Auroville

NOVEMBER 2026



SCORCHED EARTH

EDITORIAL

For more than five years now, life in Auroville has resembled a path overgrown with brambles. Not that life was ever easy here before! There have always been difficulties — reaching an agreement, in particular, was often a struggle. We tried, as best we could — or perhaps, as Satprem used to say, "rather badly then well" — to nurture and grow this mystery that is Auroville, planted here by the Mother (Satprem was a friend whose exacting standards were often difficult to keep up with). Yet, we were sustained by the quiet strength of a shared goodwill — even if that goodwill was, at times, rather naive — and looking back, we realize just how happy we actually were. There was "something" in the atmosphere — a quality that many visitors often remarked upon.

Then, a veil descended — slowly at first, as if we struggled to grasp what was unfolding — before gathering speed. At the start, many of us resisted. But gradually, a gray, pervasive weariness crept in. The community — vaguely frightened by a rising tide of arbitrary decisions reshaping the Aurovilian landscape, and intimidated by various threats — grew discouraged, as our resistance seemed to yield no results whatsoever. Ugliness, fueled by presumptuous incompetence, spread like a cancer throughout the

heart of Auroville — along with disorder and squalor.

Amidst this desolation, there was a saving grace: the heroic effort of representatives appointed by Auroville to the Working Committee. These Aurovilians, firmly supported by a handful of others, fought every inch of the way, never once yielding to the onslaught of an administration that had turned into an adversary. They protested vigorously against the numerous missteps, documented them meticulously, and informed anyone willing to listen. Their only allies in this unequal battle were a few members of the International Advisory Council, who also — tirelessly and firmly — denounced the arbitrary actions and growing corruption in Auroville's governance.

This publication seeks to convey something of the patient, obstinate, and courageous struggle of this small group — a group that succeeded in making tangible, for many of us, that subtle, gentle, yet formidable presence which the Mother calls the "Spirit of Auroville."

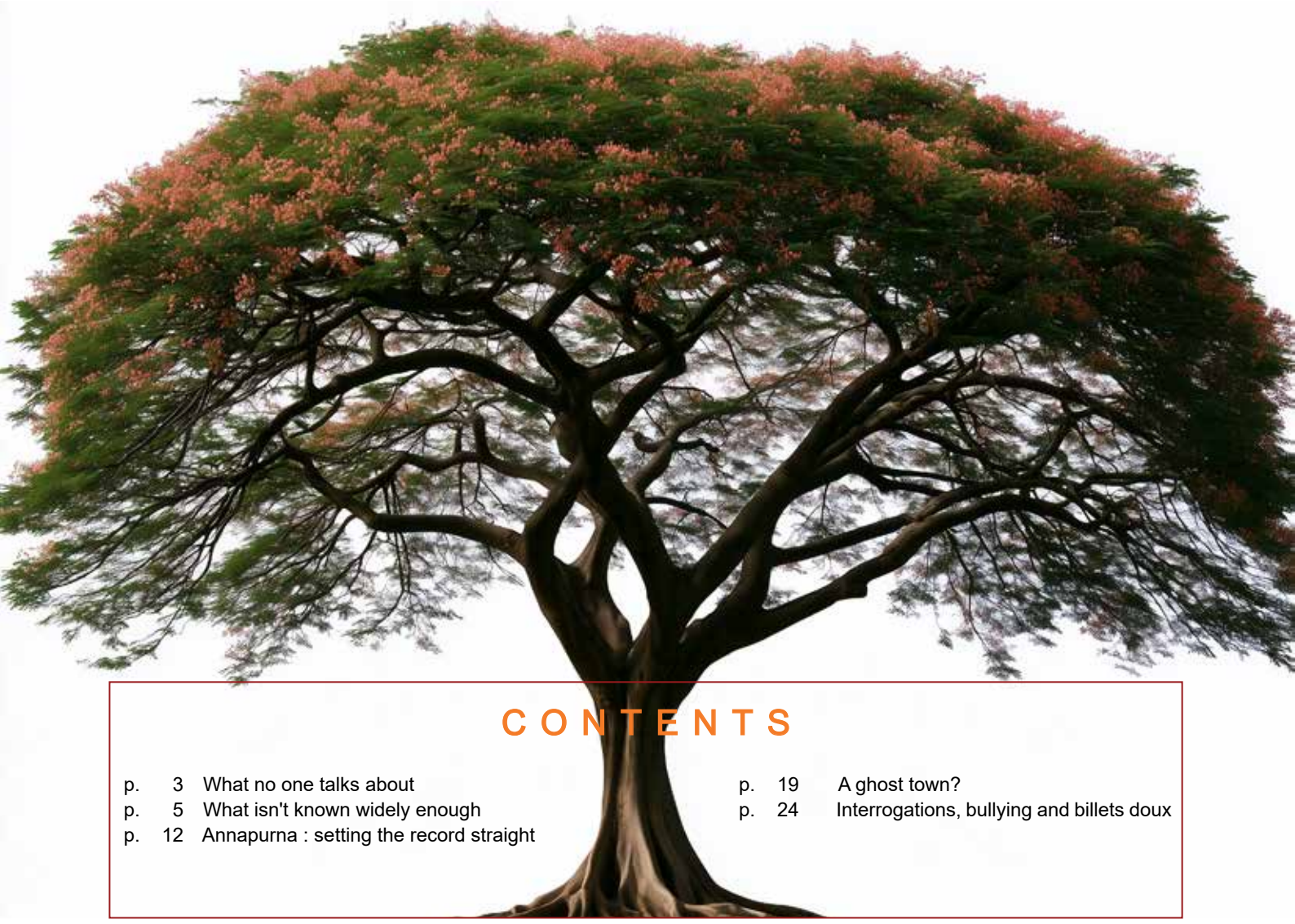
This Spirit of Auroville is our only true hope. Amidst the ruins, it whispers that the immense strength bestowed upon it at its birth — on February 28, 1968 — remains intact, awaiting the predestined moment for a truer recreation of the Divine Dream, which nothing can ever permanently destroy.

I sometimes seem to hear this whisper when, in the early morning, I contemplate the colossal and majestic presence of a tree planted in the summer of 1976 in front of a house that had just been built. Back then, it was merely a young sapling. Here, it is known as a "rain tree," because its leaves fold up in the evening and whenever it rains. In Tamil, it is called *thoongu-moonji-maram* — "the tree with the sleeping face."

The Mother named this remarkably harmonious tree "Wisdom." Wisdom whispers to me that the two of us will continue our silent dialogue for a long time yet, despite the threats that loom day after day.

This tranquil giant brings me tranquility.

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What no one talks about

At the beginning of this year, a significant change took place within our internal organization. It caught almost all of us off guard. It happened quickly — too quickly, perhaps even hastily — and has had, and continues to have, profound repercussions on how the community now responds to the administration's arbitrary decisions.

In early January, word got around that a number of local Aurovilians — keen to take their rightful place in decision-making processes — were proposing to replace all members of the working groups linked to the Residents' Assembly (such as the Working Committee and others), or at least those whose terms were expiring. It must be said that most of these Aurovilians had been absent from many previous actions protesting the prevailing authoritarianism, land swaps, and so on. Yet, we were told, they had experienced their "Road to Damascus" moment and now ardently wished to dedicate their energy to our community, which was wounded on all sides. They had even formed a dynamic group called "Light for Unity." The community could only welcome this turnaround, especially since these particular Aurovilians were less vulnerable than others, facing no visa issues. The method proposed for renewing the working groups — announced at a general meeting in early January — was to assemble a group of generally respected Aurovilians, ask them to meet urgently and select, through internal consensus, a potential list of new members for these groups. They were given (or rather, imposed with) a one-week deadline to accomplish this. The list was then to be presented to the community, which could choose the members it preferred. The list was short, and the range of choices was limited. I don't recall the exact details, but it went something like this: from a list of twelve, you had to choose eight.

The community, without fully grasping the implications of this decision, overwhelmingly approved it. The group of nine selectors made their choices within the allotted time, the lists were sent to each voter, votes were cast, and — in record time — we bade farewell to the members of the old working groups and installed new ones.

Fine. This is where things got complicated. It is not enough to simply decree that certain individuals must work together; a team has to be built. And a team is not merely a collection of individuals placed side by side. It consists of players with different yet complementary qualities and skills — players who enjoy working together and who pass the ball to one another with the sole aim of winning.

