

## Auroville and sustainable development

In the recent ruling of the Supreme Court of India, the learned judge, regarding the need for Auroville's development vis-à-vis environmental protection, stated that "...while the right to a clean environment is a guaranteed fundamental right under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India, the right to development through industrialization equally claims priority under fundamental rights particularly under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution of India. There is therefore a need for "Sustainable Development" harmonizing and striking a golden balance between the right to development and the right to clean environment."

So what does sustainable development mean in the context of Auroville? And is it even the right term to describe what Auroville is meant to achieve?

### A little background

The term 'sustainable development' was first popularised in the 1980s. The so-called Brundtland Commission was set up to address increasing concerns that the current industrial model of growth would soon encounter limits to further growth due to it exhausting the natural resources upon which it relied. The Commission acknowledged these concerns. However, they asserted that further development would be possible if it was 'sustainable', which they encapsulated in a pithy and much-quoted definition:

'Sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

This was an important definition, not only because it indicated that there were certain limits to growth but also because it raised the issue of inter-generational responsibility. However, and crucially, it didn't define what constitutes 'needs' and, given the pace and uncertainties of future development, it was extremely difficult to see how it could be applied in practice.

In fact, dissatisfaction with the Brundtland definition led to many rival definitions of sustainable development. It also led to attempts to define its core principles. These included that the Earth's resources are limited and humanity must respect those limits; that everybody has a basic right to the necessities of life and self-development; and that we must act with the awareness that we live in a dynamic, interconnected world.

These principles, if adopted, would constitute a blueprint for a more 'sustainable' future. Clearly, however, this has not happened, or it has not happened on a scale sufficient to make a difference, and humanity is continuing on a path which many predict will lead to the destruction of the world as we know it.

Why are we continuing on this suicidal path? There are many explanations. They include the spread of disinformation; the power of vested interests; lack of political will or politicians' obsessions with short-term fixes; dysfunctional systems which do not provide timely or accurate information about what is happening; individual feelings of powerlessness or denial or guilt; and the belief that, given enough time and resources, science will solve all our problems.

### The consciousness problem

But perhaps none of these touches the core of the problem, which, as indicated by Sri Aurobindo, is the inability of humanity's present consciousness to deal with the complexity and interrelated nature of the challenges confronting us in the modern world. Einstein put it like this: "You cannot solve a problem with the same mind-set which created it." Or, in the words of the mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme, "The need now is not simply to diminish the devastation of the planet but to alter the mode of consciousness that is responsible for such deadly activities."

What is that mode of consciousness? I believe that buried deep in many of us, and therefore invisibly influencing our outlook and our actions, are certain key assumptions. These assumptions include the belief that the natural world exists for our benefit and its resources are illimitable; that we are separate from nature and from each other and must compete to survive; that continual economic growth is good; and that happiness is the accumulation of more and more material possessions.

Taken together, these are a recipe for global suicide.



Solar panels on the roof of Luminosity

### The need for a completely new consciousness

Those who, like Brian Swimme, advocate a change in consciousness, tend to come up with ethical alternatives to business as usual, like the statement that Earth is our indispensable support system and we must prioritise her wellbeing above economic advantage.

However, Sri Aurobindo goes much further. Observing that *"At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny"*, he points out that as present humanity is incapable of dealing with today's global challenges, there is a need to develop an entirely new consciousness, a spiritual consciousness. The qualities of this are a *"greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power"* which can *"weld all into a greater unity of whole-life"*.

Traditionally, the three core criteria of sustainable development have been environmental, social and economic. In other words, any activity which wishes to qualify as being 'sustainably developed' would need to demonstrate that it respects the environment, that it is economically viable and that it benefits society in some way. Sri Aurobindo's insight, however, suggests that it also needs to include another dimension – that it promotes or supports spiritual development.

### Auroville and spiritual development

Auroville is often seen as 'sustainable', mainly because of its extensive afforestation programme and widespread adoption of renewable technologies. However, as Auroville is intended as a site for the development of a new consciousness one would expect this to be included as a factor – and, perhaps, the major factor – in all of our activities. While we cannot claim that we live in a society where every activity is devoted to the discovery of the soul, a beginning has been made. For example, Mother's 'A Dream' is clearly an inspiration for our efforts to create a cashless economy and her concept of 'divine anarchy', although widely misunderstood, continues to inspire many of our experiments in governance.

Town planning is another area where the spiritual dimension has been invoked, although here it has tended to create controversy. For example, the belief held by some Aurovilians that the Crown has to be a perfect circle as it is a 'yantra' has clashed with another pillar of sustainable development – the need for development to be sensitive to environmental factors. The same can be said of the present plan, seemingly based upon Mother's symbol, to create twelve radial roads.

In fact, how people view Roger's 'Galaxy' plan is an example of how Aurovilians have tended to have embraced different development priorities. Those who believe it emanates from a higher spiritual level tend to resist any attempt to change it, arguing that it has pre-eminence over any environmental or social factors. Others view it not so much as divinely ordained but more as a concept, albeit an inspirational one, which needs to be worked out in a conversation with the land and with the people inhabiting it.

The fact that this polarisation has existed for many years suggests not so much that one view is 'wrong' and the other 'right', but that both represent a 'truth' and we have not yet succeeded in integrating the higher dimension with the emerging 'wisdom of the earth': that, in terms of Sri Aurobindo's symbol, we haven't yet discovered the 'square of integration'.

### Is sustainable development the right term?

However, it is not clear that we can term this 'integrating square' as a form of 'sustainable development', for it appears to transcend any of the usual meanings of that term. In fact, the concept of 'sustainable development' itself is questioned in Auroville by those who believe it is used by some to delay development, or even irrelevant to what they take to be the true purpose of this place.

And there is a truth in the feeling that 'sustainable' is not the right term to apply to Auroville. For if Auroville is to become the 'cradle' of the new consciousness, which, as Mother pointed out, makes obsolete all the assumptions and 'truths' of the past, then it is not so much sustainability that we need to be seeking as an ever-evolving understanding of and receptivity to what that new consciousness is trying to teach us.

Nevertheless, if we did manage to achieve that 'square of integration' it could provide a stepping-stone to future discoveries, a platform from which we could take the next leap forward. It could also free up energies which today are locked in a battle to decide how Auroville should develop.

In this context, it is worth remembering what Mother expressed in 1970. *All human knowledge has gone bankrupt because it was exclusive. And man has gone bankrupt because he was exclusive. What the New Consciousness wants (it insists on this) is: no more divisions. To be capable of understanding the extreme spiritual, the extreme material, and to find... to find the meeting point where... it becomes a true force.*

Alan



An Auroville forested area

- **Auroville's development: the potential and the blockages**
- **Navigating the challenges of physical education**

pages 2–4

- **Minutes 68th GB meeting**
- **Defining Mother, losing Mother**
- **Dawn's new day**

pages 4–5

- **The musical path of Shalini**
- **Trees outer garment exhibition**
- **Tim's love of the abstract**
- **RA-WCom on GB decisions**

pages 6–8

- **Passings: Merry Cook, Anand Prasad, Walter Wagner, André Hababou, Boris Verjoutski**
- **News in brief**

pages 7–8



# Auroville's development: the potential and the blockages

A year ago, architect David Nightingale talked about how Spiral Dynamics could provide one way of understanding the present situation in Auroville [see *AV Today* # 416, March 2024]. The theory of Spiral Dynamics views development as a continuous, cyclical process where individuals, organisations and societies move back and forth through different stages of consciousness and understanding. It uses colour-coded levels (eg, Beige, Purple, Red, Blue, Orange, Green, Yellow, Turquoise) to represent these (see Box). The concept is based on the original work of Clare Graves and was developed further by two of his students, Don Beck and Christopher Cowan.

David has been inspired to continue his research into Spiral Dynamics due to his sense that there is a strong correlation between the stages of the spiral and Sri Aurobindo's descriptions of the different 'Ages' in *The Human Cycle*.

Recently, a Supreme Court judge stated that Auroville should follow a path of 'sustainable development' where protection of the environment should be balanced with the need for 'industrialisation'. What insights could Spiral Dynamics provide regarding development in Auroville?

*Auroville Today: How does Spiral Dynamics view a term like 'sustainable development'?*

**David:** From the point of view of Spiral Dynamics, each person will interpret words like 'sustainability' and 'development' differently depending on where they choose to set their priorities in each moment based on the spiral. For example, taking the three stages that are most prevalent in the world today, from the Blue perspective 'development' is primarily focused on celebrating the collective religious values of the culture in question; in Orange, 'development' means 'material abundance' and 'success' at the individual level; whereas the Green view of development expresses itself more in terms of building cohesive communities and protecting the environment within which those communities can flourish.

The same differences in interpretation can be seen in how people understand the term 'collaboration'. In Blue, which tends to seek order through control, it means 'work with us on our terms' as defined by an authority; in Orange collaboration entails balancing different professions and the skills they bring to the table; whereas in Green it usually means trying to reach decisions through consensus whilst giving every person a voice.

So to be able to have a dialogue using terms such as these you need to begin by defining what each of the terms means on different levels of the spiral and then one can see how the various stake-holders might choose to relate to them.

*When we talk about the need for development, do any of the existing models fit Auroville? Or is Auroville an exception and therefore requiring a very different approach?*

Auroville has been a global exception since its inauguration, and it very much has the potential to continue to be so. However, the issue as I see it today is that if we continue to concentrate too much on development as perceived from just one or two stages of the spiral at the expense of a more integral development (at Yellow and beyond), we may well miss the opportunity to continue to evolve in an exceptional way.

When a group of us made a public presentation a year or two ago in the Unity Pavilion, that was our focus. We were proposing that Auroville could make the leap to Yellow, to a more integral level where we can begin to drop all our personal beliefs and listen and learn from what everybody else is saying. I believe this is the leap that Aurovilians are being asked to make today as a first step towards the next level, Turquoise, which I suspect might well be the start of the "Spiritual Age" as defined by Sri Aurobindo. But the longer we continue to be splintered as we are today, the longer might be the delay before we achieve this.

I believe that the community as a whole still has the potential to make that leap. When we gave that presentation, my hope was to inspire a sufficient percentage of people to hold the

middle ground, and to be able to engage with the different perspectives – the need for protection of the environment, the active promotion of city development, as well as integrating the deeper wider vision of what Mother has described – and out of this synthesis something new would emerge. The hope was that this approach might generate sufficient dynamism whilst addressing the key issues of all the different perspectives, and that most Aurovilians who are holding positions that they consider important might then feel safer moving closer to this new centre of activity.



David Nightingale

*So what do you think are the main threats Auroville is facing today?*

The main threat from outside is the rampant uncontrolled development that seems to have become super-charged since the pandemic lockdowns, and from inside it is our incapacity as a community to properly address this threat because of our present fragmentation.

