

# Does Annapurna Farm face imminent destruction?

On 13 August, the managers of Annapurna Farm received an email signed by three working groups constituted by the Governing Board – the Funds and Assets Management Committee, L’Avenir d’Auroville (Auroville’s Town Development Council) and the Farm Service – stating: “It has been decided to allocate 100 acres of Auroville land at Annapurna for the IIT [Indian Institute of Technology, eds.] Sustainability Campus project. Consequently, Annapurna Farm will need to relocate its operations to the western portion of the land parcel, comprising approximately 34 acres.” Six days later, the managers were verbally informed that there had been a change of plans: the entire 135-acre farm would now be required for the IIT project, and Annapurna would need to relocate to somewhere in the Auroville Green Belt, to be added on to an existing, struggling Auroville farm.

## The why of the decision

The reason for the Board’s decision could be found in an article in the newspaper *The Hindu* of 25 July titled “Auroville and IIT working to fast-track sustainability campus project”. It stated that in its 69th meeting, the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation had approved a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a partnership between the Auroville Foundation and IIT. [The minutes of this meeting have not been published on the Foundation’s website, and neither has the content of the MoU been shared, eds.] The partnership is said to entail a 33-year lease of Annapurna land; IIT will build its fourth campus here, focussed on setting up a world class zero-emission test track for electric trucks.

“While this is in alignment with the broader national policy of guiding the logistics sector (where freight vehicles account for about 45% of transport emission) in transitioning to Zero Emission Technologies, the mandate of the sustainability campus is also to work on projects focused on achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. The IIT-M has found a convergence of these missions with Auroville’s ideals” said the article. It added that “The sustainability campus will provide a significant boost to emerging startups from Auroville, Puducherry, and the broader bio-region,” and that “the collaboration represents a significant step toward integrating sustainable technology education with community development in the Auroville region” as the proposed campus “is designed to serve as a hub for research and development in sustainable technologies while providing educational pathways for local students and supporting the growth of eco-friendly startups in the region.” The partnership is also expected to create new opportunities for innovation in sustainability and green technology. The Ministry of Education, Auroville’s nodal ministry, is said to have approved the MoU.

## What’s in it for Auroville?

However, it is unclear how exactly Auroville will benefit from this partnership which justifies the loss of Auroville’s largest and best developed farm. In taking this decision, the Board has not consulted the two other authorities of the Auroville Foundation, the International Advisory Council and the Residents’ Assembly. It has also not sought the advice of Auroville’s own environmental and alternative energy experts; neither has it ordered a study to be done on the environmental impact of a test track for electric trucks.

In this issue of *Auroville Today*, we present the responses of Tomas, who has been running the farm since 1986; of three members of the Auroville International Advisory Council; and of Auroville resident Manoj Pavithran.



Rice field preparation and transplanting in Annapurna

**AVToday:** Tomas, what was the impact on you of the email you received from the Governing Board appointed Auroville Town Development Council (ATDC) and the subsequent discussion you had with them?

**Tomas:** It hit us like a big shock, even though for the last year we had a foreboding that the Governing Board might be planning to sell or exchange Annapurna since they had announced that all outlying Auroville lands were going to be used to consolidate the city. In the last month, we had seen unknown people coming into Annapurna, measuring it, all without a previous appointment. We were not even talked to. Neither had anybody from the Auroville Foundation office asked us any questions. This decision was made without any discussion with us or prior intimation, as if it was a small matter.

**Were there any other indicators of this decision?**

Yes, there were. A few weeks ago we saw

a newspaper article that claimed that a 106 acre Auroville owned plot was going to be used for IIT. At the same time we heard that they were also still looking at Aurobrindavan as a possible location.

**The Board decided in its 57th Meeting held on 2 November 2021, to “enhance Auroville food production to meet the needs of Auroville”. How does the decision to relocate Annapurna Farm impact this ideal?**

I do not think that the Board is serious about enhancing Auroville’s food production. Quite recently the Office of the Secretary, Auroville Foundation allowed the ruin of AuroOrchard Farm by exchanging a major part; the Board has agreed to demolish Buddha Garden and part of Siddhartha Farm for a VIP access road into Auroville; and now it wants to give 100 acres (out of 135) of Auroville’s only certified organic farm to IIT Madras for a ‘Sustainability Campus’. These actions belie the intention to increase Auroville’s food production. This is highly questionable as the Board aims at speedily increasing Auroville’s population, which needs to be fed. The other farms of Auroville are far too small and do not have any ability to meet such future demands. [see box on page 2] At present, Annapurna Farm produces 30% of the total food supply generated by Auroville’s farms, it functions as the community’s central granary and processes over 90% of grains from Auroville’s farms.

**It has been said that the idea is to move all Auroville farms into the Master Plan area, with the justification that that would be consistent with the Mother’s original intentions.**

This is false. The first lands for Annapurna Farm were purchased in

the Mother’s lifetime, in 1967. It was her plan for these lands to be used for farming for Auroville. At that time nobody could imagine agriculture on the dry land plateau. From the beginning it was understood that it would be better to set up a farm where the soil would be suitable for irrigated crop cultivation. The Mother had similarly created farms in Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu to meet the needs of the inmates of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry.