After a few weeks, it became clear that the members of this new Working Committee had failed to form such a team. In fact, since the beginning of this year, the Working Committee has vanished completely into an ocean of oblivion, and till very recently we heard nothing more about it. Yet, we had the immense good fortune and privilege of having a Working Committee representing the residents, that, for five years, had been a cohesive, effective, determined, and responsive team — always striving to come to the aid of residents under threat. It was a team that knew how to enlist the help of experts in their respective fields for advice on specific issues. It was a team that communicated clearly; its regular messages — designed to inform and encourage — did a great deal during those trying years to restore courage and hope to exhausted residents. Another important point: the Working Committee never failed to counter the administration's propaganda, publicly dismantling their absurd arguments one by one. In short, it was something of the spirit of Auroville itself speaking through those messages.

That voice has fallen silent. How did we reach this point? Have we not sawed off the very branch we were sitting on?

There are several explanations for what I persist in calling a serious mistake on the part of the community. And as always, this mistake was born of the best intentions. First, there was the feeling that if the local Aurovilian community wanted to join the fray, it would be a highly positive development — making the resistance movement far more inclusive and effective, since there is strength in unity, and so on. Consequently, even those initially reluctant — seeing no reason to rush into changing the makeup of working groups that everyone valued — decided to place their trust in the "Light for Unity" movement. After all, local Aurovilians had long been urged to participate; they had finally begun to do so, and it was only right to give them the necessary space. There was also the argument that, with the mandates of both the Governing Board and the Secretary having expired, the time was ripe to make a strategic move.

As I write this, nine months have passed since those events. As previously mentioned, we no longer have a Working Committee — or at least, barely one. As for the "Light for Unity" group, it seems to have vanished, torn apart by internal divisions, with some members having struck deals with the Secretary.

It is well known that nature abhors a vacuum. Consequently, there was, for a time, a glaring lack of leadership. It was then that, thanks to Major Arun, we were introduced to Piyush Manush — a Tamil activist renowned for his advocacy for environment and justice. He has revitalized our struggle, though by steering it in a distinctly different direction: he focuses on local institutions — such as the police, local magistrates, and local courts — rather than on politicians in Delhi or the Supreme or High Courts. In his view, it is by working at this level — the district level — and by better informing the local population that real results are achieved. For instance, thanks to him, we



Meeting, 5 February 2026. Presentation of new working groups members

have received tremendous support from farmers in Tamil Nadu for the defense of Annapurna Farm. His optimism and determination make him a valued friend, while his experience makes him an irreplaceable ally.

Fortunately, one of our working groups, known as the FAMC, has recently taken the initiative to send firm communications to the administration regarding the land and the threats facing the Annapurna Farm.

As we write this, there are a few signs that the current Working Committee is beginning to awaken and re-engage — becoming active and responsive once again. We can only welcome this development! Time will tell what comes of it. In any case, let us once again turn to the Gita: “On this path, no effort is ever lost.”

In any case, it is essential for the people of Auroville to understand what has transpired — without casting blame, yet without turning a blind eye.

Moreover, we felt that this was information we owed to our readers, as it will help them better grasp the complexities of collective life in Auroville.

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What isn't known widely enough

Having informed readers of this complexity — so typical of Auroville — we would like to revisit the exceptional work carried out by the previous Working Committee over the course of nearly five years. The very circumstances surrounding its "disappearance" left no opportunity for any kind of formal assessment. It was therefore time to attempt to reconstruct part of that history, drawing on the accounts of some of those who were directly involved.

Let us start at the beginning. In July 2021, when the newly appointed Secretary arrived in Auroville, the Working Committee consisted of seven members. Three of them (Chali, Hemant, and Sauro) would soon realize that the new administration's intentions were not benevolent. The other four (Srimoyi, Anu, Arun, and Partha) — whether out of opportunism or frustration at not finally seeing "the city" take shape — supported the Secretary instead, claiming that her drive to accelerate development was a tremendous opportunity for Auroville. A rift was, of course, inevitable, but looking back now, it is interesting to examine how it came about.

Initially, the Secretary was given a royal welcome. Word had it that she had worked with Kireet Joshi and that some Aurovilians knew her. Moreover, she was a woman and — by all accounts — highly dynamic. The Working Committee and other Aurovilians bent over backwards to welcome her warmly, presenting her with collections of Auroville products and showing her around many and various locations and several innovative enterprises. I remember one such visit, as it took place at Auroville Papers; we had even prepared a small exhibition of books published by Auroville Press. Everything seemed normal, yet I couldn't help but notice that some of the accompanying Working Committee members looked weary and unsettled. I discreetly asked one of them for his impressions of this new bureaucrat."A disaster," he replied... Another member later said,

We welcomed her with open arms, and planned all kinds of programs and meetings, and taking her everywhere. We cycled all over the place with her, because she insisted on doing that. We went to Youth Center pizza evenings, and Johnny's Sunday potluck. I have the list still of all the meetings and people that we took her around to. And it was like 30 plus places that we took her to, and over 20 meetings with groups, working groups, and groups of people in different places. And I remember, you had asked me, "So what do you think?" And if I remember correctly, I said something like, "She could be really good for Auroville, and she could be very destructive, and very damaging. So we have to wait and see which one it will be." And now that's pretty clear.

It would soon become glaringly obvious that working with her was virtually impossible. Her authoritarianism, her manipulative nature, her whims, and her expectation that everyone should be at her beck and call at all times of the day and night were disconcerting — and ultimately shocking:

She was really difficult to work with, because she had this habit, even from the very beginning, to call people, just on the spur of the moment: come now, come now, you have to do this, and let's sit outside, there's no Wi-Fi. Come now but… wait for two hours! She wanted to sit outside for our meetings where there's no Wi-Fi, and no table to put the laptop or notebook or whatever — just very difficult. But then I, at least, was trying to give her the benefit of the doubt, saying, okay, she's coming to a new situation. We know that Auroville is very different for people [coming from outside]. Give her some time. She's trying to catch up. She's trying to get up to speed quickly. So that was my approach to her being very difficult.

It quickly became apparent that this person was appointed to Auroville with a specific mission — the ultimate goal of which was not yet entirely clear, but whose immediate task was to bring the Aurovilians into line.

And the best way to bring them into line quickly was to use the tried-and-tested formula: divide and rule. Thus, as soon as the Secretary realized there were disagreements within Auroville regarding development, she raised the issue of the Crown Road. She called for studies — and then more studies; several Aurovilians worked to satisfy her requests, preparing presentations and proposals, yet she showed absolutely no interest in their conclusions. Similarly, she later feigned support for the "Dreamweaving" process — during which Aurovilians from all walks of life collaborated to envision what the Crown Road might look like — only to subsequently throw it into the waste paper basket. She had no interest in this collaborative process; what she was seeking to do was widen a rift, a schism, to drive a wedge into an existing divide. Others remember:

The crown road was a physical sign of division. But when the division started in the leadership of the Residents' Assembly, which was the Working Committee at that time, it became very clear that the existing division which we had had for years between the green belt and the city had to be polarized. There had to be a wedge. That had to be expanded. So this was something which was taken up very consciously [by her].



4 December 2021, Youth Centre

[That day] she said to us, "Yes the crown road could meander." She said it to us and then later we heard that it had to be a perfect circle! And for me [at first] it was like an unexplained thing. She saw the division among the residents. She saw who will be following her, who will be supporting her. So she went for them. If she had seen stronger people on the meandering side, she would have gone for the meandering, God knows.

All of us we tried: Let's pick issues which unite us rather than divide us. We said: let's take those, and at the same time work with issues which are going to be more difficult to deal with; and then we work on them also. It's not that we put them aside. But very consciously, very clearly, the issues which were to divide the community on issues of planning, morality, spiritual morality, ethics and projects were chosen so that it divides the community into two or polarizes it.

