Joint Statement, 70-member G20 delegation, 31 January 2023 in Auroville**

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

*“I also noticed that there is a very good harmony, a good relationship, with the local people, and many local Indians seem to fully participate and enjoy working with Westerners. This is very good. You have the spirit of community, irrespective of religion, culture, or race. That’s really what we need.*

**HH the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Spiritual Leader of Tibetan Buddhism**  
January, 1973 in Auroville

*“Since my last visit (twenty years ago), I’m extremely happy to see that much progress and many developments have taken place. You have done many, many things... This happened because of your dedication and your full involvement. You dedicated all your time and energy to certain principles, and also you worked as a team and with, I think, a very good sense of community.”*

**HH the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Spiritual Leader of Tibetan Buddhism**  
24 December 1993, during his second visit to Auroville

*“As one deeply involved and concerned with education as a means crucial to world peace and an evolving humanity, I have greatly appreciated the ideals and work being done by Auroville... I would encourage and invite your help in Auroville’s realisation for the Earth.”*

**Robert Muller, former Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations, 1982**

*“You work together, you understand each other, and, perhaps, you are what I might say a summing-up of the aspirations of the world of tomorrow. Bon courage, good luck to you and please continue.”*

**Amadou-Mahtar M’Bow, former Director-General of UNESCO, 1986**

*“You [in Auroville] are constructing a new human tapestry where each thread, each individual, nationality, will retain its specificity, its beauty, while contributing to the tapestry as a whole. You are not there yet, this is the ultimate, but you are definitely on the way.”*

**Dr. Doudou Diene, former Director of International Projects, UNESCO**  
Member of the fourth and fifth International Advisory Councils 2004-2013

*“Recognizing that Auroville is a successful and unique model project, proving the capacity of an international community, after 40 years of existence, to continue to live up to its initial founding ideals of peace and international harmony and within the spirit of mutual respect and under-standing, tolerance, dialogue, cultural diversity, quality education and sustainable development that are also UNESCO’s own values and principles, as well as some of its major priorities.*

*“Also recognizing that Auroville has developed into a centre of expertise in a wide range of fields, benefiting India and noting its success in sharing its experience and helping the development of its neighbouring rural population.*

*“Further recognizing that Auroville is a successful and unique model project, proving the capacity of an international community, after almost 50 years of existence, to continue to live up to its initial founding ideas of peace and international harmony and which are also UNESCO’s own values and principles, as well as some of its major priorities.”*

**UNESCO General Conference, 39<sup>th</sup> Session, Unanimous Resolution**  
30 October-14 November, 2017



*“Now in April of 2017, I had the privilege of being invited to Auroville, definitely an asset of humanity where the spiritual converges with tech. I had the opportunity of meeting global scientists in the areas of building, mechanical engineering, hydraulics, specialists in alternative energies, organic agriculture, yoga practitioners, teachers of children and young people, businessmen, in short: a place where the human spirit exceeds the daily, and work is greater than any challenge.”*

**Buda Cueva Jacom, Consul of Ecuador, April 2017**

*“Auroville, a unique experiment in international and intercultural coexistence, is one of the most hopeful indications of the practical realisation of the human potential the entire world community will soon require to ensure a truly sustainable and humane future. Auroville deserves worldwide recognition as a pioneer of planetary cooperation, harmony, and understanding.”*

**Dr. Ervin Laszlo, Philosopher of Science and Systems Theorist**  
Former member of Auroville’s International Advisory Council  
28 February 1966, Auroville’s 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary

*“Auroville stands as one of the most courageous and hope-giving models of what is possible when the human will and spirit unite in a common action. When I speak of Hope for Our Future on Earth, I always include the story of Auroville... Though Auroville has been endorsed by the United Nations and is recognised by an Act of the Indian Parliament, it essentially remains a grassroots project... I encourage you to assist this unique global community venture in its determination to reverse the tide of environmental destruction, demonstrating how to restore hope and compassion on the only Earth.”*

**David R. Brower, Prominent Environmentalist, founder of many environmental organizations, movement leader and recipient of the Blue Planet Prize, in 1997**