**It is claimed that only 35 acres of Annapurna Farm are farmed, which might explain the initial decision of the Board to only lease 100 acres.**

The land used for growing food or intensive fodder cultivation is about 35 acres. [see box] But to grow food on 35 acres one needs a support system around it to do that (ie store-rooms, drying areas, animal sheds, processing facilities, ecological infrastructure like trees and hedges, roads, rainwater harvesting ponds, etc.) Initially, when we heard that land in Sedarapet was being considered, we wondered if allocation of the road side land (about 25 acres) could meet the needs of IIT. That would leave the main part intact, which has the productive farm land, the storage rooms, the cowsheds, the duck shelter, the workshops, the sustainable water management systems and the residences, for Annapurna’s use. The front part, which borders the road, has woodlands.

**Is it lack of funds which prevented Annapurna also developing these areas?**

Yes, it is partly that, but it is also the lack of Aurovilians who want to get involved in farming (right now we are farming with only three Aurovilians). In December last year I estimated that it would require an investment of between 5-10 crores to make the farm fully productive. [see AVToday No. 425, December 2024].

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This could then feed a very large section of the 50,000 people who are supposed to populate Auroville in the future. But the Office of the Secretary, Auroville Foundation / Governing Board never really seems to have considered that option and never funded any of the existing farms. [Instead they provided the capital to begin a small demo farm near Certitude, which failed to produce the estimated output. This project has since been discontinued, eds.] We have relied on donations, many from well-wishers and supporters living abroad, to slowly develop the farm and its infrastructure and so to be able to provide organic produce to the Aurovilians. But equally important is the way we set up this farm. This farm is probably the most ecologically resilient and best equipped farm in Auroville.

For example, in response to our five-year plan to develop Annapurna, last year we received a foreign donation that helped us to fence an important part of the farm to prevent wildlife from foraging on the crops. This year we received a donation to purchase a paddy transplanter, a machine that mechanises the planting of rice seedlings. So far, this has been done manually by local women, but it is a back-breaking, labour-intensive, time-consuming and costly process – and farm labour is increasingly more expensive and difficult to hire. Mechanisation is an absolute must, but for that to work, you need a minimum acreage of crops. We bought the machine as it will be of great use to Annapurna and allow us to extend our rice fields. The intention is that this will be a shared asset for other farmers to use as and when needed. We have the infrastructure to maintain it so we’ll keep it at Annapurna.

Relocating a 135-acre farm is not easy...

Far from it, and my first response was that these people have no idea what they are talking about. First of all, to where can Annapurna be relocated? All other Auroville farms are relatively very small. Can the acreage of any of them be extended to become as large as Annapurna? Or can Auroville purchase a consolidated area of more than 100 acres in the Greenbelt to start a comparable large farm? The answer to both questions is ‘no’. Moreover, the simplistic idea of relocation ignores the fact that the soil in most of the Greenbelt will need huge investments to become of sufficient quality, that those lands do not have the IMO Control (IMO IN) organic



Annapurna’s dairy cows

certification which Annapurna has had since 2005, and that a new farm infrastructure needs to be built from scratch, i.e. storerooms, grain drying areas, mechanical workshop, residences, water harvesting, irrigation systems, roads, fencing. A recent example is Kamadhenu Farm opposite the Irumbai temple. The land was bought a few years before the present Board took office (October 2021), but until today the farm’s infrastructure has not been developed and the farmer is experiencing huge problems in making the soil fertile.

Then there is the question of cost. We have been told that funds for relocation will be made available, and we have been asked to prepare an estimate. Apparently, the working group members are thinking in terms of relocating sheds, workshops and other buildings. They may be under-estimating how much that is going to cost – it will need many crores at least – and how much money in addition will be required to build up a farm of comparable size and soil quality in the Auroville Greenbelt. Actually, the word “relocating” does not describe the situation; one needs to dismantle Annapurna farm and build a new farm (we can use some of the materials depending on the new location). An organic farm is built around the natural environment (soil type, land slopes, plot size, water situation, labour availability, etc.)

One of Annapurna’s storerooms has 60 tons of food grains, another has 10 tons of animal feed. That’s huge! Our machine workshop has three tractors, a grain processing machine, a

paddy transplanting machine and many other tools and machines. The cowshed houses 30 animals. The duck shed has a thousand ducks during the season, which are only useful in a rice growing farm. There is a processing room and cold room which produces fruit compotes, jams, marmalades and all kinds of milk products, such as a variety of cheeses and yoghurts. There are hundreds of kilograms of cheese and compotes stored there.

Last but certainly not least, they have not considered the huge investments that have been made in Annapurna’s infrastructure over the years, with funds that have so generously been provided by Indian and foreign donors, over 139 lakhs since 2014. This decision is a slap in their faces.

Would you and André, your co-manager, be willing to start another farm as envisaged by the working groups?

We are trying to wrap our minds around this, because as of now it looks like a mission impossible. We are worried about the fate of our animals which cannot just be transferred to an empty land plot; our workers (around 20) who have been with us, many for decades, and are trained in various tasks will not be able to come to Auroville since they are from the local villages around Annapurna; they would need to be laid off properly because they are the ones who actually produced the food we have brought into the community. We also feel a responsibility towards

Auroville Farms	Acres
Annapurna	135.00
Aurogreen	27.00
AuroOrchard (after land exchange)	28.00
Ayarpady	22.00
Kamadhenu	17.00
Kalpavruksha	16.00
Siddharta	13.40
Kottakarai	10.00
Boomadevi	9.00
Buddha Garden	8.60
Brihaspati	7.50
Manvasam	7.00
Alipsa	6.50
Solitude Farm	6.00
Terra Soul	5.50
Windarra	5.50
Pazhamudir Cholai	5.00
Windarra Farm	5.00
Discipline	4.25
Integral Harmony	4.00
Sustenance	4.00
Unity Farm	4.00
Moonlight	3.00
Agastya Herbal Farm	3.00
Demo Farm	2.50
Shambala Garden	2.00
Total Auroville Farm Acreage	360.75

all those donors who have helped to build this farm.