Once the division was created, the ATDC group was mobilized, the bulldozers were set in motion, and — with the help of the four supporting members of the Working Committee — attacks on the Youth Center were orchestrated in December 2021. This ensured the rift would be irreparable. However, what dealt the final, fatal blow to the (split) Working Committee was the turn of events in May 2022. This occurred just as the community was preparing to vote on the following proposal:

> *I agree to remove individual members of the Working Committee from office through this current RA decision-making process, given their failure to 'assist' and 'represent' the Residents' Assembly as stated in their mandate. If more than 50% of voters agree that a member is to be removed, the term of that member ends with immediate effect.*

However, on May 6, a circular signed by an 'Officer on Special Duty' of the Auroville Foundation Office, was sent out stating that the Residents' Assembly was no longer authorized to make decisions, on the grounds that the residents' list had not been updated. This circular called on Aurovilians to halt any voting process. Naturally, they disregarded this instruction. The results were announced on May 10, showing overwhelming support for the aforementioned proposal and reaffirming Chali, Hemant and Sauro as Working Committee members with over 95% of the vote of the participants. In the days following the announcement, the administration — with police assistance — attempted to evict the three widely reaffirmed members from their offices. Other Aurovilians were present as witnesses and to offer support, prompting the Foundation Office to file an official complaint against six of them. Notably, some of the charges brought against them were criminal in nature.[1] It was at this point that the Working Committee decided to take the matter to court. It is worth recalling the reason behind this decision; today, it is all too easy to criticize and claim that we should never have approached a court of law.

It was a legitimate step because we were dragged to court with an FIR saying that we were obstructing the legitimate Working Committee.

I think that this is actually a really important point of timing to get into people's heads because a lot of people have forgotten the sequence of events. We went to court because, in our mind and in many people's minds, they crossed a line in filing this FIR against six Aurovilians with criminal charges. It was because of that, it was in response to that,

1. It should also be noted that it is only now (more than four years later) that these six Aurovilians are set to appear before a court (see page 25).

that we went to court. But a lot of people have conveniently forgotten that the FIR was filed against us with criminal charges, false criminal charges, before we went to court. And it was because of that that we went to court — not that we went immediately to court. And it was after a year almost, a year, I think, that we had been trying to keep working together, to find a way to not divide to the point that we did. So I think it's important that this is really clearly put on the record so that people can't so conveniently say now: but you guys went to court. Well, yes, but...

What people say, they have all the right to say. There will be always two views, that it was a good decision and a bad decision. At that moment, in our wisdom, at that point, it was to defend Residents' Assembly. And we felt that we had that role of defending or representing the Residents' Assembly, and any medium of appeal was exhausted. First, it was our own Working Committee dynamics, then the Council and the internal dynamics, then the Secretary and then the Governing Board. When all this was exhausted, this decision was taken. It was not taken to please A or please B. So I don't want to defend that if somebody thinks that it was a wrong decision, they have a right. At that moment, we felt that this is the right decision. And I still stand by that right decision."

The order of Seetharaman [circular of May 6], was against the Residents' Assembly. It was stopping its functioning. We appealed at every level to reverse that order. When this appeal did not go, the next set of appeal left was courts. No government was listening to us. No executive was listening to us…. Now, if two-thirds or one-third or ten or fifteen think now that it was a wrong decision, I would give them a right to express that. And if two-thirds or one-third or ten think that it was the right decision, I would give them the right to say that. But currently I would still say it was the right decision and till that court case, which is the key court case, is decided it actually gives us the right to function under the Auroville Foundation Act. And that is why probably we are sitting around this table. If that case was not there, the bulldozers on every aspect of things would have run long past.

And most importantly at the moment even in the case that we lost — the quo-warranto case, — the judgment says that for the time being Auroville is ruled by the modifications of the interim stay in the appeal that the Foundation has



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made on the Quddhose case; and these modifications say that Auroville can function as long as there is no change in the basic structure of the Auroville Foundation Act; so all decisions from after September 2023 are perfectly valid including the selection of the Working Committee, because of this order of the High Court. The Madras High Court still protects the Auroville Residents' Assembly. Maybe we will get the judgment next week or I don't know when, but at the moment the Residents' Assembly is perfectly legitimate to function and to do selection. And that order is part of that initial case regarding Seetharaman order. It has had an effect to protect for 4 years the function of the Residents' Assembly.

There is another point that must be mentioned when trying to understand exactly what happened and why. Let us not forget the treasure represented by the lands of Auroville — a highly coveted treasure. And here again, the Working Committee grasped this before practically anyone else. Those among them who had the opportunity to speak with well-informed individuals had been warned: it is a question of land.

[This friend] called me, and said, "So, what do you think?" Literally, it started with that: what do you think? I said, "I presume you're talking about the new Secretary?" He said, yes. Then I said, "I have no idea, I just met her once, and this, and that". He said, "We told you a long time ago, she's after your land."

[This person said to me] You guys have a lot of land around you (and this was before this government even came to power), you better have some justification of what you're doing with this land, otherwise, there will be somebody who will come one day and say: oh, you have too much land, let's put [here] some institutions which are like-minded". I've seen that example in the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore; they have a lot of land, so, they gave one, took out one portion, gave it to Rama Hospital, took out one portion, gave it to a new institute called National Institute for Advanced Studies, so, then, the Institute got alarmed, and they started spreading their buildings here and there. These things happen, they take the land, I know. One thing [this friend] said (I think that's as harsh as he could get, as he's very gentle, not critical of anybody), "You'll be surprised at her speed, and she'll be surprised at your speed of functioning". That was his last line.

So, I started explaining to [this bureaucrat], and told him what just happened, that road, and the tree cutting, and all those things. His first reaction was: they are after your land. Land, that's all. He said, "Everything else is distraction, everything else is distraction. Suppressing you, and this, and that, cutting trees, and all those things, this is a distraction. They want to monetize your land, they are after your land." Second thing he told me was: "You won't be able to do anything about it." Why? "Because these guys are very powerful." He's very diplomatic in general, not to be quoted, but I was alone. So, he didn't mince his words, but this is as harsh as he could say: "You will not be able to do anything about it." I asked him, and the courts? He said, "No." I said, "What if we go and talk to them?" He said, "Once they've made up their mind, why would they change it?"

People have warned us before: we are living in India where the population is high, land is very scarce, and anybody holding extra land, even privately, is going to have tough times. So that's the situation at this point. This government, the next government, the government after — it doesn't matter. What this government has been very professional in implementing is in taking government lands and converting them into monetized assets. For example take a railway land, create a mall on that, or take Ayodhya and convert it into [a touristic place]. The business community knows that very well, they know this very well, how to monetize land and how to get benefits out of it. So if this amount of land is available from a purely real estate perspective, I can convert it into a 50,000 crore, 100,000 crore rupees asset."

Listening to all the Aurovilians who — in one way or another — have had dealings with bureaucrats and/or with Indians who are clear-sighted and well-disposed toward Auroville, it seems evident from their accounts that this secretary has — effectively — carried out the orders she was given. And the mission she was entrusted with is indeed primarily linked to the monetization of Auroville — and not just its land. It concerns the location's enormous potential for tourism, specifically the spiritual-tourism sector. In recent years, certain politicians have frequently announced that Pondicherry was set to become an international yoga destination — a destination with a spiritual focus. We know, after all, that spiritual and religious destinations across India are undergoing rapid development. Auroville is no exception, especially given its international prestige. That, then, is the primary objective. In this context, the current administration appears to have been installed to implement this project — and to eliminate, one way or another, all Aurovilians (especially foreigners but not only) who believe in the Mother's dream and are therefore inevitably opposed to this goal of turning Auroville into a commercial commodity.

To return to the previous Working Committee: what must be emphasized is that, despite being at the heart of the conflict — confronted with all manner of accusations, pettiness, and lies, and indeed persecuted in countless ways, even driven from their office — this group succeeded in rising above the prevailing atmosphere — that is to say, they managed to keep working with joy and perseverance, even in the face of setbacks, never once giving up despite the enormity of the task at hand. And they did this for years, with great harmony among all the members. Even when it became necessary to bring in new people to replace those whose terms had ended, the transition happened easily and naturally. It is this "spirit of Auroville" — characterized by joyful collaboration, freedom, lightness and flexibility — that these Aurovilians embodied for so long. A spirit



THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF AUROVILLE

To the right a massive black stone marks the inauguration of a "plaza" dedicated to artisanal products. Indeed, along a newly constructed access road to Auroville, one can see a series of "kiosks" under construction — intended to house small shops that will sell souvenirs to tourists. Anyone who has traveled in India knows how these types of stalls disfigure every so-called "tourist" destination.





On the left: posters encouraging visitors to take guided tours of Auroville — by bicycle, in a standard car, or in an air-conditioned vehicle. During these tours, unsuspecting tourists will likely be shown certain aspects of Auroville that are officially decried and condemned.

so palpable that the entire community recognized it.