The centre of gravity, the status quo, for most of Auroville's history was Green, and many of the people who are now prioritising the urban development of Auroville understandably felt blocked not only by Green's apparent resistance to wider development in general but by the use of consensus decision-making which was often used to block progress as well. An entrenched status quo was empowering many of those who had been here longest to keep blocking development – the 'not in my backyard' attitude which can often manifest as the shadow side of the Green stage. The result was that the development which did happen was mostly piecemeal and relatively uncoordinated.

Auroville was inaugurated in 1968 at the peak of the latest Green wave, which had actually started towards the end of the nineteenth century. I would suggest that the majority of Aurovilians who were attracted to come and live here in the early days were passionately centred in Green values. They were willing to be out there in the blazing sun every day on a fairly barren plateau, digging holes and planting trees, exactly because of that passion and dedication. Since then, however, the successful creation of a vibrant eco-system has attracted many people centred at other stages of the spiral to also join.

Yellow can often show up in those individuals and groups who are exploring different ways of meeting and decision-making as well as those leading innovative new units, whilst Blue shows up in those Aurovilians who adhere strongly to what the Integral Yoga says regarding how Auroville should develop. Crucially, however, Auroville has also more and more home-grown Orange as many of the youth who grew up here wish to increase their material prosperity as they prepare to start families of their own. In the meantime India itself obviously hasn't stood still.

In 1968 when Auroville was founded, our host nation was centred primarily in Blue. However, in the last 50 years, and particularly since 1991 when the country opened up to outside investment, the once dominant Blue has evolved into a very dynamic Orange. Today the outside energies that we see coming into Auroville are mostly this, manifesting not only in many new restaurants and enterprises on the road from Certitude to Kulilapalayam but also in

the claiming of land for large-scale private use. For Orange primarily wants tangible things – more money, a new bike, a nice house etc. – and it can come across as trying to co-opt whatever it needs to achieve these objectives; whereas Green tends to focus much more on experiences, on protecting the environment, and it generally wishes to connect with people rather than compete with them, unless its own core values seem to be threatened.

So the problem for Auroville's wider vision today isn't just that we have the internal struggle with different groups of Aurovilians who are sure that they are holding the right position, but we also have the external development pressure coming from an empowered 'Orange' India. Actually, regarding the latter it is somewhat of a miracle that these forces were held at bay for as long as they were. This was mainly due, I think, to the influence and wisdom of Dr. Karan Singh who was chairman of the Governing Board for many years.

I believe we could have used that opportunity that we were graced with to make that leap to Yellow. But we didn't. That's why I fear we might have missed the boat. But who knows, perhaps it can still happen.

*How?*

There are basically two possibilities. It could still happen if the Governing Board would demonstrate a balanced support of a more holistic process – because the recent overwhelming focus on urban development at the exclusion of some of the other values has only been possible due to what comes across as the full support of the Governing Board. Alternatively, and leading to a much more healthy outcome in the long-run, if those Aurovilians who are presently choosing to prioritise development became aware that a more holistic alternative might well improve what is being manifested, then the community as a whole could come together and approach the Governing Board as one voice to request their support.

Don Beck, who helped to develop the theory of Spiral Dynamics, put it quite nicely. He said that you always have to crouch down before you can leap forward. So, metaphorically, one could imagine that this is what has been happening over the last three years.

Having said that, it is also quite possible that those Aurovilians who are focused on city

development will simply keep pushing on with what they are doing. For, based upon previous experience, they are understandably afraid that they will lose out again if they participate in any form of collaborative process because any collective process reminds them too much of Green, where just a few individuals can block progress. They also remember what happened with the skin of the Matrimandir when so many different people had different opinions about what should be done. And many Aurovilians seem to believe that the present Matrimandir only got manifested because a certain group kept pushing for a certain solution.

Being an architect myself, when it comes to the Matrimandir I would actually agree that they were right. However, my concern is that the lesson they draw from this experience is that they shouldn't include the community in designing the town. I suspect that they believe that if they push through their present concept they will get the same success as they did with the Matrimandir. However, even under normal circumstances there is a massive difference between designing a building and designing a town, let alone the extra challenge laid down by Mother in building the Galaxy Model.

*Yet the proponents of the present path of development claim it is based upon Roger's Galaxy concept.*

Well, I would suggest that although the geometry does bear a passing resemblance to the Galaxy Model concept, it is in fact just the Nebula model with curves.

All you have today is a series of roads with some buildings strung along them, similar to strip developments in North America. But unlike the Galaxy Model, the buildings are rarely interconnected, there are as yet no urban spaces, and the priority would appear to be clearly for traffic and not people.

What is happening at present is a mere shadow of what Mother must have envisioned when she blessed the Galaxy Model, and, to be honest, I've still not managed to figure out why Roger dropped the original idea and supported modifications which completely changed the spirit of the original. Did he feel he had to give up because of all the blockages he experienced and he just wanted to get something, anything, manifested?

*continued on page 3*

Memes as described in Spiral Dynamics - 1996			
Age names relate to Sri Aurobindo's terms in <i>The Human Cycle</i>			
A-N	Beige	SurvivalSense - Instinctive	
		Automatic, reflexive; Centered around satisfaction; Driven by deep brain programs, instincts and genetics;	Little awareness of self as distinct being (undifferentiated); Live "off the land", much like other animals; Minimal impact on or control over environment.
B-O Symbolic Age	Purple	KinSpirits - Clannish	
		Obey desires of the mystical spirit beings; Show allegiance to elders, customs, clan; Preserve sacred places, objects, rituals;	Bond together to endure and find safety; Live in an enchanted magical village; Seek harmony with nature's power.
C-P Typal Age	Red	PowerGods - Egocentric	
		In a world of haves and have-nots, it's good to be a have; Avoid shame, defend reputation, be respected; Gratify impulses and sense immediately;	Fight remorselessly and without guilt to break constraints; Don't worry about consequences that may not come.
D-Q Conventional Age	Blue	TruthForce - Purposeful	
		Find meaning and purpose in living; Sacrify self to the Way for deferred reward; Bring order and stability to all things;	Control impulsivity and respond to guilt; Enforce principles of righteous living; Divine plan assigns people to their places.
E-R Rational Age	Orange	StriveDrive - Strategic	
		Strive for autonomy and independence; Seek out "the good life" and material abundance; Progress through searching out the best solutions;	Enhance living for many through science and technology; Play to win and enjoy competition; Learning through tried-and-true experience.
F-S Subjective Age	Green	HumanBond - Relativistic	
		Explore the inner beings of self and others; Promote a sense of community and unity; Share society's resources among all;	Liberate humans from greed and dogma; Reach decisions through consensus; Refresh spirituality and bring harmony.
G-T Transitional Age	Yellow	FlexFlow - Systemic	
		Accept the inevitability of nature's flows and forms; Focus on functionality, competence, flexibility, and spontaneity; Find natural mix of conflicting "truths" and "uncertainties"; Discover personal free-	dom without harm to others or excesses of self-interest; Experience fullness of living on an Earth of such diversity in multiple dimensions; Demand integrative and open systems.
H-U Spiritual Age	Turquoise	GlobalView - Holistic	
		Blending and harmonizing a strong collective of individuals; Focus on the good of all living entities as integrated systems; Expanded use of human brain/mind tools	and competencies; Self is part of larger, conscious, spiritual whole that also serves self; Global networking seen as routine; Acts for minimalist living so less is more.
I-V	Coral	Unknown	



# Navigating the challenges of physical education



A section of the Dehashakti sports ground

In May 2024, the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation approved the creation of the Auroville Physical Education Board (APEB), and allocated an in-principle budget of ₹2 crores (approx. US \$233,500) for renovating and expanding the existing infrastructure of Dehashakti, Auroville's school sports complex near Dana, including building a swimming pool which, in future, can be upgraded to Olympic-size.

In March 2025, APEB (now called "Auroville Physical Education Body") operating under the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIR), launched a one-year course titled Integral Approach to Physical Education (IAPE). Slated to begin in June, the course aims to develop a new generation of physical education (PE) teachers. "The course aspires to create a team of educators grounded in modern sports science, supported by practical training, and inspired by the spiritual significance of the human body," stated the leaflet. While open to all, preference will be given to those intending to teach in Auroville schools.

## The stagnation of physical education

When asked for context, SAIIR explained that training new physical education teachers had become necessary as physical education in Auroville had stagnated for years. From 2022 onwards, SAIIR had each year conducted a 100-hour physical education course, open to Aurovilians and outsiders alike. In 2024 SAIIR conducted a one-year course, starting with a 3-weeks intensive which concluded with an assessment, with a minimum 50% pass required to continue the course. Current Dehashakti teachers were among the participants.

However, according to SAIIR, many participants displayed poor theoretical knowledge of the subject and limited ability to lead a physical education class. Furthermore, behavioural assessments—critical for working with children – and adherence to a code of conduct were also found to be lacking. Several Dehashakti teachers did not pass the test.

## Resistance from Dehashakti educators

The results sparked immediate controversy. Teachers who failed the test voiced their objections widely, leading to confusion

among the community – especially among parents of Dehashakti students. A series of meetings followed, eventually leading to a mediated compromise: those who hadn't passed were granted provisional status on the condition that they committed to continuing the new training course with at least 80% attendance, and comply with trainer instructions. However, many from the Dehashakti team opposed the conditions and ultimately left.

Among the objectors was Ganesh Kaliappan, a long-time Dehashakti educator since 2008. In Auroville's News & Notes, he expressed frustration. He argued that his years of organising initiatives like "Spirit of Sports," "I Run for My Heart," and local football tournaments was neither recognised nor valued by SAIIR.

Ganesh said he had enrolled in the course in good faith, unaware that failing the assessment would disqualify him from service at Dehashakti. "I joined to learn, not to be judged. This pass/fail model contradicts the Mother's educational philosophy."

He described the experience as humiliating. "I constantly felt dominated by individuals whom I don't consider superior in the Auroville context," he wrote. "The Physical Education Board was formed without consultation with Dehashakti teachers, effectively disregarding our contributions." Ganesh also criticised AVPEB's decision-making power, arguing that it negatively affected the livelihoods of long-standing Tamil Aurovilians working at Dehashakti.

## The failure of past trainings

SAIIR maintains it has tried for years to improve physical education by bringing in outside specialists. One was a trainer from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram's International Centre of Education – renowned for its physical education programme – but he left after facing resistance from Dehashakti educators who ignored his teachings. Other well-qualified Auroville trainers reportedly had similar experiences, complaining that teachers were unwilling to change and only provided entertainment, not physical education, making it difficult to establish a proper teaching environment."

## A new generation: Ruben's perspective

Ruben, an Italian who joined Auroville in 2023, offers a fresh perspective. With 16 years of experience as a certified

kickboxing coach and martial arts practitioner, he came to Auroville drawn by its alternative lifestyle. After applying to teach physical education, he was accepted and joined Dehashakti.

