Auroville: An Experiment Under Threat

A second public exhibition in Puducherry brings photographs, testimonies and documentary material into national and international focus — raising urgent questions about ecology, land use, governance and the future of Auroville's founding experiment.

DATES & TIMES

Sat 11 July · 4:00–8:00 PM

Sun 12 July · 9:00 AM–1:00 PM & 4:00–8:00 PM

VENUE

Villa Sentosa, 75 Muthiya Swamy Mudaliar St, Muthialpet, Puducherry

FORMAT

Exhibition · Conversations · Testimonies

MEDIA CONTACT

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Puducherry, 11 & 12 July — For the second time since the first public photographic presentation in Chennai on 6 June, residents and participants of Auroville are bringing together photographs, videos, testimonies and documentary material for a two-day public exhibition examining what organisers describe as the present crisis facing the international township.

Titled *"Auroville: An Experiment Under Threat,"* the exhibition documents concerns that have emerged since 2021 regarding the impact of administrative decisions and accelerated development works on long-standing ecological restoration projects, organic farms, community processes, and the continuity of Auroville's founding vision and purpose.

The organisers stress that the exhibition is not presented as a protest, but as a public record — a space for visual documentation, lived testimony, historical context, conversation and press engagement around one of the world's longest-running and largest international communities, founded in 1968 as an ongoing experiment in human unity. For the second time, residents will speak publicly about their experiences since 2021, what they believe is at stake, and how they say they have responded to mounting challenges with growing solidarity and collective strength.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Auroville was not conceived as a utopia. Founded in 1968, it grew from "A Dream," Mirra Alfassa's vision — first expressed in 1954 — of a universal town where people of all countries could live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, politics and nationalities, working toward what the Auroville Charter later described as a site of material and spiritual research for a living embodiment of actual human unity.

Located in Tamil Nadu and supported by the Government of India since its founding, Auroville has earned international recognition for ecological restoration, afforestation, sustainable architecture, organic agriculture, alternative education and experiments in collective living. UNESCO has adopted five resolutions endorsing the township, from its earliest years through to the resolution marking its 50th anniversary in 2018.

Organisers say that in July 2021, following the appointment of a new Secretary and Governing Board, the township's direction changed sharply — marking, in their account, a shift from a living, participatory, social and spiritual experiment toward a top-down administrative project. The exhibition documents what organisers describe as the progressive dismantling of a five-decade experiment of ecological, cultural and spiritual significance.

THE QUESTION AT THE HEART OF THE EXHIBITION

Should living experiments in human unity, ecological restoration and participatory governance be subjected to forms of governance and development that come at the cost of the very experiment they are meant to sustain and protect?

Through photographs, videos, resident testimonies and documentary material, the exhibition raises questions of governance, ecology, resident participation, land use, transparency and the future of Auroville as a global experiment in human unity.

> *"If Auroville is an experiment in human unity, then its future concerns more than Auroville alone. We invite you to witness, question, and participate in an important conversation about what humanity stands to gain — or lose — when such experiments come under threat."*
>
> — Mandakini Skoles, organiser and resident of Auroville

The organisers are calling for serious media scrutiny, informed public discussion, greater transparency, and the protection of Auroville's founding purpose, in the interest of preserving a living experiment intended to serve humanity as a whole.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND — AND WHY

The exhibition is open to residents, neighbours, journalists and independent media, environmentalists, legal experts, academics, artists, devotees of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, civil society organisations and concerned citizens. Visitors are invited to explore the material, engage with the questions being raised, and reflect on what is at stake — for Auroville and for the future of living experiments in human unity.

Come not to take sides, but to understand what is at stake.

PROGRAMME

Opening hours — Saturday 11 July: 4:00–8:00 PM · Sunday 12 July: 9:00 AM–1:00 PM & 4:00–8:00 PM.

Across both days, the programme includes:

- **Photo exhibition** — images documenting Auroville's ecological restoration, community initiatives and recent changes.
- **Testimonies & conversations** — personal accounts from people involved in Auroville's ecological, social, educational and community work over several decades.
- **Guest observations** — perspectives from public figures across civil society, ecology, law, culture and governance.
- **Reflections & summary session** — a closing conversation drawing together the exhibition's themes.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES & PARTICIPATION

PRIMARY CONTACT

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ADDITIONAL CONTACT

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— ENDS —

Notes to editors. A media kit — including source photographs, supporting documents, resident testimonies and the fact sheet overleaf — is available on request from the contacts above. The figures cited carry evidence tags (see page 3) indicating whether each is documented, reported, alleged, estimated or at risk. High-resolution images and interviews with residents can be arranged for accredited media.

Auroville by the numbers: built, under scrutiny, lost

Five decades of work — and the concerns raised since 2021 — at a glance. Each figure carries a status tag showing how it is currently evidenced.

BUILT
WHAT AUROVILLE CREATED

3,300
Residents
A settled community drawn from around the world
DOCUMENTED

60+
Nationalities
Living together in one township
DOCUMENTED

1,300
Acres of restored forest
From near-barren land, over five decades
DOCUMENTED

35,000
People benefiting
From socio-economic & environmental programmes
REPORTED

68
Awards
National & international recognition
DOCUMENTED

UNDER SCRUTINY
GOVERNANCE & TRANSPARENCY

21
Land-exchange deals
Said to have been conducted without transparency
ALLEGED

₹300+ cr
Estimated loss
To Auroville from those land exchanges
ESTIMATED

1,054
Acres at risk
Outlying land facing possible further exchange
AT RISK

200+
Residents affected
Reporting delays & difficulties over visa recommendation letters
REPORTED

LOST / DAMAGED
ECOLOGICAL & HUMAN

40,000+
Trees cut overall
Per documentary records / organisers' estimate
DOCUMENTED

20,000+
Protected trees cut
About half of all trees felled
REPORTED

3,000+
Truckloads of soil removed
From the Matrimandir area, per gate-pass records
DOCUMENTED

≈250
Livelihoods affected
Residents & employees said to be deprived of their work
REPORTED

About these figures. All figures are compiled by the exhibition's organisers from documentary records, gate-pass logs, resident testimony and public information. Status tags indicate how each figure is currently evidenced:

Documented — supported by records **Reported** — from resident / organiser accounts **Alleged** — contested; requires transparency

Estimated — approximate **At risk** — potential future loss

Supporting documents are available in the media kit on request. Contested figures reflect the organisers' position and are presented for public scrutiny and independent verification.