It was simply fantastic being together. There is no logical explanation. But it was the joy to be together, to be working together, to do a common work together. Working for — not the protection, but for the advancement of Auroville, for keeping these things. It was so natural and spontaneous. We trusted each other. … It was like one body. Without talking, without anything. We can't explain. Just totally... It has continued until now.

A large part of people, either vocal or even not speaking, were supportive. Support came in all kind of forms. I have never experienced as many hugs as in this period! And so much gratitude. So much gratitude. So much love!

It was quite amazing. Just how easy it was, even when a few of the members changed. There was always just a very easy integration. Very easy. There was no kind of feeling of, oh, we have to transition. It was just OK: here they are. That really is what allowed us to keep going the way that we did. … People would say, "Oh, the community is so divided". And I would say: well, in a way, but in other ways, I feel more of a sense of community than ever, more than I ever did.

The amount of goodwill we have received from outside Auroville from people who were friends of Auroville, whether it is our lawyers, or the people of… Even in government! Even in government. Our friends and people whom we knew, they could not do much. You could sense the helplessness. But there was a sense of support. Even with ….[government people] even in that circle we found so much of goodwill. That is something which made me feel that Auroville is not this geographical place. It's kind of spread in a much wider geography in terms of all the goodwill it creates.

And those people who have given so much of themselves continuously for five harrowing years, what do they feel now?

Personally, every grain in me, every grain in me says, leave Auroville! Every cell of my body says, leave Auroville! And I have to stay here. Every day I wake up, I say, okay, one more day I'll stay here [laughter]. So that is something which is... I don't know how I manage it, but every day is that struggle. Now, what keeps me here is something we have spoken a lot of, how we got connected and all that. And the disgust and the frustration of a system and not being able to fight that, is something which is personally bothering me. I would rather be slain rather than being



surviving. … And every time I feel that we have to do the same over here, but the collective [reality], which I felt in the last days — and that has become very, very difficult for me to accept — is that we are collectively not ready to be hurt and slain. And that is something which disturbs me a lot. But okay, maybe my protest is just to survive and stay. So as a protest, I stay.

[There were] moments of frustration: what am I doing? What are we doing? Putting ourselves at risk, putting targets on our backs and our foreheads for everybody else? And they can't even bother to stand up and to come forward and to put their name on things! And I would get really frustrated about that. And at one point, I just had to say, I have made my choice. I am making my choices. I can't judge other people for their choices. They have their own lives. They have their own reasons for making their choices. And I can't judge that. I just have to continue doing what I think is right and let other people do what they think is right. And that's it. And so that was also a kind of a letting go. I think another thing that somebody mentioned: the masks are off. And, related to that, one thing that I observed in other people and in myself was discovering qualities in myself and others that I didn't know existed, for better and for worse.

[When I was asked to join the Working Committee] I did what I do in these things, right from my early youth: I turned to the Mother. Mother, what do you want me to do? … And the answer was very clear: you accept. So for me it was all the time: what does She want me to do at this point, in this position? And that was the parameter, including sometimes showing a lot of anger, which was not easy always for me, but it came, to express the anger against the injustice.

I don't know how my future is going to be. At that time I read one quote the Mother had written: This project is created by the divine Mother, not by the people, and there is no failure to this project. So this I keep repeating: there is no failure to Auroville project. It will shine, it will come back. Maybe the struggle whichever we are now going through, it's meant to be. … and I'm really happy that Mother chose me and gave me a beautiful task… We made a wonderful team and never judged one another. We trusted each other. Sometimes, not everyone read every single email, but we knew that everything was done in the interest of Auroville as a whole, and we had faith in one another.

We shall conclude with these poignant remarks — so profound and so true:

I think we are experiencing the suffering and pain of the nation and the world. In Auroville we are going through what the rest of the country also is experiencing, breakdown and cracks in institutions which can be checked and balanced. We felt judiciary would be a support when the executive fails. We did go to the judiciary. We did try to go to the media. To some extent something happened but it's also very biased in many ways. So the pillars of the modern governance system are collapsing in India and worldwide, we are experiencing the same collapse for us over here, so there is something which probably is something which we need to figure out how to answer. And that in my view is something which we have not figured out yet that how to deal with it. Do we deal with the same street violence of punishing ourselves with hunger strikes, or we deal with a larger calling which is more in tune with our values and our aspirations? So here it is, Auroville is an experiment, yes I defend personally the reason to go to the court and I feel still that the relief which we have got allows us to exist at this point of time so that it has not been a complete bulldoze over there — but we should realize that it is not us alone. Not the Auroville residents alone. We are bearing the pain for the world, and I feel that we need to work at this point on how we deal with it and how we come out of it. That is probably the work the Divine has given us. Embracing the enemy doesn't work, fight yes, we should remain firm and clear and stand by our truth what we feel. And are there any other tools which we have to come with, so that is something which goes beyond Auroville? It is not an Auroville problem, it is a problem of civilization that we are facing.

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Annapurna : setting the record straight

Most of our readers are aware that Annapurna, an organic farm in Auroville, is under threat from an absurd administrative proposal: to lease the farm's 135 acres to the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chennai for the sum of just one rupee. We are told that the institute intends to use this land to test electric vehicles. For the past year, this nonsensical plan has hung like a sword of Damocles over the farm and its farmers.

Recently, a threatening letter ordered them to vacate the premises within 10 days — taking with them their livestock, poultry, crops, ducks, fruit trees, and everything else — and to relocate to one of the "many sites" supposedly offered to them. It seems these "recalcitrant" farmers have been dragging their feet for long enough; now, out they go!

We do not know exactly why this project is so important to our administrators, but they are sparing no effort to spread their narrative across social media — a narrative entirely aimed at disparaging those in charge of Annapurna, and the farmers of Auroville in general. Their primary arguments are simple, or rather simplistic:

It is claimed that the percentage of produce from Annapurna in Auroville's food supply is negligible.

It is also alleged that the farm occupies a vast area of land that is supposedly underutilized.

All of this is inaccurate. Annapurna produces 30% of the food in question. As for the land, these claims fail to mention the significant space allocated to rainwater harvesting ponds and the large area dedicated to planting Gliricidia *(which serves to nourish the soil) — both of which are essential elements for an organic farm.*

Furthermore, it is overlooked that for the entire plot to be used productively, Annapurna would require financial support.

And finally, even if it is true that Auroville's farms are not producing enough, is that any reason to eliminate the largest among them — especially after having already mutilated the Auro-Orchard farm?

The propaganda on social media reached such a level that it had to be addressed.

Tomas gave an interview — available on YouTube — in which he responds to these accusations.

https://youtu.be/fo7vhTcYiig?si=sYpaqVB-GyZgIf-L

We reproduce here an excerpt from the conversation.

In conversation with Tomas, 29 september 2026

The first question we asked Tomas was: What has been happening since 2025 ?

I have to think deeply now… We got a letter in August 25 that it was decided that this farm would go to IIT — 100 acres of it — and we would have to relocate to the 35 acres of the northwest of Annapurna. And that was signed by the ATDC, that's what I remember. I can't actually remember what was written in that email, which came from one moment to the other.

We had a meeting afterwards, which was about 10 days later. We met them about this, and it was again emphasized that this land was important to go to IIT because IIT was whatever and Annapurna was not so important somehow, in such words. And that the 35 acres left were actually not anymore available because we had to move to the Greenbelt. So that happened immediately. They had changed their mind already within 10 days. And so we had a bit of a discussion, but not really; we asked them a few questions, but the answers were so ridiculous that in the end we stopped. They came up with a story that Mother had Annapurna in mind for IIT. I mean stuff like this, it was just like all over the place. They would offer us lands to consider, and so they gave us a really silly map: there was a 3-acre plot there, there was a 5-acre plot there, whatever, all little things, not even with proper access. And there was one plot which was 12 acres or something, which we actually went to look, and this land is near the Irumbai Lake, and I know this land, and this land is coming under water in the monsoon because the lake is overflooding it — about half of it — this doesn't make sense. They wanted us to make a plan, so I presented a plan, and I said now if you want to relocate Annapurna and you want to have at least a decent production on a certain scale, we need minimum 50 contiguous acres, and with a decent quality of soil and water availability, and otherwise I mean what are you talking about, you can never do this. They could not produce that because it isn't there in Auroville, it's just there's nothing really on that level.

Among the people with whom you have talked, people who are supposedly in charge of this relocation, are they people among them who know something about farming?