In short, all this still feels very unreal and we are grappling to see how best to deal with it.

But I am also concerned about the wider impact. In my honest opinion, by losing Annapurna Auroville loses a major farm asset and the possibility to supply organically grown food to the community. The question of how to feed Auroville’s growing population in future needs to be addressed. If this decision is not reversed, future inhabitants may wonder why the present Auroville administration did not care about healthy, safe and sustainable food for the city of the future.

In conversation with Carel

For more information on Annapurna see issues # 369-370 (April-May 2020) and # 425 (December 2024) on the Auroville Today website <https://auroville.today>.



Banana plantation with green manure plants



One of Annapurna’s rainwater catchment ponds

# Response from three IAC members

Letter from three members of the Auroville International Advisory Council to the Chairman, Auroville Foundation, regarding Annapurna Farm & the Memorandum of Understanding with the IIT Madras.

17 August 2025

Dear Shri Ravi ji,

We write in connection with an MoU signed between the Auroville Foundation and IIT Madras, which invites IIT Madras to establish in Auroville a 100-acre “sustainability campus”. A recent article in *The Hindu* on this MoU and the IIT Madras project is attached. From the location it mentions and from a recent email received by the Annapurna Farm, it is clear that the planned campus is to be established on the 135-acre land occupied by that farm.

While the IIT Madras project has obvious merits, we are deeply concerned that carving a campus for it out of Annapurna Farm will have far-reaching negative consequences. Kindly consider the following:

- Annapurna Farm was established on bare lands purchased in the late 1960s, during Mother’s time. On 25 March 1970, Mother explained to a disciple, “You see, we had planned a lot of lands around the city for large-scale agriculture for the city’s consumption. But to cultivate those lands, for the moment we need money, or else materials.”

- In line with Mother’s approach, from the 1980s onward a few Aurovilians developed Annapurna Farm into a flourishing farm through sheer hard work and with funding coming entirely from private sources.
- Annapurna Farm has been and is one of the most productive farms in Auroville, supplying year after year to the community tons of grain, fruits and dairy products. It has also established a food-processing unit (so as to reduce wastage of harvested produce), which also processes produce from other Auroville farms.
- From its inception, Annapurna Farm pioneered techniques of organic farming – long before the recent interest in the field. It remains a shining example of organic farming. Besides, as the farm’s stewards trained a number of volunteers, it has inspired similar developments elsewhere.
- Farming apart, through afforestation and water conservation, the farm has completely regenerated the environment, benefitting the region around it. Auroville has been praised all over India, and indeed the world over, for its work of eco-restoration and environmental conservation, a work that is more relevant and needed with every passing year. It is no surprise that Auroville’s experts are constantly consulted for various projects (including governmental ones) in India.
- The proposed project represents a diversion from the land’s original purpose to a non-agricultural purpose. Besides, it has been formulated without consultation with the farm’s founders and stewards, the community at large or our Council.

We also recall how the Governing Board raised on several occasions Auroville’s failure to achieve self-sufficiency in food production. While this is a complex issue, we wish to stress here the paradox of destroying 100 acres of productive land painstakingly nurtured over decades in the name of establishing a “sustainability campus”. Such a step, we submit, would have a highly negative impact on the environment and would greatly reduce the amount of food produced in Auroville, creating a domino effect in this regard.

We earnestly appeal to you to save Annapurna Farm and ask IIT Madras to find another location for its project. Indeed, we submit that a “sustainability campus” ought to be established on some degraded land outside Auroville, with its regeneration as the first objective – which is precisely the work Auroville has been doing for decades. Given the vast financial and human resources IIT Madras has at its disposal, it should have no difficulty in relocating this project to a more appropriate location. A collaboration with Auroville’s experts, who have solid experience in the field, could certainly be envisaged to ensure the success of the project.

Requesting your decisive intervention in this matter,

With warm regards,

Dena Merriam, IAC chairperson  
Gabi Gillessen, IAC member  
Michel Danino, IAC member



# Appeal to the Chairman

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

*Subject: The MoU with IIT Madras & Land Use Concerns*

Dear Shri R.N. Ravi ji,

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to read this message.

I have been a resident member of Auroville since 1995 and a follower of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother’s teachings since 1989. I am not a representative of any faction of the community and am writing this to you only as an individual member of the Residents’ Assembly. I have been a supporter of many initiatives taken by the Governing Board, such as the development of roads, land consolidation, and the setting up of the Zoho accounting system, as very positive movements in the right direction for the future of Auroville. I deeply believe that the destiny of Auroville and India are interwoven, and collaboration is the only way forward.

This letter is an appeal to you concerning the allocation of 100 acres of Auroville’s Annapurna Farm to IIT Madras for the development of a Sustainability Campus. IIT Madras is an institution of excellence, and sustainability is indeed a key issue for the future of humanity. However, in this particular case, there appear to be some fundamental contradictions with the idea of sustainability as well as the ideals of Auroville when viewed from the integral vision given by Sri Aurobindo, and I would like to bring this to your kind attention and wise consideration.