During his initial months, Ruben shadowed various teachers and meticulously recorded his observations. "I kept a notebook and later compiled a 41-page report, which I shared with SAIIR and my colleagues," he said. He received no response. Was it because the feedback was unwelcome? "Possibly," he said. "I tried to remain objective – documenting instances where teachers arrived late or missed classes, left students unattended, failed to prepare the grounds, or overlooked safety hazards. There was a noticeable absence of structure, discipline, and systematic teaching."

Ruben joined the first 100-hour IAPE course. "We were taught about progressive pedagogy, lesson planning, and the need for intense, focused engagement during every class. Teaching physical education is not casual – it demands full concentration, like a Formula One race," he said.

He stressed the need for skilled teachers and a comprehensive, long-term physical education programme throughout the students' schooling at Dehashakti. Ruben also highlighted economic challenges, particularly the insufficient maintenance offered to teachers. "SAIIR must rethink its policy. The current so-called 'full maintenance' barely covers basic needs," he said. He criticised the practice of offering only half maintenance for 20 hours a week. "They don't realise that two daily classes of two hours each, five days a week, easily add up to 34–36 hours of work. Each class requires prep time, equipment setup, class management, follow-up notes, and interaction with parents, colleagues, and management. Half maintenance is just not enough."

## Conclusion

The ongoing debate around physical education in Auroville touches on questions of governance, recognition, and values. While the APEB initiative aims to bring professionalism and structure, some long-standing educators feel sidelined. Progress will require dialogue, integrating both excellence and inclusivity.

*Carel*

## DEVELOPMENT

*continued from page 2*

In fact, if you listen to Roger's early interviews, he clearly stated that the Galaxy is only a springboard, a starting point for the design of Auroville which needs to evolve with the consciousness of the Aurovilians, and this actually fits very nicely with the Spiral Dynamics / Human Cycle evolutionary paradigm that I'm describing.

Interestingly, from that perspective, I think the four models of the town plan which Roger and his team produced – the Grid Model, Nebula, the 'Yin-Yang/Macro' model and the Galaxy – actually reflect evolution of the collective consciousness: each one of them is a step on the spiral. The Grid Model expresses basic Orange values – where the geometry is very mental and rational – while I think the Nebula Model expresses Green quite well in that it is trying to introduce spirituality through Mother's symbol, along with the Matrimandir at the centre. The Yin-Yang model is more complex and incorporates Yellow, but for me the Galaxy is really trying to capture Turquoise: Roger and his team were very much channeling something, calling something down, when they came up with this.

**What is it about the Galaxy concept that you find so inspiring?**

The concept is so complex, so rich, and the need for collaboration just to attempt to build it is so immense that it presents us with this amazing challenge. If we want to build this, we

have to do the work, both inner and outer, otherwise it won't manifest. And that work requires collaboration, because as each part of the Galaxy relates to the whole, and because nothing can be done in one place without an awareness of the whole, we cannot keep working in separate pockets to manifest it.

**But is collaboration enough to build something like this?**

The level of collaboration required would already indicate a shift in consciousness to or towards Yellow. I think there are a significant number of Aurovilians already centred at Yellow, and these people have already come together, at different moments and at different times, to develop new initiatives and test out new models.

But Yellow is still not enough to build the Galaxy, as Yellow still lacks a certain ability to integrate the more subtle aspects of a potential Yogic town: Don Beck described Yellow as 'left brain with feeling'. Also Yellow, since each respective stage oscillates between a focus on the personal and then the collective, follows on from collective Green and is centred on the individual. So if we are here for a collective evolution, we need to set our sights on the next stage: Turquoise. Turquoise is profoundly intuitive and, in contrast to Yellow, Beck referred to it as 'right brain with data'. At this level you are tapping into something more subtle. It is what Sri Aurobindo was referring to when he speaks of the higher mind, the illumined mind, and the intuitive mind, where

something higher is being called down.

However, I think that so far any experience of Turquoise has also been mainly happening on an individual level. So this is the challenge which Mother placed before us. This is the shift in consciousness we need to make in order to manifest the Galaxy Model as originally envisioned by her through Roger as well as her vision of Auroville as a crucible for a true Human Unity.

However, there is no template for this, no 'Dummies Guide'! This is why the collective shift won't necessarily happen in our lifetimes. It is similar to the building of a medieval cathedral which took many generations, but today we have been asked to use the building of a city as the necessary catalyst to build a metaphorical 'cathedral of Human Unity', because we've already got 50 years behind us of manifesting the framework and the collective culture which allows for the possible emergence of something new. Mother gave us both a goal – building the town – and a description of what the end result might look like in the shape of "To be a True Aurovilian", as well as a formula of how to get there in the Charter: something which is so beautifully vast and yet so well defined that if one embodies it fully, one wouldn't need anything else to ultimately achieve her vision.

**What part, if any, can the government play in this?**

The Governing Board's challenge, as I see it, would be to protect the space for this

long-term process to unfold. However, the danger is that if the Governing Board chooses to prioritise just one aspect of Auroville's development at the expense of the other parts, even though that elusive Second Tier emergence (ie Yellow and Turquoise) might be primed to happen, it won't be able to.

Even without careful stewarding Auroville will certainly 'develop'. The last fifty years have created an incredibly attractive environment, along with a powerful sacred centre that will continue to act as a magnet for many decades to come.

Unfortunately, the tendency of the spiral for any manifestation that manages to break free of the stage at which the mainstream culture is centred, is to eventually be over-run and taken over by those larger more powerful forces. It is simply the ebb and flow of the Prakriti and the Purusha working on us.

The question is whether the government in its wisdom chooses to embrace the unknown through the long-term vision of Mother and support the unfolding of the original experiment, or whether pragmatism and a more short-term need for tangible results wins out.

On a final note, I believe that one of the reasons that Mother said 'No politics in Auroville' was precisely to avoid the short-term nature of politically-motivated decision making. But if any governance structure in the world is capable of embracing a wider long-term vision grounded in spiritual principles, then I believe that here in India we have been in the right place all along.

*From a conversation with Alan*



# Minutes of the 68th Governing Board meeting

On 20 March, the Ministry of Education, responding to two Right to Information requests dated 25 and 26 February, sent the applicant a copy of the Minutes of the 68th Meeting of the Governing Board (GB) of the Auroville Foundation held on 5 December 2024, which have since been widely distributed in Auroville. (These minutes have not yet been published on the website of the Auroville Foundation.) We publish here an abbreviated version of the Minutes. The Chairman's and Secretary's opening remarks are followed by the Board's salient considerations and decisions.

### Opening remarks

In his opening remarks, Shri. R. N. Ravi, Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu and Chairman of the Auroville Foundation, warmly welcomed Shri K. Kailashnathan, Hon'ble Lt. Governor of Puducherry, as a Member of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation. He then gave a brief recap of the road travelled by the current GB which was formed in the year 2021. He lamented that over a period Auroville has tended towards an antithesis of its core objectives. Instead of a place for sadhkas and devotees of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, it became a refuge for some persons with vested interests. The current GB with a deep sense of their responsibility took initiatives to try and bring Auroville back to the intended mission. The task in hand was two-fold. One the physical manifestation of Auroville according to the dream of its founder, The Mother, and the other its spiritual evolution.

There was a Master Plan of Auroville before the GB and the GB deliberated into why it was not implemented even after many decades. On scrutiny of minutes of the earlier GB meetings it transpired that from time to time the GBs exhorted the Aurovilians to work towards the implementation of the Master Plan in meetings after meetings. The Chairperson observed that he himself had met more than half of the Aurovilians either collectively or individually both at Auroville and at Chennai. The Mother formulated the Master Plan as per the dreams of Sri Aurobindo described in *The Life Divine*. Persons with vested interests started interpreting Mother after her departure, according to their whims.

The current GB started implementing the Master Plan, however it was met with obstructions in various forms including litigations. The challenges were met legally and the GB proceeded with determination towards fulfilling the dreams of The Mother, the implementation of the Master Plan. The Chairperson and then GB members continued meeting the Aurovilians individually and collectively to take their opinion as forging a consensus seeking their co-operation in the manifestation of Auroville in the best possible manner.

During the course, the GB also realised that there are a few loopholes and ambiguities in the Acts, Rules and Regulations which were being exploited by vested interests. The GB is making efforts to remove the shortcomings in the Act and Rules. He also stated that earlier GBs used to meet once or twice a year, however when the current GB took charge, it began meeting at least once a quarter so as to remain grounded here in Auroville. The GB has been taking everyone on board, viz International Advisory Committee and the residents as far as possible. However, a minority of Aurovilians choose their own path and create a series of obstructions.

The Secretary, in her brief remarks, stated that Sri Aurobindo gave us *The Secret of the Veda* to have abundance, prosperity, beauty and aesthetics, all of which can be achieved while living in this world, yet do it with consciousness, and the city was meant for that purpose. While formulating the Master Plan, The Mother gave a complete blueprint and did not leave anything to the imagination of others. The City has been conceived in such a way that it could be assembled as a jigsaw puzzle. In the year 1968 The Mother wanted that the City should be completed within ten years; however even after 57 years the city has not yet taken a definite shape. The Mother planned the city for a population of 50,000 people, however, now it has less than 2,000 persons which is akin to a village panchayat in India. She thanked the current GB for its unwavering support and assured that soon the City will have a definite footprint viz the crown road, radial roads and the outer ring road etc. She briefly mentioned about the framing of Admission and Termination Regulations for induction of new Aurovilians, Working Committee Regulations to streamline the forma-

tion of the Working Committee etc. She also mentioned about the efforts made by the Foundation in centralising of accounts of all the nearly 800 units of Auroville through a common ERP [*an Enterprise Resource Planning software, eds.*] solution.

### Considerations and decisions

#### 1. Case studies

The Secretary reported that in addition to IIT Kharagpur and IIT Mumbai, IIT Ahmadabad and the National Law School, Bangalore, have been engaged to undertake case studies. The teams of IIT Kharagpur and IIT Mumbai visited Auroville in November last year. Their reports will be available by February 2025. It was clarified that these institutions approached Auroville to document the current point of inflection in the City of Dawn. It was also noted that these would document the origin and the vision of Auroville, what happened during the past more than 55 years and the initiatives of the current GB in reinvigorating the efforts to realise the City.

#### 2. Communication regarding land exchanges

The Ministry of Education has forwarded complaints regarding land exchanges and other matters relating to the Auroville Foundation and another one regarding the dog shelter. The Foundation has furnished appropriate replies to the Ministry.