*“Auroville has the advantage of having a unique specificity, which is the combination of spirituality with action in the material world. Spirituality does indeed call forth the better aspects of our nature and enables us to fuse passion and compassion in our work. But we also need to ground in reality, and this is something that is unique in this experience here. It is not disengagement from life, but engagement with it. It results in a holistic view where reductionist science can go side by side with spiritual uplifting. It seems to me that you are building on real achievements here.”*

**Dr. Ismael Serageldin, Former Vice President, The World Bank, 1 February 1988, in Auroville**



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# ANNEXURE D:

## ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTING AUROVILLE

Over the past decades, Auroville has received support from a considerable number of governmental and non-governmental agencies, foundations, corporate donors and private well-wishers in India and abroad. This selective list comprises funding agencies, which have supported specific research and pilot projects and programmes in Auroville and the neighbouring villages.

### INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

#### Government of India

- » Building Material & Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC)
- » Ministry of Education
- » Ministry of Environment
- » Ministry of Human Resource Development
- » Ministry of Non-conventional Energy Sources
- » Ministry of Rural Development
- » Ministry of Science and Technology
- » Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO)
- » Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR)
- » Indian Navy
- » Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA)
- » National Wasteland Development Board (NWDB)

#### Tamil Nadu / Puducherry Government

- » District Rural Development Agency (DRDA)
- » Tamil Nadu Government
- » Tamil Fund
- » Tamil Nadu Energy Development Agency (TEDA)
- » Tamil Nadu Family Welfare Board
- » Tamil Nadu Social Welfare Board
- » Tamil Nadu State Forest Department
- » TRYSEM Programme

#### Indian Non-Governmental Organisations & Businesses

- » All India Books
- » Aurofood
- » Auroshikha
- » Bombay Natural History Society

- » Credit Himatsingka
- » Indian Oil Corporation
- » Indian Tobacco Company
- » INTACH
- » Janagri
- » J.R.D.Tata Trust
- » Modi Charitable Trust
- » New Horizon Sugar Mills
- » Oil and Natural Gas Corporation
- » Sri Aurobindo's Action
- » Sri Aurobindo Memorial Fund
- » Sri. Dorabji Tata Trust
- » Sri. Ratan Tata Trust
- » Tata Energy Research Institute
- » Vikalp Sangam

#### **International Organisations**

- » European Commission (EC)
- » ICEF (India - Canadian Environment Facility)
- » OECD/Hunger Campaign
- » United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS)
- » United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)
- » UNESCO

#### **Foreign Governments & Governmental Organisations**

- » AUSTRALIA: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- » BELGIUM: Algemene Belgische Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (ABOS)
- » CANADA: Canadian High Commission in India
- » DENMARK: Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA)
- » FRANCE: Ministère des Affaires Etrangères
- » GERMANY: Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
- » Deutsche Welthunger Hilfe (FAO)
- » Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)
- » Foerdergemeinschaft Rotary Ludwigshafen
- » German Agro-Action
- » German Appropriate Technology Exchange(GATE)
- » Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)
- » Ministerium für Bundes- und Europa-angelegenheiten des Landes Schleswig-Holstein
- » JAPAN: Japanese Embassy in India

- » NETHERLANDS: Royal Netherlands Embassy in India
- » NEW ZEALAND: New Zealand High Commission in India
- » SPAIN: Government of Navarra
- » Municipality of Pamplona
- » SWITZERLAND: SWISSAID
- » U.K.: Overseas Development Administration (ODA now DFID)
- » USA: V.I.T.A. (Volunteers in Technical Assistance)

### **Foreign Non-Governmental Organisations**

- » AUSTRALIA: Quaker Service Australia
- » CANADA: Centre Créatif l'Élan
- » FRANCE: Alliance Française  
Association Vitalis  
Communautés d'Emmaus  
INERP  
Secours Populaire Français
- » GERMANY: BORDA  
Caritas  
Deutsch - Indisches Kinderhilfswerk (DIK)  
Dritte Welt Kreis (DWK)  
Friedrich-Naumann Stiftung
- » ISRAEL: GIFRID
- » ITALY: Association VIDYA  
Himalaya Trust
- » JAPAN: Human Performance Institute
- » NETHERLANDS: Stichting de Zaaier
- » SPAIN: Fundacion Centro Sri Aurobindo
- » U.K.: Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC)  
Findhorn Foundation  
OXFAM
- » U.S.A.: Earthstewards Network  
Foundation for World Education  
Infinity Foundation  
Institute of Evolutionary Research  
Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Centre  
Merriam Hill Centre  
Sri Aurobindo's Action Centre  
Threshold Foundation  
Trickle-up Program  
Turtle Island Fund