### Physical Dimension of Sustainability

The modern global discourse on sustainability largely focuses on the carbon footprint, soil health, organic agriculture, biodiversity, product life-cycle, recyclability, energy efficiency, and related technological innovations. These address the physical and material aspects of sustainability, and Annapurna Farm of Auroville has been a pioneer in the field of organic farming and soil health. IIT Madras too has been working in the field of soil fertility. If this were a collaborative effort where the experiences gained by Annapurna Farm and IIT Madras were enhancing each other, it would have been a meaningful step towards the future.

However, what I have understood from the email message dated August 13, 2025, from ATDC to Annapurna Farm, is that the idea is to relocate the farm and allocate its land to IIT Madras. This risks undoing much of the dedicated work done by the farm over decades in developing soil fertility, organic farming, and food production for Auroville, which is the very foundation of sustainability. Soil fertility and fruit trees cannot be relocated like buildings and movable assets, and it takes a long time to regenerate soil and grow trees.

It would be helpful to understand the reasoning behind why a farm that is already steeped in sustainability is to be deprioritised to establish a new sustainability campus. The declared intention of the campus is in stark contradiction with the proposed relocation of the farm.

### Vital Dimension of Sustainability

Beneath the layer of physical sustainability lies the underlying economic system and its sustainability. The current economic systems of the world, with their industrial system of production and consumption, have been primary drivers of ecological destruction and unsustainable, cancerous growth. Economic growth and ecological harmony have been in conflict since the advent of the industrial revolution and the competition-based free market economy, leading to disastrous consequences in terms of pollution, deforestation, loss of soil fertility, and loss of biodiversity. Resolving this disharmony is one of the challenges of sustainability. It is not solely a technological or physical issue, but an underlying economic systemic issue to be addressed and resolved for true sustainability.

Auroville has been conceived as a self-supporting city, with a system of production and consumption primarily for internal use, and only the surplus is intended for trade with the world, as per the guidelines given by The Mother. This is key to socio-economic, ecological, and cultural individualisation and ‘*atmanirbharata*’ at the level of a localised collective being. This is a crucial factor for safeguarding the cultural diversity of regional units and their local ecological harmony, which would otherwise be eradicated by globalised free market economic systems based on export and competition, creating monoculture and ecological destruction worldwide. This also protects the possibility of equitable wealth distribution within such regional units, which would otherwise be absorbed by a small global elite amassing wealth and creating vast disparities in wealth distribution across the world.

Local food self-sufficiency is a fundamental starting point for such an economic system, and the work of Annapurna Farm serves as such a baseline. Replacing it with a technological innovation campus serving the dynamics of the global economy represents a fundamental denial of the economic system envisioned for Auroville.

While start-up culture and entrepreneurship are indeed important, they should serve the type of economy envisioned for Auroville, where there is no private ownership and production is

primarily for local consumption. Research and development are to be aligned with this ideal of Auroville.

### Mental Dimension of Sustainability

A growing concern worldwide is a subtle yet significant psychological imbalance. In developed economies, a sense of meaninglessness, loneliness, and depression is increasingly prevalent, indicating a quiet internal decline. Long-term economic and material sustainability relies on psychological renewal and growth, rooted in an individual's intrinsic nature and purpose (*swabhava* and *swadharma*). The world’s economic and educational systems, driven by free-market competition, appear to be fundamentally disconnecting individuals from their authentic selves and from Nature.

This leads to increased stress and psychological fragmentation, which in turn manifests as ecological and economic unsustainability. As India's economy expands rapidly in this direction, we are observing a rise in mental health challenges, even among young people, prompting the University Grants Commission (UGC) to establish Student Services Centres (SSCs) to provide counseling support for mental health in Higher Education Institutions across India.

This presents a sustainability challenge at the psychological level. Auroville was envisioned to offer a transformative alternative to the current development paradigm, addressing not only the physical and vital aspects of progress and sustainability, but also the psychological dimensions. When life and work lack emotional and mental enrichment, individuals, organisations, and civilisations are likely to experience decline. Thousands of young people are drawn to Auroville, not in pursuit of advanced technologies or higher salaries, but for something deeper that cannot be quantified in financial terms. The meaning and purpose of life are immeasurable, yet this intangible essence is what truly enables people and civilisations to flourish.

Annapurna Farm has historically served as a beacon of hope and a pioneering example for countless individuals in India and globally, who discovered meaning and purpose in organic farming as a way to secure humanity’s future. The potential disruption of such a living laboratory is not merely a question of food production quantity or efficiency, but rather the loss of a profound symbol in people’s hearts. It is profoundly important that Auroville’s leadership remains attuned to these subtle factors, which extend beyond the material and economic utility of land. When psychological foundations are undermined, external decline often follows.

### The Foundation of Sustainability

True sustainability, in my view, stems from a deep internal and spiritual alignment that empowers people to endure, adapt, and flourish despite challenges. Many individuals who contributed to Annapurna Farm and other Auroville initiatives, even with very limited resources, did so not for conventional employment or payment. Instead, they were driven by a profound sense of purpose, a call of their soul, dedicating their lives to a greater cause for the welfare of the world. This commitment represents a significant shift in consciousness, demonstrating courage and a willingness to engage in a socio-economic experiment where private property, inheritance, and salaries are not the driving forces. This spirit of self-sacrifice and dedication has, in turn, fostered a rich local creative diversity in Auroville, offering inspiration and hope to countless people seeking deeper meaning and purpose in their lives.