#### 3. Land erosion at Sri Ma community

The Board noted the huge sea erosion threatening the Sri Ma community and the efforts of the Public Works department to protect it by dumping boulders, a work which was stopped due to protests from neighbouring villages which feared this would cause erosion in their villages. The Board was informed that the Foundation had approached the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) which had earlier restored the beach in Pondicherry and is now involved in developing the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) for restoring the entire coastline of Puducherry. The proposal of the NCCR is roughly Rs 2 crores, which, according to NCCR, can be integrated with the larger SMP of Puducherry. Auroville Foundation has also obtained a proposal from TechFab, a private firm, for a Gabion wall at an estimated Rs 4.5 crore. Auroville Foundation has requested the Government of Puducherry for integrating one of these proposals within the larger SMP of Puducherry, currently under preparation, which is mandatory for any shoreline work to be implemented. The Board gave in principle approval for this work.

#### 4. Integral Skills Development Centre

The Board accorded in principle approval for the proposed Centre for imparting various skills to Aurovilians and outsiders.

#### 5. Auroville Media Policy 2024

The Board approved the Media Policy of the Auroville Foundation.

#### 6. Amendments to Auroville Foundation Act and Rules

The Board discussed the need for amendments to remove the anomalies in them which are misused by a section of the Auroville community to stall the realisation of the city and the growth of Auroville. The Board approved the amendments for submission to the Ministry of Education for their appropriate action for processing amendments to the Act and Rules.

#### 7. Allocation of site for dog shelter

The Board decided that the dog shelter will continue at its present location with the existing facilities. Infrastructure facilities proposed for the Shelter will be submitted to the GB in its next meeting once funds have been allocated for the purpose by the Ministry.

#### 8. Joint collaboration with Sri Aurobindo Ashram devotees

The Board approved the proposal for a collaboration between the Auroville Foundation and Sri Aurobindo Ashram devotees for the realisation of various projects.

#### 9. Looking into complaints

The Board decided that retired officers of All India Services, Central Government Departments and Institutions, Revenue Department, Police Department and CAG may be engaged on honorarium basis to assist the administration of the Foundation to look into specific allegations

brought out in the various complaints such as the Madan Gopal Committee, audit report of the O/o Principal Controller of Accounts, MoE and Forensic accounts, as well as such similar audits that are to be taken up as required for ensuring compliances and to take them to logical conclusions.

#### 10. Sector plans

The Board noted that Detailed Plans are to be prepared for Sector Plans and Infrastructure Plans for the various Zones. A team of experts will be engaged on contractual basis for a period of one year for preparing the various plan documents. The Board approved the expenditure of Rs 52.5 lakhs.

#### 11. Staff quarters

The Board accorded in principle approval for the construction of 28 staff quarters up to type VI and directed the Central Public Works Department to re-submit a revised estimate with full scope of 30 quarters including type VII and VIII to the next GB meeting.

#### 12. Auroville Public Space Service

The Board gave in principle approval for the formation of the Auroville Public Space Service, for the maintenance of public services such as Water, Electricity, Road and Green areas. The Service will function under the control of the Secretary, Auroville Foundation. The expenditure on account of these services will be met through government grants for which a proposal will be submitted in the next meeting of the Board.

#### 13. Auroville communication service

The Board directed that Aurinoco shall be subsumed in the Auroville Telephone Service. While according in-principle approval to the proposal submitted for Rs 19.8 crores, the GB also suggested exploring alternative funding through BharatNet project. The Board advised engaging the service of a retired BSNL officer to execute the said work.

#### 14. Auroville Consulting – UNEP project

The Board approved the 3-year project of Auroville Consulting to provide technical assistance to designated state and city agencies for capacity building. The project is funded by the United Nations Environment Programme and has a total budget of US \$ 300,000.

#### 15. Admission and Termination Registry (ATR) and Admission and Termination Scrutinising Committee (ATSC)

The Board noted that in view of the pending court cases relating to Regulations, it is not possible to induct new residents. However, 250 Newcomers are waiting for a long time to become residents. It is proposed to extend facilities as available to the residents to Newcomers. At the same time, amongst these Newcomers, there are a few who have been found to have violated the criteria to be a resident or of the established guidelines and regulations of Auroville such as blocking development activities and engaging in outside business activities in violation of visa conditions etc. The Board approved the nomination to the ATSC of 5 persons including one member of the Board and of 3 persons to the ATR.

#### 16. Formation of the Donation Channeling Committee

The Board noted that a Donation Channeling Committee had been formed to monitor the proper receipt and expenditure of donations received from India and abroad. The Committee consists of the Secretary, two GB members and the Officer on Special Duty of the Auroville Foundation.

#### 17. Auroville Liaison Office in New Delhi

The Board had already approved the setting up of a liaison office in New Delhi. The Foundation has now identified a space at Sri Ramayan Vidapeeth in the Institutional Area, Lodhi Road. The site is located in central Delhi, in close proximity to government offices and ministries. The proximity is expected to significantly facilitate the Foundation's administrative, coordination and engagement efforts with relevant authorities and allied institutions such as the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The Board approved the proposal.

#### 18. Chief Security Officer

The Board approved the engagement of two retired police officers, one for handling visa related matters and the other for security and law and order and liaising with local police authorities.

#### 19. Due diligence procedure for land exchange

The issue of acquiring land from private landowners who own land in the City and Greenbelt areas of Auroville in exchange for out-lying lands has been raised by several individuals in the past. The repeated allegations levelled by these individuals have created a perception that the current process of land exchange followed by the Foundation has resulted in a huge loss for Auroville. The Board felt that there was a need to address these perceptions in a credible and transparent matter. The Board therefore decided to form a one-member committee by a retired High Court judge to look into the allegations and furnish a report to the Board. The Board approved the Terms of Reference of this Committee, which include to record the process of land acquisition followed by the Auroville Foundation since 1991; whether the existing process of land acquisition is adequate, eg whether it complies with the requirements of the Master Plan, Government Orders issued by the Government of Tamil Nadu and the Government of India; whether the existing checks and balances in the process is adequate to ensure objectivity; if the extant process has shortcomings suggested for future land acquisitions; suggestions to quicken the process of land acquisitions; whether the process of acquiring land over all these years have resulted in a loss to the Auroville Foundation. The Committee shall furnish its report to the Chairman within three months after its formation.

#### 20. Trusts, Units and Activities Regulations

The Board approved the draft Regulations; the Board was informed that the draft will be forwarded to the Ministry for their further considerations and approval.

#### 21. Double assets

The Board appreciated the efforts taken by the Auroville Foundation to ensure that the residents occupying double assets are vacated. The Board advised that due process may be followed in getting the defaulters vacated.

#### 22. Pending City Services dues

The Board noted the huge default in payment towards the monthly contribution by several Aurovilians and advised the Foundation to initiate appropriate action through the FAMC to get the dues collected.

#### 23. Residents on business visa and residents doing business outside the Foundation

The Board approved the following action. (1) The residents holding business visa or doing business outside will be directed to furnish written explanation on their visa status to the Foundation Office and if they wish to continue to hold a business visa and conduct business outside they will be taken out of the Register of Residents and will have to reapply when they wish to join Auroville. If the resident wishes to continue as a resident and change visa status to comply with the Auroville Residence Criteria, or close down his outside business activities, they will be given 6 months time to regulate the same during which time their names are suspended from the Register of Residents.

#### 24. Issues of non-compliance, violations and irregularities

The Board empowered the Officer of Special Duty to take all necessary steps and measures to address issues of non-compliance, violations and irregularities and issue necessary directions and orders to the residents to ensure compliance, under the overall supervision of the Secretary. The Board noted that some of the violations are of a serious nature, including violence, withholding of Auroville assets, building without authorisation, visa violation, owning land in the Master Plan area of Auroville and many others which need to be taken suo-moto cognisance of and acted upon, giving due opportunity for the violating residents to offer evidence to the contrary and/or correct course, following all principles of natural justice. This is especially important as a course-correction in Auroville so that Auroville may develop further without the shadow of the unsavoury past dogging its move into the future, with its current residents in alignment with its aims and ideals, to be an example to the residents of the future who are waiting to join Auroville and participate in manifesting this City of the Future.

The full minutes can be read at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RmMSntrsLd4qkHqqvGN5fduAwBcGhh7/view>



# Defining Mother, losing Mother

In 2016 a German forester, Peter Wohlleben, published a book which describes how trees exchange resources with each other through fungi on their roots. *The Hidden Life of Trees* was based upon work by Suzanne Simard, a Canadian ecologist, who discovered how trees are interconnected in this way, exchanging not just sugars but also transmitting distress signals to each other. Simard is a serious researcher and these were important findings, but at times her scientific objectivity slipped. For example, describing how ‘Mother trees’ ‘care’ for those around them she wrote, “the flow of energy from the Mother Trees is as powerful as the ocean tide, as strong as the sun’s rays, as irrepressible as the wind in the mountains, as unstoppable as a mother protecting her child”.

Some of Simard’s original co-authors and other researchers subsequently questioned some of her findings, noting that some of her claims outstripped the evidence: that, for example, seedlings connected in fungal networks to older trees often do worse, not better as she had claimed. However, the image of a conscious, collaborating forest proved irresistible. The magazine *Nature* dubbed it the ‘wood-wide web’ and *The Hidden Life of Trees* became a bestseller.

It is not difficult to understand why the image of a caring forest has rooted itself so deeply in the public’s mind. It is attractive because it humanises it, making it more recognizably like us. Moreover, Simard’s concept fits with the current zeitgeist which prefers to view the natural world as cooperative rather than competitive.

But by labelling or repackaging the forest like this something essential is lost, and that is the sense of the forest as something ‘other’: powerful, profound, yet unknowable in human terms. (And perhaps this is what we fear – that we live in an unknown and unknowable world, which is why we need to humanise it.) In Bill McKibben’s

words, “We have deprived nature of its independence, and this is fatal to its meaning.”

I wonder to what extent many of us are doing the same with Mother – ‘packaging’ her to make her more understandable or amenable to us but losing something essential about her in the process.

Mother was very aware of this. In 1954 she observed, “*It is their (devotees’) own mental and vital formation of me that they love, not myself... Each one has made his own image of me for himself in conformity with his needs and desires, and it is with this image that he is in relation...*”

And in 1970, talking of the devotees’ propensity to see all the workings of the Divine concentrated in one person as the ‘one and only’, rather than seeing such individuals as special concentrations of a larger Force which is acting everywhere, Mother protested, “*I absolutely REFUSE to let myself be put like this (gesture under a bell jar)... I’d rather – I’d rather dissolve, you understand. Let it be fluid. The impression I get is as if people have big scissors, and they always want to cut out pieces of the Lord!*”

So how do devotees view the Mother? I think that many devotees cherish an image of her as the ‘motherly’ Mother or, conversely, worship her as the divine goddess. What few would like to recall is the Mother of those final years who, while remaining a being of extraordinary power, spoke of her own sense of powerlessness as she wrestled with the yoga of the physical, and struggled with periods of excruciating pain which alternated with moments of extraordinary bliss. She spoke, too, of her doubts and uncertainty, of the attacks of the hostile forces and of the incomprehension of those around her. For she sought a way to change the world, but the world resisted and her final years were difficult and painful as she strove, often on the edge of physical death, to supramentalise the cells of her body.