No, people have no clue. And the Farm Service which has been replacing the Farm Group, are people who have no clue. So you sit with people who have no clue and they come with the most ridiculous kind of things: "Oh the land is flooding, we'll bring on Matrimandir soil to heighten it up." (!!) I mean these are the kind of stuff you get in meetings, so how do you want to talk to those people? So the whole thing well fell flat for quite some time, so we just ignored it and kept farming as we still do. We had actually only two meetings with them about this, and they were pushing.



They said it was a long process.

Yes, I know, I know, it is a long process because it has been a year, but the process has not been there! Recently we had another meeting, Koshy [a bureaucrat looking after visas] was there, and the OSD was there, and there was Gino [from the Farm Service] and one person of the Housing Service, and they were pushing. I think they had got a message, maybe from higher up, that they had to do something about this. So this is very briefly the story, and then recently we got the last letter that we had to move out in 10 days. So we have been going through a long process, definitely (*laughs*).

But it seems that you never cooperated with them?

That's what they say. We have been cooperating, but we were not cooperating to the point that we were preparing to leave. They were only giving you this kind of silly plots, which they felt were good enough. Basically we felt this is not good enough. If you want to relocate a farm with what we do, you need to come up with much more than that. And 50 acres is really the minimum, because then you cannot do what we do now.

Did they respond to your request?

Not really, because they did not have even the 50 acres. Also then they wanted a budget. How could we give a budget [just like that]? They don't understand organic farming. You have to look at the land and then you see what is needed to be able to make a budget. It's not like ok, 50 acres, and you make a budget just like that! We have to look at what is needed, some farms need this, some farms need that. I mean, it all depends on what you look at, so...

Why doesn't Annapurna move?

Because we feel Annapurna is needed for Auroville. Annapurna was bought for Auroville in the 60s and basically it was meant to grow food on a larger scale because the plateau as it is here was not suitable for that and it's still not suitable for that. You can do gardening here, you can do small scale farming, you can do all kind of interesting little things — which we should do. We should actually farm in the middle of the city, anywhere. But if you need also scale, you need to grow... Rice needs to have a certain area, you need a certain kind of conditions. Annapurna is very good for that. And so, knowing that, you cannot just move away. It doesn't work. And also the fact that after all this happened, we see that people who were initially very much in favour of what the Foundation was doing (that's their right), are slowly starting to kind of see that actually it is not the right thing to do.



The dairy herd of Annapurna



One of the three ponds collecting rainwater

What do you think of this idea of consolidation of farming on the Greenbelt land?

Definitely interesting enough that you look at the Greenbelt as not only forest — which I've often said even in the green groups before. Greenbelt is not just forest. And there are definitely little patches and you have to look at what you can do and you have to find ways with the water because the water is a big problem, of course. So it can be a mixed lot. Forest we have to have, and we can have it everywhere, but farms also and food is a very important aspect. And so yes, consolidation in the Greenbelt, I think the word is a little bit … but we should look at the Greenbelt in detail and see what we can do there so that it gives us the best what we can think of.

For me, Annapurna is the same. We have even talked with them that we could look at a collaboration with IIT because Annapurna needs inputs, in the sense of technology. I believe that agriculture has to become much more technical, much more mechanized because there are simply no people; there will be never Aurovilians in the field on that level we are working. So you need maybe little robots to do the weeding and they are being introduced in Japan. I see them, but it needs work on another level. So I see advantages possible and, if IIT would step in and actually kind of use us as their little demonstration ground, we would be willing to say: here are the needs, and we would evaluate, and they would come in and have students, whatever, that would be an interesting kind of thing to explore. But we need to be on the same level. It can't be people who from the top tell us what to do…

Did you try to approach IIT?

Sure. Yes. We have worked on this. We sat with them at the table but the discussion stopped and they said "We leave it for the moment." That was interesting. But then afterwards, nothing materialized and IIT seems to have not responded. We have sent some stuff to IIT. We said, hey, we are willing to open up. Can we sit together? There was nothing coming. Nothing. I had said, I would be happy to do this. We should have at least an Annapurna farm, which keeps producing food for Auroville and tries to become a model. So we have been trying to cooperate, collaborate with them as far as we could. So we looked at land, we looked at a collaboration possibility, but there was nothing.

Could you explain what, in the context of Auroville, the background of Auroville, what is the concept of steward versus owner?

Right. I was always happy to be steward and not owner. I mean, it felt for me the right way to be in life. To feel I don't have to carry that thing in me, I felt like I can function more



freely and I can give and be part of it. And my ideal has always been like I would be most happy if one day I can walk out of the gate and the farm would continue to move, would continue to go, because it's a community farm which should go over generations and you should have a growing of the farm and evolving of the farm. And I felt always a relief somehow that I could be in there as a steward, as a part, but not owning it. That owning gives a whole heavy thing, I think. I've never owned land, so I don't know for sure, but I had never any intention to want anything like that. So yes, stewardship is responsibility, it is to take things on and try to put the best what you can manage in circumstances with people and growing within there. So I think it also gives you a more growing environment. When you are not the owner that frees you up and it kind of gives you more space to psychologically move.

I feel I've lived my life in the farm and did my work. You did your life in Pour Tous, in wherever, and what do you say in the end? Yeah, I did my work because that's why you're here and nothing more.

❑





On October 16, the Tamil Nadu Farmers' Protection Association organized a demonstration — accompanied by a hunger strike — in a place very close to Auroville to protest against various illegal actions taken by the Auroville administration.Specifically, they called for the protection of Auroville's land and its environment. Naturally, slogans were heard demanding that the Annapurna Farm not be destroyed.The police attempted to disperse the protesters, but the farmers stood their ground. The Aurovilians cannot help but feel deeply grateful to these farmers for their remarkable action and for their solidarity with the farmers of Auroville.





BEFORE

On August 15th, a black stele, one and a half meters tall, was installed with great fanfare in the center of Auroville. It informed passersby that a magnificent project — dubbed "New Birth" and conceived and executed by the current authorities — was to be built on that very spot.

AFTER

Alas, two weeks later, it became apparent that the land behind the black stone was being rapidly cleared and fenced off.Within a few days, all the timber had been hauled away by tractors.
It was discovered that, inexplicably — even though this land had been in Auroville's possession since the year 2000 — the name of another owner had been added to the property title in 2024. To this day, the mystery remains unsolved, despite requests for an explanation from our group responsible for Auroville's finances and assets (FAMC).



A ghost town?

A once-vibrant community has all but vanished. Scattered here and there are fragments of its former existence, now shrouded in the drabness of a profound emptiness. The Bharat Nivas — the Indian pavilion, which once served as a venue for a wide array of gatherings for Aurovilians, including exhibitions, concerts, film screenings, and seminars — is now almost exclusively oriented toward the outside world, catering to visitors as a mandatory stop on a rather exhausting tourist circuit that conveys nothing authentic about Auroville. Not far away, the Visitor Centre is but a shadow of the lively, dynamic hub it had been for years.

This distressing scenario repeats itself at the Administrative Centre, formerly an active coordination point for various Aurovilian working groups. The upper floors of the "Town Hall" are now occupied by groups of individuals whose precise functions remain unclear — save for the fact that they serve exclusively the administration of the Auroville Foundation, which has itself expanded considerably. The official building housing this administration — once open and easily accessible — now feels menacing; it is all too often the source of unpleasant summonses for those Aurovilians who have the misfortune of refusing to conform to the new official mandates.

In many respects, then, Auroville has become a ghost town. People live in isolated pockets, more or less affected by the steady stream of often preposterous directives issued by the administration — and, alas, by their Aurovilian minions. We meet from time to time in various communal spaces — restaurants, food cooperatives, production units — but large gatherings are no longer held; gatherings that used to be a source of comfort, even though the news shared there was, more often than not, not good.

The visible life of Auroville today is, in a sense, an "administrative" existence. The numerous production units that manage to survive — however precariously — receive a steady stream of emails, often cryptic and frequently threatening in tone, sent by accountants who are generally unknown to the recipients — a stark contrast to the trusting relationships that once existed with the offices in Pondicherry (contrary to the administration's claims, the accounts were, in fact, well-maintained, with only a few rare exceptions. Annual audits conducted by official central government inspectors almost always proceeded without any major issues). From time to time, "official" groups issue imperative directives, informing the "community" of various plans and projects for Auroville's future — all without any consultation whatsoever.