Of course, the work undertaken in Auroville is not without its imperfections, in every area of work there is tremendous progress to be made. A live-in-laboratory, by its very nature, involves continuous experimentation, which inevitably includes numerous failures and mistakes. Yet, it is through this ongoing process that remarkable achievements emerge, creating ripples of inspiration for thousands. The emerging world, I believe, will be shaped by these ripples of inspiration, and a new paradigm of leadership will involve becoming a source of such inspiration. For decades, Auroville has been a source of inspiration to millions globally, a reality that is more about psychological impact than measurable external factors.

This internal, foundational aspect, rather than solely renewable energy, electric vehicles, biodegradable materials, or carbon footprints, is, in my sincere estimation, the true essence of sustainability for both Auroville and the world. These external means are certainly important, but they are not the living foundations. If we overlook this fundamental aspect, we risk losing sight of the broader vision, becoming overwhelmed by the complexities of the global economy and the numbers on a balance sheet.

### The Excellence of IIT Madras

IIT Madras is indeed an icon of excellence across India and the world, and the concept of an IIT Madras campus dedicated to sustainability is highly valuable. As we consider this, it’s important to reflect on all four dimensions of sustainability, not just the material and technological aspects. Auroville has long been recognised for its work in sustainability, encompassing not only material considerations but also deeper economic and psychological dimensions. A collaboration between these two distinguished institutions holds immense promise. However, it seems crucial that such partnerships honour the foundational principles of Auroville and avoid diverting its limited assets for other uses, especially if it involves displacing an established organic farm.

It is fully understandable that an excellent institution like IIT Madras would require significant land for its development plans. Tamil Nadu possesses abundant land, and both the government and industries associated with IIT Madras are well-positioned to support its efforts in acquiring or purchasing land for a new campus focused on technological innovations for sustainability. In contrast, Auroville, as an institution, has not typically received the same level of governmental or industrial funding to acquire lands within its Master Plan area. This is understandable, as Auroville’s purpose is not to function as a conventional economic engine or to participate in the global economy in the traditional sense. Instead, Auroville is dedicated to building an alternative to the prevailing global economic paradigm, operating with limited resources that must be utilised with careful consideration.

While the land of Annapurna Farm may not be within Auroville’s Master Plan area, it is important to consider that this fact alone may not fully justify its allocation to IIT Madras, an institution with a different mandate and not intrinsically aligned with Auroville’s unique socio-economic system. IIT Madras is not expected to develop an alternative economic system in the same way Auroville is.

### Trusteeship of the Land

The land in Auroville has been acquired through the generous donations of individuals who deeply trust in the vision of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, rather than through government grants. It is worth noting that while the Government of India has dedicated substantial resources to land acquisition for various educational institutions across the country, Auroville has historically not received similar support. From this perspective, it seems important to consider the ethical implications of allocating Auroville’s limited land resources to other educational institutions in India.

While the current legal framework for Auroville may permit such an allocation, it could be seen as potentially inconsistent with the sacred trusteeship expected from the Governing Board of Auroville. Auroville’s aim is not to operate as a department of the Government of India, but rather to develop a self-sufficient city where land use primarily supports Auroville’s internal needs and growth. Diverting Auroville’s limited resources for purposes not directly aligned with its core mission may represent a significant challenge to this trusteeship.

### Reimagining the Farms of Auroville

We could consider reimagining Auroville’s farms not merely as places for growing food, but as environments that nurture personal growth and provide spiritual education where individuals can reconnect with their inner selves and with Nature. These spaces could become hubs for developing a new economic paradigm and work culture, much like the inspiring example of Sadhana Forest in Auroville. If we were to establish hostels on these farms, dedicated to an integral education rooted in farm work, I believe thousands of young people from around the world would be drawn here. They wouldn’t come solely to learn organic or other agricultural practices, but also to address mental health challenges and restore their connection with their inner being and with Nature. This seems to be a pressing need for the youth of today, crucial for their psychological and spiritual well-being.

Having conducted training sessions for students at IIT Madras, IIT Palakkad, and IIM Kozhikode, and offered courses aimed at helping young people discover their intrinsic nature and purpose (*swabhava* and *swadharma*), I have gained some insight into the challenges many young people face. In a June 2023 interview with the *Indian Express*, Prof Kamakoti, Director of IIT Madras, discussed the institute’s responses to a series of suicides and the broader mental health crisis growing among its students. Auroville holds a significant treasure of experience and healing environments that could benefit the youth of the world, who are the architects of our future. Our farms, forests, and numerous units offer ideal settings for a uniquely transformative, hands-on integral education. Thousands of young people are already seeking such experiences; they are not primarily looking for formal degrees or certifications, but rather for deeper self-discovery. What we can offer is not spiritual tourism, but genuine spiritual education. In my view, this is Auroville’s true purpose and reason for being.

I sincerely hope that you will consider this message not as a critique or opposition to the valuable works initiated by the Auroville Foundation, but rather as a heartfelt suggestion to explore this situation from a potentially different perspective. I would be grateful to learn your perspective on these concerns.

On another note I am glad to share with you the recently released film *Sri Aurobindo: A Call to New India*, a project where I was actively involved. I hope you find it valuable for the future of India and the world.