This is heroism on a scale beyond anything we can comprehend. Yet it is an aspect of Mother which is rarely talked about or celebrated, not because it is unknown – even in her lifetime extracts of her struggle to supramentalise the body were being published, with her permission, in the *Bulletin of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, and since then a far more comprehensive documentation of those final years has been published in *The Agenda* – but because this is not a comfortable or comforting Mother. Moreover, this is an ‘unfinished’ Mother, one who had not obviously succeeded in finishing all the transformative work she had been engaged upon.

Yet, what is also evident is that in her final years, in spite of her difficulties, Mother was

moving at breakneck speed in making new discoveries, guided by the consciousness of what she termed the ‘surhomme’. And what she discovered through her explorations, which were now concentrated in the physical, completely changed her former understanding and outlook:

*“I have very much changed, even in character, in comprehension, in the vision of things. There has been a whole rearrangement.”*

*“This poor body cannot say anything because it knows nothing; all that it thought it had learned for ninety years has been demonstrated most clearly to be worthless! (Mother laughs) It’s been shown that it has everything to learn.”*

*“We know nothing! It’s amazing how we know NOTHING.”*

This is not at all easy to comprehend, and even harder to accept. Many of us don’t want a Mother who is admitting to ignorance. We want a Mother who we can look up to, who is assured. We want a Mother who ‘completes’ us, who is everything we are not. It is why there is a tendency for many of us is to remain focussed upon an earlier Mother, upon, say, the Mother of the *Entretiens* who seemed to know so much (and, of course, who can continue to teach us so much), even though, in her final years, she viewed these talks rather differently:

*“These are things I would certainly no longer write now! ... But anyway, they are true on their level (gesture at ground level).”*

By freezing an image of Mother in our heads, many of us ignore or have difficulty engaging with the ‘unfinished’ Mother who hadn’t yet ‘arrived’, the one who, while unsure of her steps, was ceaselessly voyaging into the unknown. By attempting to define Mother, we have put her under a bell jar and lost touch with the ‘fluid’ Mother whose radical indefinability was her refusal to be bound by human limitations for, as she put it, “*The world is recreated at every moment!*”.

Alan

## FABLE

# Dawn’s New Day

There is an hour before dawn when the night seems darkest, when stars fade but the sun has not yet shown its face. In the old tales, this was often the hour when hope seemed most distant, yet also when transformation was closest at hand.

The City of Dawn had entered such an hour. The Perfect Circle was being carved through ancient groves, the towers of authority cast long shadows, and many who had helped build the dream had been forced to depart. To those who saw only with outer eyes, it might have seemed that the great experiment was ending.

But those who had learned to see with inner sight began to perceive something else stirring beneath the surface of events. Just as the first settlers had once perceived the sleeping potential of a barren plateau, they now began to sense new possibilities awakening within their present challenges.

They remembered how the Lady of Light had spoken not just of building a city, but of the birth of a new consciousness. Perhaps this crisis was part of that birth – a testing time, pushing them to develop capacities they hadn’t known they possessed. For isn’t this how evolution often works, through challenges that force new adaptations, new ways of being?

The community began to gather in new ways – not in the great halls now controlled by others, but in small circles where deeper truths could be shared. They discovered that their unity grew stronger precisely because it was being challenged, like muscles that develop through resistance, like roots that grow deeper in strong winds.

“Look,” said one elder, pointing to where new saplings were sprouting in a cleared area, “the forest itself shows us one way forward. It continues its work of growth and renewal, finding new paths when old ones are blocked. Yet we too must do our part – standing firm where we must, resisting what needs to be resisted. For if we do not slow the advance of shadows, they will spread until no saplings can grow at all.”

This sparked deep discussions in their circles. Some spoke of examining their own past actions, seeking to understand how the seeds of separation had taken root in their midst. “Perhaps,” said one, “we were not inclusive enough in our unity. Perhaps we grew too comfortable in our separate gardens, forgetting to tend the paths between them.”

Others began to work on healing the wounds that had opened within the community itself. “If we do not attend to these hurts now,” they said, “they will fester and poison what remains of our dream.” They created spaces for truth to be spoken and heard, for grief to be shared, for understanding to grow even between those who saw things differently.

The young ones especially pushed for clearer articulation of their path forward. They gathered to map out practical steps – how to protect what was most essential while remaining open to genuine growth, how to set priorities that were both visionary and achievable, how to build bridges even while standing firm in their truth.

They understood that what they were protecting was not just a physical place but a possibility – the possibility that humanity

could learn to live and grow in new ways. This possibility couldn’t be destroyed by bulldozers or bureaucratic decrees. It lived in consciousness itself, in the new ways of seeing and being that they had developed through their fifty years of experiment.

Even the Perfect Circle, which had seemed solely a tool of control, began to yield unexpected teachings. Its rigid geometry highlighted by contrast the living patterns they had discovered – the organic flows of nature, the subtle ways that true unity emerges through diversity. It became a reminder of what they were working to evolve beyond – the old consciousness that sought to impose order from outside rather than allowing it to grow from within.

Those who had been forced to depart sent back stories of how the seeds they had carried were beginning to flower in new soil. The very diaspora that had seemed a defeat was becoming a means



of dispersal, spreading the possibilities they had discovered to places that needed them desperately.

In their quiet gatherings, they began to see their present challenge in a larger light. Throughout history, new possibilities for human consciousness had often faced resistance from the forces of the past. Yet these very challenges had often served to clarify and strengthen what was trying to be born.

The young ones, especially, began to see their role in new ways. They were not just inheriting a wounded dream but participating in its evolution into new forms. They were eager to listen and learn – not just about the outer history of what was happening, but the inner knowledge that had been developed through decades of experiment. “We are like the ancient scribes,” one young one said, “protecting essential knowledge through a dark age. But we’re also like gardeners, planting seeds for a future we may not see.”

And so they continued their work, though in new ways. While the powers-that-be controlled the physical space, the community

wove new patterns of connection – study circles where knowledge was deepened and shared, healing circles where wounds could be tended, action circles where resistance could be planned with courage and wisdom. Those who had crafted outer forms were now also focused on crafting methods of decision-making that could survive pressure, ways of organizing that could bend without breaking, networks of communication that could persist through the darkest nights.

They continued to plant trees wherever they could find space, with an even deeper awareness now of how each planting embodied their principles – the patient work of preparing soil becoming a reminder of inner preparation, the careful tending of saplings reflecting the nurture of consciousness, the protection of young trees mirroring their protection of the dream itself.

The Lady of Light had spoken of truth as a living force, not a fixed doctrine to be preserved. They began to understand that perhaps this time of trial was teaching them exactly that plasticity – how to let forms change while keeping the essence pure, how to face darkness without becoming dark, how to maintain unity even in apparent separation.

For the real City of Dawn, they came to understand, was not just a physical place but a state of consciousness. It existed wherever people worked to transcend the old divisions, wherever they sought to live in deeper harmony with nature and each other, wherever they dared to imagine and work toward a more wholesome way of being human.

Yet they also understood that this truth did not absolve them from action. It called them rather to more conscious action – to learn from their mistakes, to heal their divisions, to articulate their vision more clearly than ever before. The seeds they had planted over fifty years – seeds of unity in diversity, of harmony with all living forms and beings – would find ways to grow, but they needed active nurturing, protection, and the courage to face what had gone wrong while holding firm to what was deeply right.

Dawn would come again. It always does. But perhaps not quite as any had expected. For isn’t this too part of evolution – that the new emerges in ways that transcend our existing patterns of thought, our old ways of seeing?

And so they kept their vigil through the darkest hour, knowing that they served not just a past dream but a future possibility. Even in the deepest night, tomorrow’s light is already stirring, preparing to break forth in ways that only the awakened heart can sense.

The story continues, as it must. For this was never just about building a city, but about the endless adventure of consciousness evolving toward greater light.

And that adventure has only just begun.

Clam Aduelaie

*Author’s note: Any resemblance to current events or persons, living or mythological, is purely coincidental and exists only in the reader’s imagination.*



# The way of the artist

*Auroville Today: What was your childhood like, how did your own musical journey begin?*

**Shalini:** My journey with music began very young. Singing was always central to my life, but never through formal education. It was always just me, in a playful yet deep process with myself. I would record my voice, experiment on my own, and put on shows for my parents. That started when I was really little – I honestly can’t remember a time I didn’t sing.

I must have been around three when I discovered my parents’ cassette player and their collection of tapes. I’d press the red button and record my voice over everything.

Later, when I was a bit older, my parents got me a mic. We set up a small system in the living room, right at the heart of the house. I’d come back from school and spend hours recording the same song over and over. I’m still surprised at how welcoming they were of all the repetition – and of being constantly shushed.

I did explore other avenues. I joined choirs, studied with a few teachers, and explored different musical styles, including dhrupad and other Indian forms. But none of it ever quite felt attuned to me. Some of it felt heavy or patriarchal, and I never found a teacher who truly connected with how I was using my voice. It always felt like I was over here doing something instinctive, and they were over there giving instructions that didn’t quite land. It left me feeling tense and disconnected from myself.

Eventually, I realised what I really wanted to do was to go deeper into singing folk songs from different parts of the world. I love the way different cultures develop different ways of using the expressive possibilities of the voice.

*You spent a lot of time in Greece. Tell me about that.*

I first heard Rebetiko, a rich Eastern-influenced urban folk music, one winter in Paris at a little Greek restaurant – and I fell in love. I knew I had to go to Greece. The next summer, I was there, and for a few years, I went twice a year and was warmly welcomed into the homes of musicians, where I’d soak the music in. Greece is a very interesting place for music, where the musical East and West meet.

I was drawn to the makam modal system and its unique way of improvisation, and the gorgeous ornamentation of the voice in Greek folk music. I also studied the accordion there – it was a wonderful journey dancing with the breath of the bellows – but I struggled with my body in connection with the instrument and never developed my playing enough to call myself an instrumentalist.

Then came COVID. That brought a natural end to that phase, and I began using my voice in completely new ways. During lockdown, I was processing some really difficult inner experiences. It was just me, in a small house, with my voice, my body, a mirror, and everything I was moving through internally.

The way I navigated it was by using my voice – intuitively, without structure, following my impulses from moment to moment. At the end of that period, I gave a concert for the first time, and my voice had completely changed. What was fascinating was that I hadn’t been trying to “improve” my voice. I wasn’t working on it technically – it was purely an inner journey. And yet, the aesthetics of my voice had evolved more than they ever had in my life.

I think that’s the essence of the work I do now: working with the voice without a fixed agenda, without trying to control it.

*So that was a discovery that just happened?*

Exactly. It was a beautiful and unexpected discovery – surprising and wonderful, and healing.