For those Aurovilians perceived as hostile to the current administration, this present-day reality carries an almost police-state quality. Any participation in protest movements is logged as a "black mark," and the accumulation of such marks can lead to one's exclusion. It is an oppressive atmosphere — the likes of which had never been seen in Auroville prior to 2021.

Authoritarianism, intimidation, and oppression — who could have imagined that these, the worst failings of any administration, would become the lived reality in Auroville for years on end, with no end yet in sight? Granted, this does not manifest here with the same brutality seen in some other countries; it is more subdued — a latent threat that creates a heavy, stifling atmosphere — punctuated, from time to time, by specific instances that reveal just how real it truly is.

Why was it necessary for Auroville to undergo this painful experience? What fundamental lesson might we possibly — or perhaps even certainly — be receiving? Haven't we ourselves gone astray, losing sight of Auroville's true compass long before this cataclysm befell us? Haven't we ourselves attempted to "administer" Auroville? And, in essence, we failed — that is a fact — even though many fine and good things have been accomplished since Auroville's inception. Aware of this inability, we even held a special two-day session in March 2015: the "Auroville Retreat" — the largest seminar of Aurovilians ever organized, with nearly 200 participants, prepared diligently over many months. It was a moment of honesty. What was hindering progress was clearly identified and acknowledged. The result? Despite a near-universal consensus on the diagnosis, no significant progress followed. The impasse persisted.

Yet, we had at our disposal the precise and illuminating observations of The Mother, who discussed at length with Satprem what the governance of Auroville might look like — particularly in the event that a "representative of the Supreme Consciousness" were not present to lead it. This conversation, published in the 1968 Agenda, took place on April 10th — just a few weeks after the inauguration. At that time, there was almost nothing on the ground, save for a few scattered elements in Pondicherry. The fact that the Mother nonetheless devoted a considerable amount of time to the question of future governance shows that she knew how crucial this would be for the true development of Auroville.

The first thing to be accepted and recognized by all is that the invisible, higher power (higher in the sense that it belongs to a plane of consciousness which, although veiled to most, one can gain, a consciousness one may call as one likes, any name — that doesn't matter — but which is integral and pure in the sense that it's not mendacious, it's based on the Truth), that this power is capable of governing material things for everyone in a MUCH TRUER, happier and more beneficial way than any material power. That's the first point. Once everyone agrees on it ...

And it's not something you can pretend to have; a being

can't pretend to have it: either he has it or he doesn't, because (laughing) *if it's a pretense, life will use the slightest opportunity to make it obvious! And moreover, it won't give you any material power — here also, Théon said something in this regard, he said, "Those who are all the way up" (he was referring to the TRUE hierarchy, the hierarchy based precisely on each one's power of consciousness), "one who is all the way up (one or those) necessarily has the least amount of needs; his material needs decrease as his capacity of material vision increases." And it's perfectly true. It's automatic and spontaneous; it's not the result of an effort: the vaster the consciousness and the more things and realities it embraces, the smaller the material needs become — automatically so — because they lose all their importance and value. It's reduced to a minimal need of material necessities, which will itself change with the progressive development of Matter.*

And that's easily recognizable, of course. It's difficult to feign.

The second thing is the power of conviction. That is to say, the highest consciousness, when it's put in contact with Matter, spontaneously has ... (what should I call it?... It's not an "influence," because there's no will to influence.... I might put it this way:) it has a power of conviction greater than that of all intermediary regions. Through simple contact, its power of conviction, that is, its power of transformation, is greater than that of all the intermediary regions. That is a fact. Those two facts make it impossible for any pretense to last. (I am looking at it from the standpoint of a collective organization.)

As soon as you come down from that Supreme Height, you find the whole play of diverse influences (gesture of mixture and conflict)*, and that's in fact a sure sign: if you come down ever so slightly (even into a region of higher mentality, higher intelligence), the WHOLE conflict of influences starts. Only that which is truly the highest, with perfect purity, has this power of spontaneous conviction. All substitutes you may try are therefore an approximation, and not a much better one than democracy; by "democracy," I mean the system that wants to rule through the greatest number and lowest masses (I am referring to "social democracy," the latest trend).*

If there is no representative of the Supreme Consciousness (which can happen, of course), if there isn't any, we could perhaps (this would be worth trying) replace that with the government by a small number — we would have to choose between four and eight, something like that: four, seven or eight – a small number having an INTUITIVE intelligence. Intuitive is more important than intelligence: they should have an intuition that manifests intellectually. (From a practical standpoint it would have some drawbacks, but it might be nearer the truth than the lowest rung: socialism or communism.) All the intermediaries have proved incompetent: theocracy, aristocracy, democracy, plutocracy — all that is a complete failure.

…

The only thing that could be competent is the Truth-Consciousness choosing instruments and expressing itself through a certain number of instruments, if one can't be found (just one isn't enough, either, that one would necessarily need to choose a whole collectivity).

Kireet once remarked that when the Mother spoke of the potential absence of a representative of the Supreme Consciousness to guide Auroville, she was referring to herself. Her presence would, of course, have significantly altered the course of Auroville's evolution. Yet, it remains a fact that even with her active and intervening presence, the early years of Auroville were far from tranquil; conflicts and opposition were frequent.

Sooner or later, there will be an "after" to the current situation in Auroville. Some fear — understandably so — that the damage may be too profound to allow for a genuine new beginning. I, however, do not believe that Auroville will cease to exist as a vital center for a message concerning the evolution of the world. No, the core issue is "us."

One might argue that I am validating our current persecutors... But let us be honest: we have failed to implement the Mother's directives, or even to attempt anything remotely approaching them.

We certainly have our excuses: shortly after the Mother's passing, we were forced to contend with the overreaching, illegitimate control of the Sri Aurobindo Society — an organization whose claims to govern Auroville bore little relation to the Mother's own precepts. It took a 12-year struggle, culminating in the Auroville Foundation Act of 1988. This meant enduring many blows, as well as far too many deep-seated disagreements among a number of Aurovilians — disagreements that have left their mark.

Subsequently, it became necessary to adapt to a more administrative and "official" form of governance, brought about by the introduction of the Foundation into the life of Auroville — a development met with instinctive distrust by many Aurovilians. This resulted, among other things, in the creation of an "Auroville Council" — existing alongside the new "Working Committee" (a representative body selected by all residents) — with the primary role of overseeing the working groups that govern or administer Auroville. One can already discern the inherent flaw in this layering of structures, which naturally tends to introduce politics into the very heart of Auroville. And, it must be acknowledged, that is precisely what happened. We established a pseudo-democracy, laden with rules, which rarely produced groups capable of providing Auroville with clear direction. Consequently, two competing visions for Auroville's development — which had long stood in varying degrees of opposition — became increasingly entrenched, eventually leading to an impasse that the Auroville Retreat of 2015 attempted, unsuccessfully, to resolve.

These two visions have existed almost from the very beginning: on one side, administrators and urban planners; on the other, pioneers working on a devastated, nearly

barren landscape that needed to be brought back to life. There were deep, mutual distrust and a lack of understanding, with few bridges between the two sides — all compounded by the all-too-rapid end of the physical presence of The Mother, who had urged everyone to make the "heroic" and essential effort to find common ground.

Now is the time to be heroic.
Heroism is not what people say, it is to be completely united — and the divine help will always be with those who have, in all sincerity, resolved to be heroic. Voilà.
You are here now, I mean on earth, because you once chose to be — you don't remember it, but I know; that's why you are here. Well, you must stand up to the task. You must make an effort, you must conquer pettiness and limitations, and above all tell the ego: your time is over. We want a race without ego, with the divine consciousness in place of the ego. That's what we want: the divine consciousness, which will enable the race to develop and the superman to be born.

— Mother's Agenda, April 2, 1972

We have not risen to the task; we have neither been able nor known how to be as heroic as the Mother asked of us — that is a fact. This comes as no surprise, yet it remains the fundamental challenge for the future of Auroville.

It is worth noting that, in the early 2000s, new methods of collective work were piloted in Auroville — "Dream Catching," "Dream Weaving," and the "Citizens' Assembly." This is not the place to delve into the details of these experiments, which spanned several years. I wish only to mention the most recent instance in which such collective work was undertaken: it occurred during the first few months of 2022 — a time that followed a period, late the previous year, when the people of Auroville found themselves confronted by the aggressive approach of the new administration.

This administration, installed at the end of June 2021, very quickly propagated the narrative that, after fifty years, the Aurovilians had still not managed to build the Mother's City. The objective, therefore, was to implement — as rapidly as possible — the plans duly approved by the central government. This included, in particular, the Crown Road, intended to serve as the primary thoroughfare at the heart of the city — a complex architectural project that had long been a source of significant questioning and division within the community.