### **Auroville International**

Auroville International (AVI) is a worldwide network of collaborating groups established as independent associations with the aim of supporting the Auroville International Township in India. AVI is incorporated in the Netherlands, and today includes affiliated NGOs and liaisons in 32 countries.

Auroville International Centres work for the advancement of the ideal of human unity by promoting the development of Auroville, and by encouraging the realisation throughout the world of the aims and ideals of Auroville as laid down in its Charter and the numerous writings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

Each official AVI Centre is incorporated or registered under the laws of its country, qualifying for applicable tax-exempt or similar status. Country laws often stipulate that such NGOs are independent entities which must report their activities according to each country's statutes. An organization chooses to become an official AVI Centre to indicate that it agrees to participate in planning, decision-making and actions in coordination with other AVI Centres, and to demonstrate the breadth of international support for Auroville.

In addition to formal AVI Centres, affiliated but unofficial groups ("liaisons") meet to discuss and work together to support Auroville and serve as a point of contact in their country.

Auroville International makes presentations to national, international, governmental and non-governmental organisations and acts as a channel for funding to support Auroville's projects.

### **Locations of Auroville International Centres and Liaisons**

Argentina  
 Australia  
 Belgium  
 Brazil  
 Canada  
 Denmark  
 France  
 Germany  
 Greece  
 Haiti  
 Hungary  
 Ireland  
 Israel  
 Italia  
 Japan  
 Kenya  
 Lithuania  
 Luxembourg  
 Mexico  
 Montenegro  
 Portugal  
 Russia  
 Singapore  
 Spain  
 Sweden  
 Switzerland  
 The Netherlands  
 Turkey  
 Uganda  
 United Kingdom  
 Uruguay  
 USA



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# ANNEXURE E:

## SOURCES AND RESOURCES

PRINT readers can enter [TinyURL.com/AVCrisis](http://TinyURL.com/AVCrisis) into a browser, which will open a document containing links to the sources. Digital readers can use the links to go to the sources directly.

### **Auroville's Roots**

[The Auroville Charter](#)

[The Dream](#)

[To Be a True Aurovilian](#)

[Inauguration February 28, 1968](#)

[UNESCO Resolutions](#)

### **The Auroville Foundation Act**

[Presentation of the Act to the Rajya Sabha](#)

[The Auroville Foundation Act, 1988](#)

[Governing Board](#)

[International Advisory Council](#)

[Residents' Assembly](#)

### **Structure and history**

[Address by Narendra Modi, February 2018](#)

[On Auroville Self-Governance, by Shri Kireet Joshi](#)

[Auroville Master Plan: Perspective 2025](#)

[The Development of Auroville's Assets](#)

[Fifty-Four Years of Realizations](#)

[Auroville, the City of Dawn, by Satprem Maïni](#)

[Governance in Auroville, by Raag Yadava, PhD](#)

### **Crisis in Auroville**

[Auroville Under Existential Threat, by Auroville Media Liaison](#)

[Auroville Dossiers, Voice of Auroville, and Evolving Galaxy](#)

[Auroville Today and Mass Bulletin](#)

[Rulings by Madras High Court and National Green Tribunal](#)

[M. Chakrapani, M.A. MLA, to Mrs. Jayanti Ravi, IAS](#)