That discovery led me to start working with people quite experimentally. That was about five years ago. I found that even without having many tools or formal knowledge, I could offer meaningful support. It felt like there was some kind of gift to explore.

*Support in giving people space to explore through their voice?*

Yes, though the first person I worked with sang Indian classical music. So it began with singing – but not in the conventional sense of giving someone technique to “improve” their voice. It was about meeting the person fully,

creating space for deeper explorations and shifts.

Since then, I’ve been very committed to studying voice in various ways – in order to have real knowledge and tools to offer, in addition to my own experience, my intuition, and my presence.

*Can you speak of the approaches to voice that you have been studying? Because there’s so much richness in what you’ve explored.*

I did a research-based postgraduate certificate in voice pedagogy, which was a year and a half long. It was mentored, and quite intense. My focus was on somatic approaches to the voice, so I studied many different ways to approach the voice, body, and emotional process.

One of my studies focused on fascia and the voice – how emerging understandings of the body, and of the connective tissue that holds everything together, can change the way we approach vocal work. That was absolutely fascinating. I was also given an introduction to a wide range of vocal methods during my studies. I’m constantly studying and learning from different people, and I love that so much.

Personally, I’ve recently been working with a teacher of the Estill method, which is a very detailed anatomical system of understanding the voice – you learn to focus on your sensations to create different vocal settings.

For a few years I’ve been collaborating with someone who created a very interesting form of voicework called Vocal De-armouring, based on a Hungarian school of classical voice called Libero Canto. Her work is very similar to mine – probably the closest alignment I’ve found. We’ve had an ongoing online collaboration for some years now, and I’ve written and offered online classes for her community. She’s based in New York.

I’ve also taken several online courses with bodyworkers who work with the voice. This last year I studied bodywork with Shari, and that is now an integral part of my work with the voice. And I went through a course in mindfulness-based listening which included components of psychotherapeutic modalities like focusing and parts work, which are also a part of my sessions.

*Could you talk more about these sessions?*

It’s really about meeting the whole person and what they come in with, so each session looks very different.

These sessions are not about fixing the voice or trying to sound a certain way, though that can come in as desire, and we address it. Broadly, we use the act of voicing – through songs or improvisations – as a container for discovery. I find that when you approach the act of vocalising with curiosity and care, many things surface, and can be felt, expressed, and moved.

Through gentleness, the person and their voice begin to open – often in ways you couldn’t have tried to produce, because you didn’t know they were possible. In that sense, the aesthetic or expressive quality of the voice tends to shift – but not as a goal. It’s a byproduct of a deeper process.

A good example is a day when I had three sessions – each completely different. They really show the range of the work. The first was with someone I’ve been seeing for two years now. Her intention is never technical – she doesn’t bring in pieces or repertoire. Her focus is self-expression and using the space to process what’s alive in her.

That day, she came in with an inquiry about her heart. As she walked around the room, I noticed – something I’ve observed often – that she holds her spine in a very particular way. I’d never brought it up; it felt too invasive. But this time, it felt right. There’s an intuitive element to this work. So I gently asked her about it – what she knew, and if she was open to exploring it.

That opened something. She shared that when she holds her spine that way, she sees an image of it as a rigid structure around her heart – as if her heart is stuck to her spine. We explored, through touch and imagery, what it might be like for the heart to be free – not caged by a rigid spine.

She ended by singing to integrate what she’d touched. It was an improvised song – about how frightened her heart was to be free. Her voice came effortlessly. It was incredibly moving.

The second session was with someone I’d worked with for a year. He always came in with songs, but carried a lot of vocal tension. We’d

Shalini, who has lived in Auroville for 12 years and the last five as an Aurovilian, is deeply appreciated in the community for her musical performances, and for the vocal work she offers individually and in groups.

Her musical path has been shaped through collaborations with a wide range of musicians – from classically trained Indian artists to Italian oudists and Argentinian bandoneonists, from folk traditions to contemporary global music projects that have been performed across the world. Her work bridges cultures and genres with sensitivity and depth. She sings in many languages and has recently begun writing songs that subtly reflect her wide-ranging influences.

Raised in a liberal, meditative household between Bombay and Bangalore, Shalini attended a Krishnamurti school throughout her education, and first visited Auroville as a teenager. In her early twenties, she studied Mathematics, co-founded a school called Shibumi, a children’s bookstore called Story Revolution, and a graphic design practice.

Moving to Auroville felt like a natural step. At the time, she was recovering from illness, and her first years here became a time of healing, embodiment, and return to self.

Though she explored many forms of art and work, music was always at the heart of her life. Yet finding a clear musical path wasn’t easy. It was only in Auroville that she found ways to follow this essential calling and deepen her relationship with music.



explored it in many ways – slow, meditative, body-based. After a break, he returned, and something had shifted. His voice was relaxed. Old patterns had fallen away.

This time, we worked technically – on tuning, scales, musical phrasing. He could now approach these without tightening. When tension arose, he could release it – something he hadn’t been able to do before. It was a purely musical session, and very beautiful.

The third session was with someone completely new, and it was all bodywork. This woman was very sensitive, and the moment she tried to sing, a lot of emotion would arise.

We began lying down, working with her hand, then arm through the fascia. As we moved, she began vocalising. Her body led the way. She felt pressure in her chest, so we brought touch there, then to the throat. Tears came. She completely guided the process; I simply followed and supported.

At the end, I asked how she’d like to use the last ten minutes – to integrate. She said she wanted to sit up and sing. She did. Her arms lifted; she said there was a surge of energy through them. Then she sang – a song in Spanish, her voice wild, resonant, filling the space as her arms trembled. We both wept.

Sometimes I feel like it’s beyond me. I’m just there, witnessing, full of awe and gratitude that this is the work I get to do.

*Why is it so fulfilling for you?*

Because I know it in my own body. I’ve had patterns in my singing that didn’t shift through effort or technique. Trying to fix them only created more tension. But when I found this sensory, body-based, agenda-less approach, it gave my nervous system the safety it needed to change.

Singing from that kind of safety is deeply transformative – not only musically, but emotionally, and at the level of the whole person. And while the aesthetic quality of the voice does shift, this change comes in ways that are beyond control. It happens on a timeline that cannot be predicted, and in directions that could never have been planned for.

What is so beautiful is that this isn’t just limited to my own personal process – it’s something I get to offer others, and witness its impact. I’m moved every single day. And I get to keep learning, all the time.

*What is this work like in groups?*

As with individual sessions, participants in workshops come with a range of goals – some are exploring their singing voice for the first time, others are professional singers who want to find more ease, self-connection, or meaning in the use of their voice.

Workshops include a significant amount of individual vocal and somatic work, but I think the true gift of group work lies in the relational aspect of the voice. Vocalising with a partner offering supportive witnessing and touch allows the voicing partner to experience the effects of co-regulation on their nervous system, and in that safety, inner tensions and blocks can soften, allowing the voice to transform.

Environments that are gentle, lovingly held, and where all experience and expression is welcome, offer the space for moments of deep emotional or energetic process and healing – this is one such space where these things can unfold, and here they are integrated with vocal expression.

*And music and aesthetic beauty – what does it mean to you in this context?*

What moves me most is music as an expression of aliveness – of being human – rather than music as a product to be perfected.

When we hear someone sing, what are we really responding to when we call it “beautiful”? Yes, there’s tone, pitch, texture – sonic elements that touch us. But I think we perceive more than sound.

We feel where someone is singing from. We notice tightness or freedom, effort or abandon. Their honesty moves us. The voice is a mirror – it reveals so much.

Being honest with the voice, rather than chasing perfection, feels profoundly meaningful.

*And you’re recording an album at the moment. Tell me about that.*

*The Road of the Wild Lily* is a project that is three years old now – a collaboration with a powerful Indian singer, Shruthi, whom I met here in Auroville. It’s become our response to the world: a way of holding its pain with softness, and exploring the deep threads of connectedness, of longing, and of home.

The songs we’re recording include a deeply evocative Persian poem set to music by an Iranian woman in exile; a Turkish song by a woman dervish, speaking of spiritual yearning; the heart-wrenching Palestinian poem *If I Must Die*, which we’ve set to music; a folk song sung across the border in both India and Pakistan; an Azerbaijani love song; an Afghani lullaby, sung to a child of war; and a pairing of two strong feisty women: one from Greek rebetiko, the other voicing a bold commentary on caste from Maharashtra.

Recording has been an immense learning curve for me. I feel like such a beginner on this path, and at the same time, I’m deeply grateful – to be working alongside such powerful, experienced musicians, to keep learning and growing, and to be meeting my own edges with gentleness.

*In conversation with Chandra*



# Trees – their outer garment

It's easy to overlook the bark of a tree – especially here in Auroville, where trees are everywhere and we pass them daily, often without stopping to truly see. But *Trees – Their Outer Garment*, a quiet and thoughtful exhibition by Tim at Pitanga, invites just that: a slowing down, a re-seeing.

The photographs – drawn from trees in India as well as a few from Europe and Asia – reveal a surprisingly wide emotional and visual range. Some images show bark as richly textured and expressive, like the brushstrokes of abstract art. Others evoke aerial views of landscapes – dry riverbeds, red canyons, patchwork fields. There's something startling in how often the bark appears like a terrain, a body, or a dream.

The exhibition's title refers to the bark as a tree's "outer garment," and Tim's accompanying statement encourages viewers to rethink this familiar layer: "You may wonder what is special about the exterior of trees? Well, take a look at this exhibition, which presents an interesting range of photos, from the surface appearance of living trees to dead ones, smooth tree trunks to rough ones, and single coloured trunks to multi-coloured ones."

Some images feel almost intimate – knots that resemble eyes, splits in the bark that suggest wounds or windows into the inner life of the tree. A few even seem to hold something hidden, something playful or mysterious. As Tim notes, the bark sometimes "captures... human and animal forms, including Ganesh!"

The sense that trees are beings in their own right runs through the exhibition – not in an overt or sentimental way, but in the stillness of each frame. The photographs seem to be listening, just as much as they are showing. They reflect a kind of gentle attention, both from the trees and from the artist who spent time with them.

In the end, it's not just an exhibition about bark. It's about relationship – between trees and the earth, between trees and each other, and between trees and us. As Tim gently encourages, "Trees can communicate with us!... with quiet sincerity and patience one can generally be successful." The same might be said of the photographs themselves.

You just have to slow down .... And listen.

Chandra



# Tim's love of the abstract

"I began photographing tree bark almost ten years ago, when I noticed a really unusual pattern in the bark of a tree. Over the years, I photographed more and more of them with my mobile phone until I had a collection of about eighty. I selected thirty-five photos for the exhibition, most of which were taken in Auroville.

What is fascinating about the bark of trees is that the form of each one is unique: there is only one like it in the whole world. Actually, it is not only bark that interests me, it is practically everything to do with the world of art. My parents had a large collection of early 20th century works of art so I became aware of art at a young age. I'm not an artist myself but I learned to appreciate creativity in others.