With much love and appreciation for your bold leadership,

*Manoj Pavithran*

*(First published as an open letter to the Chairman of the Governing Board on Auronet)*



# Dr Karan Singh to the Aurovilians: trust and go forward

**On 14 August Dr Karan Singh, who has been Chairman of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation for more than 20 years, briefly visited Auroville. The day before, he met with a small group of Auroville residents on the terrace of the bungalow of the Ashok Beach Resort hotel in Pondicherry, during which he agreed to give Auroville Today an interview at his residence in New Delhi on a later date.**

**Auroville Today: Dr Karan Singh, could you tell us about your first contact with Auroville?**

**Dr Karan Singh:** When the conflict between the Sri Aurobindo Society and the Aurovilians started, and there was violence, I raised the matter in the Parliament of India. I have a connection with The Mother who I first met in 1956, and I had been closely following the development of Auroville. When these problems started, I visited Auroville and was welcomed by a handsome young man. That was Frederick. I was informed about the happenings, and I decided to raise the issue in Parliament. That ultimately led to the Government of India promulgating the Auroville Emergency Provisions Ordinance 1980, which was soon afterwards followed by the Auroville Emergency Provisions Act. This Act was passed to take over the management of Auroville in the public interest for a limited period of time. That period was extended to about seven years, as the validity of the Act was challenged in the Supreme Court of India. But the Court upheld the Act. It was followed by the Auroville Foundation Act we have it at present, which was largely drafted by Kireet Joshi. It came into force in 1988. I became its first Chairman and continued to be Chairman for more than 20 years, with a few breaks in which Dr M.S. Swaminathan and Kireet Joshi became chairman.

**You met with some obstructions when you first interacted with the Aurovilians.**

Yes. In the beginning of my first term, there was a lot of resentment against the Governing Board. I had long meetings with delegations of Aurovilians to explain the structure of the Act and what we, as Governing Board, planned to do. It was only much later that the Aurovilians began to realise that the Board provided the much-needed security, for otherwise Auroville would have been lost in the whole ocean that is India.

**How did you feel about interacting with the Aurovilians?**

I noticed right from the beginning that the community was never unanimous on anything – the galaxy, education, the way the Matrimandir had to be built, the idea to request the Government of Tamil Nadu to create a New Town Development Authority for the Auroville area, and so on. The Board met in Auroville twice a year and we would spend one day interacting with Auroville working groups and individuals who presented their views. This was organised by the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly. The next day we would meet with the International Advisory Council and have our own Board meeting. In the evenings, I

would host a dinner for all, including Aurovilians I hadn't yet met. Very often, before the meetings, I would be present at the foundation-stone laying *pooja* of a new public building or inaugurate a building which had just been constructed. Sometimes we had open meetings with the residents.

**What do you consider were the achievements of Auroville in that period?**

The Aurovilians have done three miracles. The first one was to convert that whole wasteland and desert area into an oasis of green. Thousands of trees were planted and monsoon water runoff was checked. The second miracle was the building of the Matrimandir. Here I played a small role. When I came in, I discovered to my horror that the architect, Roger Anger, and the engineer, Piero Cicionesi, were not on talking terms. But this building was to be the Soul of Auroville! I managed to get them together, and I was immensely pleased when, in February 2008, the Matrimandir building was completed. That was a big achievement, done entirely by the residents. I was delighted that day. The third miracle was sociological, the fact that so many people from so many different countries with different religions, different languages, different cultures were able to live together in harmony. Auroville had managed to become a multi-national, multi-linguistic, multi-regional, self-governing autonomous institution.

**Apart from these achievements, you also pushed Auroville to start building the city.**

Yes, but this was not very successful, not even when Governing Board member Shri B.V. Doshi became head of the Auroville Town Development Council. A major issue was the lack of funds. In the years I chaired the Auroville Foundation, it would receive a small sum of some 15-18 crores a year, which was insufficient.

**Your chairmanship was characterised by the fact that you granted autonomy to the residents as much as possible. But some people have argued that you were too lenient.**

I have been very, very careful not to impinge upon the autonomy of the residents. Only in rare cases did we take decisions which bypassed the Residents' Assembly, when we felt that we had no choice but to intervene or when consultation was not required. I have no regrets; I believe that mine was the right position. I did what I thought was correct.

**One of those decisions was to invite to Prime Minister of India to come to Auroville.**



Dr Karan Singh

I invited him to inaugurate Auroville's golden jubilee because I thought that would enhance Auroville's public image. He came, visited Savitri Bhavan, meditated in the Matrimandir and then gave a rousing speech in Bharat Nivas [see *AVToday* #344, March 2018, eds.]. I think that was the acme of my chairmanship. We all hoped that because of this visit, Auroville would become eligible to larger government grants so that the building of the township could begin. But, in fact, it has gone downhill when my last term was over.

**Could you explain?**

When I left, there was a gap, and gaps are never good for these sorts of institutions. Then, a new, highly educated, Secretary was appointed, but she took a very different view of how Auroville needed to develop. The new Governing Board was appointed a few months later, and it followed her views. What we see today is a Board and Secretary acting as if Auroville is a department of the Government of India, ignoring both the Residents' Assembly and the International Advisory Council. This is diametrically opposite to the collaborative model I had followed during my period as Chairman. I also believe that this way of acting is against the very philosophy underlying the Auroville Foundation Act and its principle of recognising the Governing Board, International Advisory Council and Residents' Assembly as 'authorities' of the Foundation.