It very quickly became clear that this was the project that would be prioritized for implementation. Gradually, in the face of the threat that inadequate plans might be rapidly pushed through, the idea of attempting a "Dream Weaving" process gained traction and was well received by the community. The administration appeared to approve and encourage this collective project, which took place in early 2022, from January 4th to February 19th. A documentary exists that tracks the day-to-day progress of the work; one cannot help but be moved by the intensity of the exchanges and the palpable joy that emerged, culminating in an exhibition of the results. And yet, at the outset, many of the participants had held nearly opposing visions! Representatives from a firm led by India's most famous architect took part in the process. They expressed their admiration for this collective planning approach and their confidence that they could now produce the necessary execution plans. Alas! The very person who had strongly encouraged the experiment — and even participated in some of the sessions — imposed a veto just a few days later. It seems the administration had not anticipated that participants who were initially so divided would succeed in developing a shared project. With heavy hearts, the group had to resign themselves to the outcome. All that magnificent effort — seemingly for nothing.

As for what followed, we know the story…

But sooner or later — surely — we will have another opportunity to manifest the spirit of Auroville: a spirit defined by collaboration, joint effort, transparency, and the transcending of differences. That spirit hovered over the participants of the "Crown" Dream Weaving. It is, therefore, possible — and, indeed, a joyful endeavor. Auroville as a dream factory! The Mother herself spoke of Auroville as a dream of the Divine.

So, for the future, there will be no administration in the classical sense — only Aurovilians who learn, day by day, how to organize themselves as effectively as possible, and who know how to take the time — when necessary — to sit down together in groups of varying sizes to discover the paths toward unity. A key factor in the success of the aforementioned exercise was the active and dedicated presence of organizers who ensured that the work proceeded smoothly. Throughout the nearly two months of "Dream Weaving" meetings, participants appreciated the meticulous and transparent organization that supported such intense work — an effort led by a team, many of whose members had previously organized the first Citizens' Assembly, which addressed the critical issue of water.

The Mother placed great importance on the role of the organizer:

The conditions to organize – to be an organizer (it's not "to govern," it's to ORGANIZE) – the conditions to be an organizer should be these: no more desires, no more preferences, no more attractions, no more repulsions – a perfect equality for all things. Sincerity, of course, but that goes without saying: wherever insincerity enters, poison enters at the same time. And then, only those who are themselves in that condition can discern whether another is in it or not.

— The Mother's Agenda, Vol. 11, March 25, 1970

It is clear that the Mother does not mince her words: who among us would dare to claim the exceptional level of consciousness she describes for an organizer?

And yet, let us be clear: the true Auroville can only manifest if an increasing number of Aurovilians prove capable of approaching this ideal.

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COLLABORATION, CREATIVITY, IMAGINATION



IMPOSITION, CONFORMITY, BRUTALITY







Interrogations, bullying and billets doux

The harassment of those Aurovillians who do not accept the takeover of the current administration continues. Visas are denied or left pending without being extended; individuals are subjected to interrogations reminiscent of the notorious Stasi; there are threats regarding the withdrawal of essential services, formal "notices to comply," acts of blackmail, and so on. It must be noted that this persecution is directed — though not exclusively — at long-term Aurovilians, as well as those who held positions of collective responsibility. Why is this happening?

I believe there are several answers to this question.

First, those who experienced the atmosphere of Auroville during the time when the Mother was present know full well that the current climate — defined by pervasive fear and threats — bears no resemblance to the gentleness of that era; that "quiet gentleness of the soul" of which Satprem spoke.

Furthermore, the current administration had hoped that long-term Aurovilians — those who had known the Mother, as well as those who had held or are still holding significant responsibilities — would offer unconditional support for its policies, thereby leading others to enthusiastically embrace this takeover. They were, therefore, deeply frustrated and disappointed to discover that, for the most part, this was not the case. And since a defining characteristic of this regime is its vindictive nature, it felt compelled to take revenge for this perceived affront.

It should be noted, however, that — unfortunately — a few "old-timers" either naive or fanatical enough to believe that the main purpose of the takeover was "to build the city," collaborated from the very beginning, opening the gates of Auroville to unscrupulous individuals — people with no moral compass — driven, in some cases, by political-spiritual ambition, and in others, by sordid appetites.

And then there is another reason: the majority of Aurovilians who have lived here for many years have neither the means nor the possibility to return to their home countries — unlike a number of other Aurovilians who have already chosen to do so. Or, at the very least, it is far more difficult for them. So, the administration reasons: they will keep making noise, alerting the media, boycotting our "wonderful" projects, and denouncing corruption — in short, they'll keep being a massive pain in the neck. Well, let's silence them, then. Let's hint that they might lose their homes or their monthly stipends. Let's threaten them with eviction. Let's keep them waiting indefinitely for a letter of recommendation. And let's harass them relentlessly.

Let us add a dash of cruelty by subjecting them, from time to time, to an interrogation — using a method whose copyright belongs to every totalitarian regime:

1. A list of questions prepared in advance.
2. A group of individuals duly authorized by the "Competent Authority."

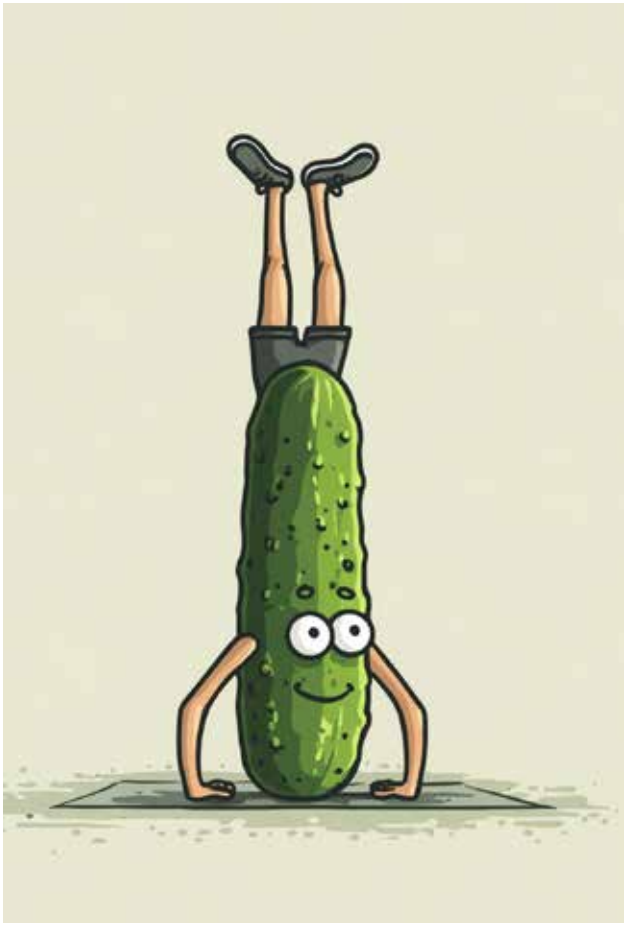
Facing them, an Aurovilian — alone, disoriented, and caught off guard. And here, much like in the heyday of Stalinism, the goal is not to obtain answers to the questions. The goal is to destabilize the individual until they react — a reaction that is immediately interpreted as an admission of guilt.

It would take too long to recount all the pettiness, malice, bullying, provocations, and the constant accumulation of repressive rules that Aurovilians face. In one instance, a community is threatened with the loss of control over its own water distribution system, under the guise of "centralization". In another, a cultural center is forbidden from hosting meetings. Elsewhere, it is decreed that Aurovilians — such as those who provide massages or other forms of care — may no longer conduct their professional activities from their own homes. Sometimes, a business is ordered to change its name for obscure reasons, with no regard for the administrative and financial burdens this imposes. There have even been attempts to contact the clients of a business run by an Aurovilian — one who happens to have fallen out of favor with the authorities — to dissuade them from continuing their professional relationship. At times, an Aurovilian is removed from their position — without even the pretense of a plausible justification — so that the space can be seized and repurposed as a center for propaganda (as was recently the case with the Paradiso cinema). At other times, there is heavy pressure on those Aurovilians who require visas to attend the "Residents' Meetings".