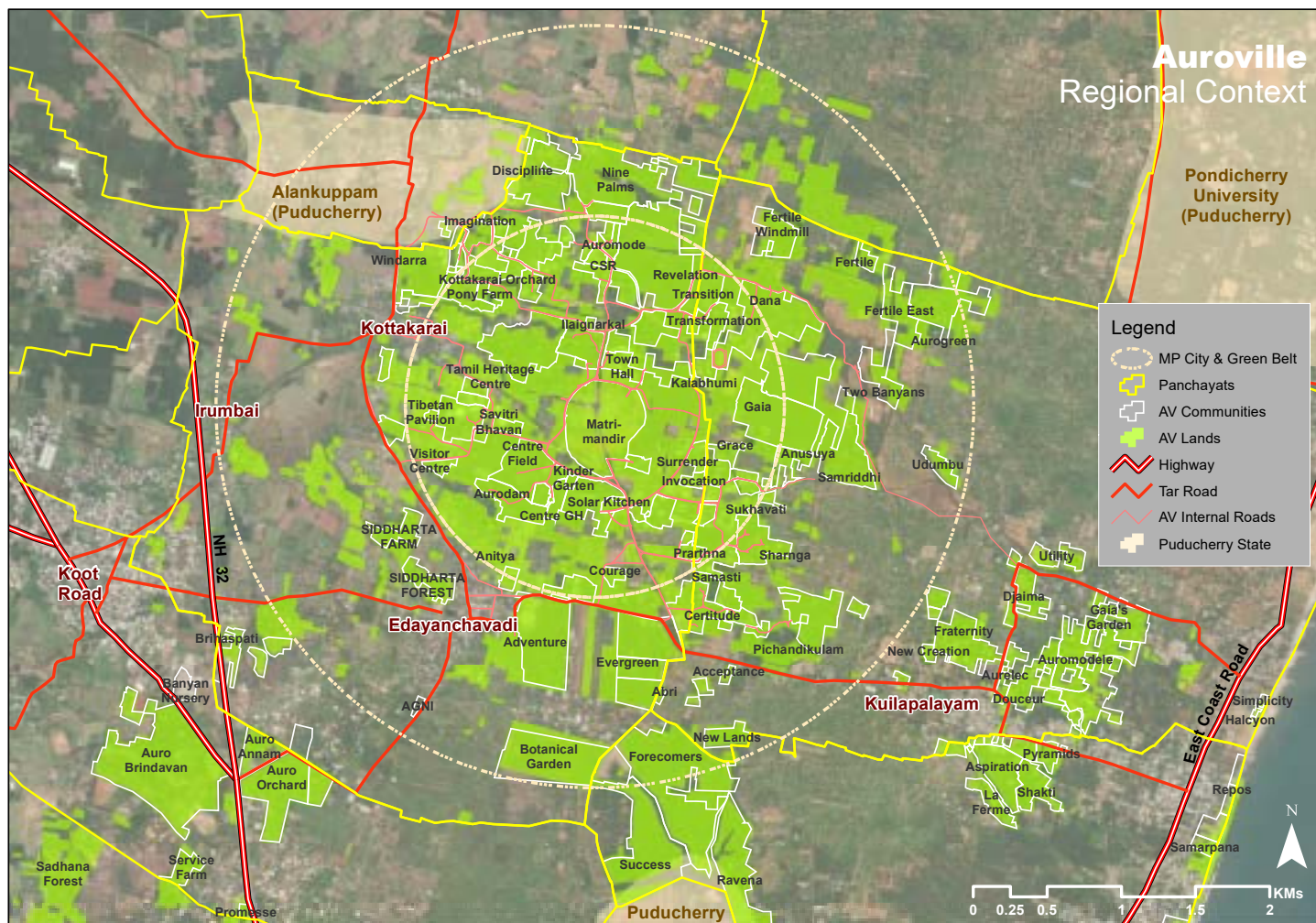
[A View from the Outside \(Auroville Today article\)](#)

[On the Takeover of Auroville, by Rod Hemsell](#)

- » Information in this report has been extensively documented in a range of reports, studies, publications, records, letters, and other print and online material. Specific references can be found in the above list.
- » All quotations by Sri Aurobindo can be found in the [Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo](#) and by the Mother in ["The History of Auroville – Mother's Known Words"](#), Gilles Guigan ed., 2016



# ANNEXURE F: MAP OF AUROVILLE



For a detailed PDF Map Scan the QR Code



**AUROVILLE IN CRISIS & THE WAY FORWARD**

A Report by The Auroville Global Fellowship