**The minutes of two recent Governing Board meetings mention that the Board has recommended to the Minister of Education to amend**

**the Auroville Foundation Act. The proposed amendments have not been shared with the community; rumour has it that they do away with the Council and Residents' Assembly and give all powers to the Board and its Secretary.**

I am not aware of this. But it would be sad if this would be enacted.

**This Board and its Secretary have managed to raise large funds for the building of the city's infrastructure.**

That indeed is an achievement. But I have a concern. Building the city is important, but not when it is only done by the Public Works Department. Trying to build Auroville without the cooperation of the Aurovilians is *prima facie* a contradiction which goes against the *raison d'être* of Auroville. Auroville can only be built in collaboration with its residents.

**The newspaper The Hindu carried a small article about your visit in its issue of 22 August, titled "Karan Singh reviews progress of projects." It mentioned that you had commended the progress made, held meetings with a range of stakeholders, gave a message to the youth of Auroville and the bioregion and presented a book to the Auroville Foundation Secretary.**

I saw that newspaper report, somebody had sent it to me. But I was amazed to read it, for it is not true. I did visit Auroville on 14 August as I wished to make a flower offering to Sri Aurobindo at his statue at Savitri Bhavan. Lalit Verma, the man who been instrumental in making this statue and the similar ones which are now at the Parliament House of India and at UNESCO, accompanied me. I was on the point of leaving when I was told that the Secretary was on the way to greet me. I waited, she came, we had a cup of tea, and I left. That was all.

**You are kept informed about the developments in Auroville and the difficulties some Aurovilians are experiencing.**

Yes, and I sometimes wonder how they cope with them. Has Mother left Auroville? Or is Auroville in one of those "Hours of God" as Sri Aurobindo has so eloquently described? I have been told that they keep firm, believing that whatever happens is The Mother's will. I hope they will sustain. As Sri Aurobindo wrote, "Being pure cast aside all fear, for the hour is often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest ... but trust and go forward."

*In conversation with Carel on 30-08-2025*

## HEALING

It would be inappropriate to use the phrase 'healing Auroville' in connection with the Auroville which, Mother said, had the sanction of the Supreme. But it can be applied to the present social situation. For, whatever one's orientation, it is difficult to deny that the last three years have increasingly fractured our community. Residents who have lived together for many years find themselves on different sides, and a great deal of pain and suffering has been inflicted on many Aurovilians by recent policies of the current administration.

Of course, the residents who support those policies will argue that the present administration is engaged precisely in 'healing' Auroville from the abuses which they believe have been committed in the past. But a society where some people feel they cannot talk or want to associate with other residents, where there is pain, feelings of injustice and a profound and pervasive fear of open, free expression for fear of repercussions cannot, by any definition, be called a healthy one.

So can this be changed? Is any kind of healing possible or even desirable unless present conditions change? Here we present some different views on the issue.

Some would argue that healing is not possible without a change in the policies of the present administration which, they feel, is demolishing, brick by brick, what has been created over many years, and everything which they believe Auroville stands for. One cannot compromise with falsehood would be their standpoint. Setting aside the fact that the other orientation makes the same argument – that they are the ones who are protecting the true Auroville – the fact remains that even if present policies change and the government steps back to allow the residents space to work things out themselves, the consequences of the present social disruption may last for very many years.

For it is unrealistic to believe that those Aurovilians who now strongly disagree will suddenly fall into each other's arms if outer circumstances change. In fact, our experience is that it took many years for some of the 'neutrals' to be accepted into the community again after they were perceived not to be aligning themselves with the rest of the community in the struggle against the Sri Aurobindo Society in the late 1970s and early 1980s. And today the tearing of the community fabric is on a far more extensive scale.

In other words, if there is a solution, it doesn't appear likely that it will be on

a level where hardliners in each party sit down to dialogue over a cup of tea. This is because the disagreements we see today regarding, for example, how the city will be manifested and how this relates to the growth of consciousness of the residents have existed almost from the beginning of Auroville and, so far, neither side has managed to convince the other that they hold the sole 'truth'.

The need, then, is to try to contact a space where, in spite of our surface differences, we experience that we are one; where we not only accept, but are able to celebrate, our differences and are able to move forward together because we understand we are part of each other and of a larger whole.

However, such true 'fraternity' or 'brotherhood' in Sri Aurobindo's definition (and he clearly intended these terms to be gender-inclusive) cannot be achieved by external means, for it is based upon a spiritual recognition of our essential oneness. As he put it, "brotherhood exists only in the soul and by the soul; it can exist by nothing else" for "spiritual comradeship... is the expression of an inner realisation of oneness".

Moreover, he pointed out that it is only the individual's realisation of his or her profound oneness with others as expressed in their outer actions which can create a "perfected community".

But until then? Until we have

realised our essential oneness, the "actual human unity" referred to in our Charter, are we condemned to continual conflict? Are there no stepping-stones on the way?

Perhaps, just perhaps, a beginning might be made by cultivating the power of imagination, for when imagination is used consciously, creatively, it can be a means of prefiguring and bringing us closer to achieving something we do not feel fully capable of at the moment.

So what if we practiced seeing others, including our opponents, as part of ourselves, as simply another aspect of our own deeper being, however different the surface manifestation? Even if at first we didn't feel it, if it was only a mental exercise, wouldn't it begin to change things? While our disagreements would not vanish, wouldn't it change the way we hold our differing perspectives and how we relate to those who see things differently?