Much later I went to the Tate Gallery in London and saw a mobile sculpture by Alexander Calder. I was fascinated, absolutely fascinated. The thing about the mobile is that it takes no shape and yet it is every shape, there's no fixed form but it is constantly creating new compositions as its component parts are moved by the wind. I think that was the beginning of my love of the abstract, of unusual shapes that are not any recognisable form, which I find in tree bark but also in other things.

For example, some years ago a French photographer had an exhibition in Auroville. She had gone to Kerala and taken close-up shots of flaking paint on an old wall which was creating abstract formations. I love that kind of thing. In fact, I have two of her photographs in my bedroom.

So I am happy to present these photos of tree bark, which I want to emphasise are not my own works of art but rather the art of Mother Nature at her most interesting. Normally we just glance at trees but if we really look at them we can become inspired. If you focus on the details of nature, like even a small piece of bark, you will see how wonderful it is.

So my hope is that this exhibition will help people wake up to the incredible world that we live in."

As told to Alan

## PASSINGS

### Merrilyn Cook

Merry, born in Vermont, USA, passed away on 30 March. She was 85. She officially joined Auroville in 1999, but was already involved 10 years earlier.

Merry is remembered by her friends and caretakers as "mighty willed, brilliant and the sweetest lady we know ... Her strong individuality, inherent sweetness and sincere aspiration for the Divine Mother shone through, touching the lives of everyone around her."

Merry joined Auroville at the age of 50, and, being a lover of animals, soon got involved with the dog shelter. As a music teacher, she harmonised the lives of countless students, sharing the universal language that brought joy and beauty to all. She expressed her kindness and love for children through teaching and caring for many animals over the years.

In later years Merry suffered dementia and severe hearing loss, which did not prevent her from being a regular customer at La Terrace where she had lunch and read the newspapers, with a pen in hand to write her comments in the margins!

Merry's remains were buried on 4 April at the Auroville Burial Ground.

*True Animal Stories*, a book that Merry wrote and which was published in Tamil and English, is available at Thamarai and other Auroville schools.



actively involved in various community activities including the Auroville Marathon and Aurinoco.

Anand's remains were cremated on 9 April at Karuvadikuppam, Puducherry.

### Walter Wagner

Walter was born in Stuttgart, Germany, on 7 December 1950. His childhood and youth were difficult but he felt there was always a protecting hand over him.

In 1970 he graduated as a landscape gardener, and later became a qualified engineer of landscape architecture and environmental preservation.

At the office where he was employed in Munich there was a photo of the Nebula (an earlier design by Roger Anger, which later became the Galaxy) attached to a cupboard. Walter was always attracted by it. He had been introduced to the Integral Yoga early through his spiritual friend and guide Heinz Kappes (1893 - 1988), a priest who, after retiring, lived in the Ashram for one and a half years.

He worked on a farm in Egypt between 1983 - 1985 and there was a German on the farm who had lived in Auroville for some time. Walter became curious. In 1986 he came to stay in Auroville for several months, falling in love with the Matrimandir and the idea of a garden design based on the Mother's Symbol. He came back for good in 1987 and jumped full-heartedly into participation in the design of the Matrimandir gardens and the park.

He had a love for perfection and Mahalakshmi, the Mother's aspect of Harmony and Beauty, became his inner aspiration. Walter had an intense inner life with lots of beautiful spiritual experiences.

In 2023 he had an accident from which he didn't fully recover. On 17 April in the early evening the Mother took him into Her arms while he was walking. His partner, Mechtilde, received a last message from him on the same day.

"Our dear friend Heinz has made it clear to me that I will never be able to give back what good deeds other people do or did to me. I can only say 'thank you'."

A silent gathering for Walter took place at the Matrimandir Banyan Tree on 21 April.

Walter's remains were buried on 22 April at the Auroville Burial Ground.



### André Hababou

André, one of Auroville's early architects, arrived in Auroville in 1968, aged 26. On the invitation of the Mother, he started working with Roger Anger, Auroville's chief architect, and was his first draughtsman.

André was originally from Tunisia and spent the first 13 years of his life there. At the age of 14, he moved to France and attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts, where he studied Arts and Architecture. He became a painter and worked in architectural offices.

Through a chance meeting with an artist in Marseille, André's interest in spirituality was awakened. He read *The Adventure of Consciousness* and a brochure on Auroville. On its first page, there was a picture of the Galaxy, the Charter, The Dream and a photo of Mother. It was like a revelation, an immense joy. "But this is where I must live!"

After selling his paintings he came to India overland. When he arrived in the Auroville area, he was taken aback because he did not find even the beginnings of a city he had been expecting. However, "I wasn't disappointed – I wasn't happy either – and I told myself that it was up to us to build the city; that we had to transform ourselves through doing it. It was a process that had meaning."

André began living in Auroville and working under the guidance of Roger Anger, and for the next 40 years, he helped create numerous private residences, apartment buildings and commercial facilities. His projects included the Centre for Research in Communication and Publication (CRCP) in Fraternity; Surrender community - a residential collective housing project; the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture in the International Zone; commercial units Shradhanjali & Auromode Atelier, both in the Industrial Zone; and the school at New Creation.

For André, expressing beauty and harmony linked with functionality was his aspiration and the most important aspect of his architectural work in Auroville.

André passed away on the night of 17 to 18 April. His burial took place at Auroville Burial Ground on April 20, the day he would have been 83.

An autobiography by André Hababou (previously published in French) is now available in English at the Visitors Centre bookshop, under the title *From Tunis to Auroville, In search of Truth*.



### Boris Verjoutski

Boris, Auroville's entomologist and nature lover, passed away on 22 April at Marika Home, where he stayed for the past few years. He was 87. Boris was born in Krasnoyarsk, a city in Siberia, Russia, on 9 June 1937.

He arrived in Auroville on 21 September 1991 at the age of 54. He came to live in the Aspiration community, and remained there for the next 30 years. About his life before coming to Auroville, he wrote, "For more than twenty years I worked legally in the Soviet Science Academy and I practiced illegally yoga for fifteen years." Through yoga, he realized that "science is nothing compared to Yoga .... Yoga gives joy, health, wisdom for all the people of the world. It is from God. Science on the other hand can be, at times, from the asuras."

He described what he saw when he arrived. "I saw a child in every Aurovilian. And now my vision hasn't changed. It is a city of very young people who created their own young world. This reality has a great perspective. The physical and spiritual atmosphere of the city creates the constant youth of Aurovilians."

His observations of the natural world, and also of human behaviour, appeared very regularly, during many years, in short but often pithy pieces of writing in the weekly News & Notes. Boris's writing had its very own inimitable style. As an entomologist (i.e. a scientist who studies insects) he got plenty of opportunities to observe insect life, not in the least in his own thatched-roof home in Aspiration. In one of his pieces, he makes fun of Auroville's attempts at organisation and governance while talking about termites: "The Working Committee of Aurovilian Termites has decided that all the termites which are residents of the city must work round the clock, all year long, every day including all holidays and festivals, without any salary. The results are obvious. Now the Housing Group of Termites successfully competes with the Human Housing group. In reality, the Auroville land belongs almost equally to man and to insect, although the insects are less serious and do not celebrate Deepavali." (1998)

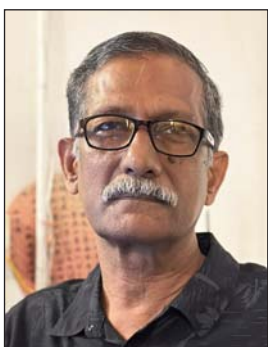
Lately, Boris seemed very concerned about how the city development is affecting the life of nature and humans in Auroville. "The planet is in a dangerous sickness. Our Kurukshetra battlefield for its healing is here..."

Boris's remains were buried on 26 April at the Auroville Burial Ground.



### Anand Prasad

Anand Prasad passed away on 8 April. Born in 1957, he studied at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. During his school days, he participated in Matrimandir concretings. He joined Auroville as a volunteer in 2006 when he helped found the Saracon campus, bringing an invaluable contribution to its growth and spirit. He was also





# RA-WCom challenges decisions of the 68th GB meeting

On 20 April the Working Committee selected by the Residents’ Assembly (RA-WCom) shared with the community a letter it had written on 16 April to the members of the Governing Board, copied to the members of the Auroville International Advisory Council. The RA-WCom expressed its concern that “once again” meeting minutes had not been shared with the Residents’ Assembly or posted on the Auroville Foundation website in a timely manner and instead were obtained through an RTI. Additionally, it expressed “serious concerns” about multiple decisions taken during the meeting which reveal actions that “directly contradict both the Auroville Foundation Act, 1988, and the foundational principles of the Auroville Charter”.

The RA-WCom believes that the Governing Board has been overstepping its role as defined in the Auroville Foundation Act. The Act has not given the Board any power to initiate, impose, or execute programmes and activities without the involvement of the Residents' Assembly.

Specifically, the RA-WCom objected to the mischaracterisation of Auroville's planning history by the Chairman in his opening remarks, which is “being used to justify unilateral development without proper consultation with the Residents' Assembly”. The RA-WCom also took issue with the minutes characterising Auroville “as having ‘tended towards an antithesis of its core objectives’ and becoming ‘a refuge for some persons with vested interests’”, which it considers to be “empty and false statements” that “ignore and dismiss

the contributions of thousands of residents over 56 years, the results of which can clearly be seen by all”.

The RA-WCom further objected to the implementation of the Master Plan without proper consultation and stated that physical development must include meaningful participation from the community, not forced implementation of a now outdated plan.

The RA-WCom observed that the centralisation of services in the form of an ‘Auroville Public Space Service’ and ‘Auroville Communication Service’ under the Secretary's direct control again bypasses the letter and spirit of the Auroville Foundation Act and Auroville’s Charter regarding the commitment and involvement of the residents.

Regarding the admissions process, the RA-WCom noted that the decisions of the Board contradict the Auroville Foundation Act, which explicitly states that the Residents’ Assembly shall “allow the admission or cause the termination of persons in the register of residents”. Moreover, the Admission and Termination of Persons in the Register of Residents Regulations, 2023, have been stayed by the Madras High Court, and therefore the Board’s decisions are bordering on contempt of court.

The RA-WCom found it particularly troubling that the Board is proposing to amend the Auroville Foundation Act to, as quoted from Board meeting minutes, “remove the anomalies in them which are misused by a section of the Auroville community to stall the realization of the City”. The RA-WCom states that “this characterisation

attempts to frame the Residents’ Assembly’s legitimate exercise of its statutory rights as ‘misuse’ and suggests altering the foundational legal framework rather than working within it as intended. This is further evidenced by the refusal of the Governing Board and its Secretary to recognize section 20 of the Act by ignoring the residents who have been chosen as representative members to the Working Committee through an RA approved process ... and instead interacting with unelected members preferred by the Governing Board.”