Here, it must be explained to the reader that what the administration now calls a "Residents' Meeting" is not — or is no longer — a gathering where Aurovilians come together to discuss matters of common interest. Instead, once a month, the common folk is invited to a show: a few individuals parade across a stage to announce a string of "official" decisions before a very bored audience — people who feel compelled to be present simply so they can be considered favorably when the time comes for their visa to be extended. The performance culminates in the radiant appearance of the "Competent Authority."

It must be said that many of these acts of harassment — particularly the "show-cause notices" and interrogations — are perpetrated by a group with a rather barbaric name: Admissions and Terminations Scrutinizing Committee. It is a four-person group (comprising two couples) that, through some unknown means and for some unknown reason, wields unimaginable power. These four zealots fancy themselves to have a divine right to question, mistreat, accuse, defame, and condemn any individual who appears before them.

A word about these "official notices." These notifications — referred to here as "show-cause notices" — are documents typically sent by management to employees who have committed an infraction. The recipients are



Staying in good shape, come what may!
"Cool as a cucumber" — that's our motto!

asked to explain their conduct and provide reasons why they should not be dismissed from the organization. In the case of Aurovilians, they are asked why they should not be expelled from Auroville. The text generally concludes with a statement along these lines:

"Failure to submit a complete written explanation within the prescribed time limit may result in the matter being referred to the Competent Authority, which will take appropriate action based on the information contained in the file, including the issuance of a unilateral decision."

Many people have heard of these "love letters", but not every one knows that their number is growing. More than fifty Aurovilians have now received such a document (issued by the aforementioned group). Some have even received two each! There could be no clearer sign that the current administration mistakes Aurovilians for (unpaid) government employees.

We have briefly touched upon the six Aurovilians who were implicated and targeted in the events of May 2022. We have noted that, after four years, they are finally appearing before the local criminal court. However, their hardships are not limited to the requirement to appear regularly before a magistrate — with each appearance serving as just one step in a very long process. Three of them now hold a special six-month visa — an extremely costly document that specifies their stay in India is solely for the purpose of "legal proceedings" and prohibits them from traveling or engaging in any other activities. This situation creates financial pressure on several fronts; one can easily imagine the difficulties this poses for these Aurovilians, who, in addition, find their freedom of movement restricted.

The administration, as we said, takes pleasure in harassing the people of Auroville. One of their favorite delights is to separate parents from children, husbands from wives, and so on. For instance, a man might be granted a five-year visa, while his wife is left to languish, denied a letter of recommendation. Or perhaps an entire family lives in Auroville, yet one of their children remains in exile abroad, unable to obtain a visa to return. A truly unparalleled pleasure…

I understand that it may be difficult for those on the outside to grasp our perspective. To them, all of this likely seems exaggerated — disproportionate. "If the situation is truly so dire," they might ask, "how can you possibly stay? If reality were really as you describe, there would be no one left in Auroville."

That, precisely, is the mystery. And it is the mystery that lies at the heart of our resistance. What, exactly, are we defending? Our organization has been dismantled, our services are being destroyed, our environment — if not entirely destroyed — has been scorched and ravaged, the whole atmosphere has become toxic. So, what are we defending? Ruins? Our own security?

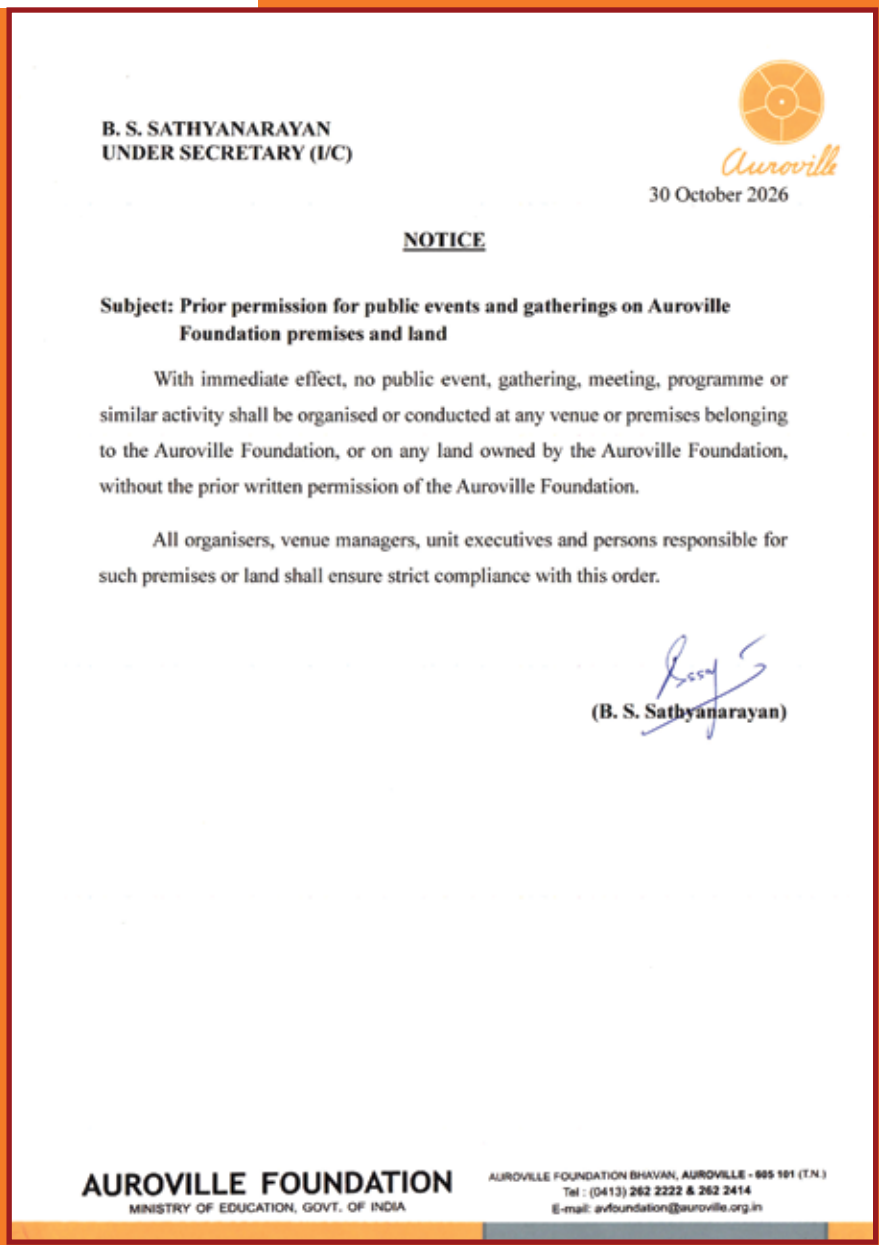
I believe, quite simply, that we are defending the spirit of Auroville. That is the only thing worth fighting for. And when we are gone, others will defend it — here or elsewhere, now or in the future. Of that, I am certain. And, after all… The Mother did say that Auroville was an adventure!

And besides… As the French revolutionary Louise Michel once remarked, "Where would we be if the lambs no longer wished to be slaughtered?"

As we are write these lines, we cannot remain silent about the administration's latest repressive order. Aurovilians are now no longer permitted to gather without



first requesting authorization. This marks a new low in the already depressing story of the last five years. We cannot resist the need to reproduce this order here, but before, a word of explanation regarding the context is necessary: a gathering — a true meeting of residents! — had been planned for October 30th to watch a film about the demonstration by farmers in support of Auroville, to be followed by a potluck. Early that afternoon, a circular was issued prohibiting Aurovilians from holding such gatherings. When the time for the film arrived, a few fanatical supporters of the current administration blocked the path to Kalabhumi and intimidated residents as they arrived. True to their usual tactics, they also filmed the attendees, ensuring that any "belligerent" individuals could be identified. Fortunately, the evening did not end there; the film — which was deeply moving — was screened at another location, where Aurovilians were able to watch it and share a meal in peace. ❑



B. S. SATHYANARAYAN
UNDER SECRETARY (I/C)

Auroville

30 October 2026

NOTICE

Subject: Prior permission for public events and gatherings on Auroville Foundation premises and land

With immediate effect, no public event, gathering, meeting, programme or similar activity shall be organised or conducted at any venue or premises belonging to the Auroville Foundation, or on any land owned by the Auroville Foundation, without the prior written permission of the Auroville Foundation.

All organisers, venue managers, unit executives and persons responsible for such premises or land shall ensure strict compliance with this order.

(B. S. Sathyanarayan)

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