The RA-WCom also objected to the Board’s disregard for the vision of development as outlined in Auroville’s Charter, stating the current approach to development focuses solely on conventional physical manifestation while disregarding the experimental and research nature of development that would foster human unity. “The forceful implementation of infrastructure without community participation fundamentally contradicts this foundational principle ... the GB refuses the collaboration offered by the residents whilst continuously maligning them by claiming that they are obstructive, possessive and anti-development.”

The RA-WCom, closed its letter stating that it is ready to work together with the Governing Board in a spirit of mutuality and collaboration, as intended by the Auroville Foundation Act.

The full letter can be seen at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XpRLzNTHSB-6ilayPKx2ltdHrTB-tp/view>

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Organising gatherings and activities without prior approval and recognition of the GB-WCom

In an unsigned circular addressed to all residents, newcomers and volunteers dated 11 April 2025 the Auroville Foundation stated that certain residents, newcomers, and others “continue to organize gatherings and conduct activities without prior approval” and that “those who are holding or participating in such unauthorized meetings, and any illegal and impersonating group claiming to be the Working Committee other than the one recognized by the Governing Board (GB-WCom), and those who participate in or support any activities organized by illegitimate groups, and the people impersonating office bearers in illegitimate groups themselves, shall be liable to face action and are in violation of the regulations of Auroville.”

### Response from the RA-WCom to the AVFO circular

On 18 April, the RA-WCom responded to the 11 April 2025 circular sent out by the Auroville Foundation Office. The RA-WCom noted that, once again, the Foundation Office and the groups and individuals who are recognised by them are attempting to erode the sense of community and spirit of unity by sowing confusion and fear. It clarified that community gatherings of residents are not breaking any laws, and that it is therefore not required to obtain any prior approval. “It is fully within the rights of residents to hold meetings to share information and experiences. The fact that the Foundation Office and its appointed groups are trying to stop residents from gathering shows their insecurity in their forcefully assumed positions and in their continuing attempts to control people at all costs,” wrote the RA-WCom. Regarding ‘who is the true Working Committee’ the RA-WCom reminded the community that four individuals mentioned in the circular as the ‘Working Committee’ were specifically dismissed by the Residents’ Assembly in its decision of May 2022 and that the three others were co-opted by those who had been dismissed. The RA-WCom also recalled the explicit provision of the Auroville Foundation Act that the RA will determine the manner of choosing and the term of office of its Working Committee. “Neither the Governing Board nor any employee or appointee of the Foundation office has any say in the selection, constitution or ‘recognition’ of the Working Committee,” stated the RA-WCom. Lastly, the RA-WCom made reference to a ruling of the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court of 4 September 2023 stating that the RA as a statutory body must be allowed to carry out its functions as per Sections 18, 19 and 20 of the Auroville Foundation Act.

### Meeting with Newcomers

The GB-WCom invited Aurovilians and Newcomers to an Information Sharing and Joint Interaction meeting with the Governing Board-constituted Auroville Town Development Council, Funds and Assets Management Committee, Admissions and Terminations Scrutinizing Committee, Working Committee, and Auroville Foundation Legal. The meeting took place on 11 April in the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium, Bharat Nivas, in the presence of the Officer on Special Duty and the Visa Officer of the Auroville Foundation. Those who wish to view the event can do so at <https://youtu.be/PdwDi8awuLM>.

### News from the ATR

On 11 April, the Admissions and Terminations Registry informed the community that it had received and verified 28 applications from people aspiring to join Auroville as Newcomers together with 10 children. The ATR invited all Residents registered in the Register of Residents to share with the ATR within fourteen days their agreement or disagreement about an applicant joining Auroville. Any disagreement with an applicant’s entry into Auroville should be substantiated against the relevant provisions of the Auroville Residence Criteria. The ATR further stated that the Admissions and Terminations Scrutinizing Committee (ATSC) and the Admissions and Terminations Registry (ATR) shall, for the time being, process all applications related to Volunteers, Newcomers and Residents, but the entry or removal of names into and from the Register of Residents shall not be finalised, in accordance with the Interim Order dated 23.2.24 of the Madras High Court in which the vires of the Regulations has been challenged.

### High Court Ruling awaited

In a message to aspiring Newcomers, the Working Committee appointed by the Residents’ Assembly (RA-WCom) informed them that the entry process for Auroville is pending in the Madras High Court which has not yet given a final ruling. The RA-WCom explained that as per Section 19 (a) of the Auroville Foundation Act, the Residents’ Assembly (RA) may “allow the admission or cause the termination of persons in the register of residents...” and that an Entry Board chosen by the RA has been functioning for many years, in accordance with a set of Regulations that were created by the Residents’ Assembly and approved by the Governing Board in 2020. “There are now groups of residents calling themselves the ‘Admissions and Terminations Registry’ and the ‘Admissions and Terminations Scrutinizing Committee’, who have not been chosen by the RA. They are taking for them-

selves the admission and termination powers of the RA, with no delegation or approval from it,” wrote the RA-WCom, and clarified that the Admission and Termination of Persons in the Register of Residents, 2023, under which these two groups are formed, was stayed by the Madras High Court on 23 February 2024. The RA-WCom stated that “These groups and their actions are illegal and clearly go against Auroville’s ideals of human unity” and that the “Residence Criteria” which were also created under the stayed Regulations are therefore illegal as well. The RA-WCom warned that any admission process that is begun by these groups that are created under the stayed regulations may be subject to the final outcome of the case regarding the admissions process for Auroville, which is still in the courts.

### RA decision recognising RA committees

On 10 April the Residents’ Assembly Service (RAS) announced the outcome of an Emergency RA Decision-Making (ERAD) Process initiated by the Working Committee of the Residents’ Assembly (RA-WCom) to formally acknowledge Residents’ Assembly entities as section 19 committees under the Auroville Foundation Act 1988. The decision making process ran from 28 March to 6 April. As an introduction to the ERAD, the RA-WCom reminded the community that in the recent ruling from the Supreme Court, it was confirmed that the Residents’ Assembly (RA) has the right to have committees formed under Section 19 of the Auroville Foundation Act (AVF Act) that will “advise the Governing Board in respect of all activities relating to the residents of Auroville”. On 28 April, the RA-WCom held General Meeting to present this ERAD and clarify the reasons for it. The RAS announced that a total of 598 valid votes were submitted online and in-person and the number of participants exceeded the 10 per cent (239 votes) quorum required to validate the decision. (According to the Master List data, the total adult population of the community eligible to participate in RADs was 2394 as of the month of April 2025.) The ERAD proposal had two parts to it. The first part asked residents to vote on the statement, “We resolve to formally acknowledge the following entities as ‘Committees’ of the Residents’ Assembly created under Section 19 of the Auroville Foundation Act.” These were: (1) the Auroville Council; (2) the Budget Coordination Committee (BCC); (3) the Entry Board/Service (aka Admission Committee); (4) the Exit Review Group (aka Termination Committee); (5) the Forest Group; (6) the Funds and Assets Management Committee of the Residents’ Assembly (FAMC of the RA); (7) the Housing

Board/Service; (8) L’Avenir d’Auroville (RA TDC); (9) the Land Board; (10) the Project Coordination Group (PCG); and (11) the Residents’ Assembly Service (RAS). The outcome was that the Residents’ Assembly formally acknowledged these entities as Section 19 Committees of the Residents’ Assembly. The second part asked the residents if they agreed with the statement, “These groups have been supported by collective funds generated by individual residents and income generating units of Auroville. Therefore, we further resolve that collective funds, including monthly contributions from individuals, shall be used to support the budgets of these groups and maintenances for their members.” This statement was supported by 98.9% of the residents who voted and therefore the Residents’ Assembly approved it and resolved that the above groups shall be supported by the community’s collective funds.

### Use of residential assets

The GB-FAMC recently published “Procedures and Guidelines for the use and allocation of an Auroville residential asset,” aimed at transforming how housing is managed within Auroville. When read alongside the Auroville Foundation (Residence Criteria) Standing Order 2024, these changes represent a significant shift in how Aurovilians’ relationship to their homes is defined by the Auroville Foundation. The new guidelines state that “All residents/occupants of Auroville assets are Permissive Occupants.” The earlier concept of stewardship has been eliminated. The guidelines emphasise that Aurovilians may be required to relocate based on the AVFO's assessment of their needs, stating that "Inhabitants may be asked to move to a different asset when their needs change, or if the city development requires this change of accommodation." If a resident leaves “without approval of the Human Resource Service”, the Housing Service will re-allocate their residence after a three-month notice period. For residents who are “asked to leave Auroville”, the notice period is reduced to just one month.

### Visa Extension of Frederick Shulze-Buxloh denied

Frederick, an 85-year old German national who was among the first to be admitted as an Aurovillian by the Mother and who has been living in and working for Auroville for over 60 years, was denied the extension of his visa and has been requested to leave India. Deeply dismayed, concerned residents have issued a humble appeal to the relevant authorities to reconsider these decisions so that Frederick is allowed to remain in India, which he calls the country of his soul.

<b>About Auroville Today</b> <p>Auroville Today is an activity of the Kattidakalai Trust of the Auroville Foundation. The GST number is 33AAATA0037BXZV</p> <p>Contact: Auroville Today, Surrender, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, India, Phone: +91.413.2622572. Email: <a href="mailto:aurovilletodayweb@gmail.com">aurovilletodayweb@gmail.com</a> and <a href="mailto:avtoday@auroville.org.in">avtoday@auroville.org.in</a>.</p>	<b>Subscription information</b> <p>Subscription rates for 12 issues:</p> <p>India print Rs. 850 India digital Rs. 1,000</p> <p>Other countries: Print Rs. 4,000 Digital Rs. 3,500</p>	<b>How to subscribe:</b> <p>1. Through our website: Subscriptions can be ordered and paid on-line through <a href="https://auroville.today">https://auroville.today</a></p> <p>2. By cheque: Cheques must be payable to <i>Auroville Maintenance</i>, reference <i>Contribution Auroville Today</i>, and need to be sent to</p>	<p>Auroville Today, Surrender community, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, India.</p> <p>3. By bank transfer. Bank transfers are to be made to account # 163101000118 of Auroville Maintenance at ICICI Bank, Auroville Branch, IFSC Code ICIC0001631, Swift Code ICICINBBCTS, reference: Contribution Auroville Today.</p>	<b>Editorial team:</b> <p>Alan, Carel, Chandra, Gita. Proofreading: Alan, Gita, Kristen. DTP: Carel. Print editing: Jean-Denis. Digital editing: Krishna V</p> <p>Published by Carel Thieme on behalf of the Auroville Foundation. Printed by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry, and published at Surrender, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu.</p>
--	---	---	---	--

Auroville Today does not necessarily reflect the views of the community as a whole.