For example, if it led to the dividing lines between us being drawn less harshly, couldn't it open a door to us reframing some of our past differences regarding, say, the development of the city? To viewing them not so much in terms of zero sum conflicts – where the 'truth' of one perspective must triumph over the 'falsehood' of the other – and more as differences of perception where elements of truth exist on both sides and a

collaborative effort is required to winnow out the grain from the chaff.

Those who believe we are at a decisive moment in the battle between the forces of darkness and light over Auroville's future would probably reject any such reframing. But even if they are correct, if we tried to see others as aspects of ourselves, wouldn't we, at a bare minimum, begin to be more caring of others, more careful of causing hurt, even while we continue to stand for what we believe in?

There may, however, be another more powerful route than imagination to healing ourselves and our community, and that is by opening ourselves to the light of the New World which, according to Mother, is growing more intense and more powerful as it breaks through the crust of the old. For by opening ourselves to this light, we identify, we become part of a wave, a vibration, which is intrinsically healing and integrating.

This isn't a recipe for 'blissing out', for ignoring the very real challenges we are facing today. On the contrary, if we can align ourselves with this light, whatever we decide to do regarding these challenges will have real power because we will be basing our actions upon a much deeper truth than anger, frustration, or the desire for revenge.

*Alan*



# Listening to the Shakti: a path toward Auroville's healing

*In 2018, Amrit published 'Children of Change', a memoir recounting his early life and the difficult years in Auroville when he and others chose not to take sides in the bitter conflict between the Sri Aurobindo Society (SAS) and the then-dominant Auroville collective. Branded as "neutrals", they faced hostility, ostracism, and sustained disrespect. In this conversation, Amrit reflects on how today's challenges mirror those past experiences and whether Auroville is facing the weight of its collective karma. He also proposes a way of healing.*

**Auroville Today:** Amrit, in 2018 we interviewed you about your book and your experience as a "neutral" in Auroville's early conflicts [AVToday #347, June-July 2018]. Recently, you mentioned parallels with the current situation. Could you elaborate?

**Amrit:** Though I initially supported the Auroville community in its conflict with the SAS in the late 1970s and early 1980s, those of us who finally refused to take sides were subjected to many forms of intimidation. Unfortunately, as in most revolutions, the persecuted, in this case the Auroville collective, became the persecutors of fellow Aurovilians. Because of differing viewpoints, we were ostracised, our visas threatened, we were told we did not belong here in Auroville and that we should go. Many former friends and acquaintances turned against us, some attempting to drive us off the roads, others spitting on the ground when meeting us; people were thrown out of work, maintenances cut, mobs were coming to our houses to harass us. This went on for years.

This was pure tribalism. Either you were "in" or you were "out". The dominant group was fanatical, almost theocratic in its mindset. In some cases, I felt people were behaving as if possessed. There was no attempt at mutual understanding, which was going completely against the ideals of Auroville to reach unity and harmony.

When The Mother was confronted with conflicts between people in the Ashram, she stressed the necessity for people to agree. "*You must all agree. That is the only way to do good work.*" And "*For everyone to agree each one must rise to the summit of his consciousness; it is on the heights that harmony is created.*" This is not just moral advice, but a spiritual imperative. True spirituality, by its nature, is inclusive. And yet, in those years, this was totally absent.

Now, looking at our present circumstances, has anything changed? We are once again living in a split community with some people fully collaborating with the decisions and actions taken by the Governing Board and its Secretary, others strongly objecting, and a large group in difficulty because of the loss of maintenances, or the delay of visa recommendations. People who were friends or who were on good terms with each other have cut connections or pass each other with a dead-pan face. It all sounds so familiar – as if the past has been resurrected.

**You've referred to this as an issue of "collective karma". What do you mean?**

In Sri Aurobindo's *The Problem of Rebirth*, he explains that karma extends beyond individual actions and also encompasses family, society, and nations. Collective karma is not just the sum of individual karmas; it has its own evolving force that affects individuals and communities over time.

Sri Aurobindo cites the example of Belgium. Its colonial atrocities in the Congo, especially under King Leopold II in the period 1885-1908, were characterised by extreme violence – millions ultimately died and many mutilated. Six years later, Belgium itself was invaded by Germany during World War I, its people experiencing similar horrors. Collective karma doesn't spare anyone, and even innocent children suffer for the sins of their fathers.

That made me reflect: are the divisions we face today a karmic residue from Auroville's past? Have the past actions of the Auroville collective returned to haunt us?

**Do you see the Government of India's intervention – first through the Auroville Emergency Provisions Act (1980), then the Auroville Foundation Act (1988) – as part of this karma?**

That's my observation. Mother stated clearly: "*To hand over the management of Auroville to any country or any group, however big, is an ABSOLUTE IMPOSSIBILITY.*" And yet, that is what happened.

At the time, it was claimed this was to safeguard Auroville's ideals. Maybe there was some truth in that. But in reality, I believe it was polit-

ically motivated – a way to seize power and expel those who didn't align with the dominant group.

This became obvious to me in late 1982, when several key figures who had led the fight against the Sri Aurobindo Society left Auroville. They issued a statement saying Auroville had "failed" because the Government had allowed the influence of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram to enter Auroville and not purged the "undesirables" – people who didn't agree with them. It was a time when some in Auroville divided people into basically two groups, those who were in "the inner circle of Truth", the "true" Aurovilians as they saw themselves, and the others "in the Falsehood" who should be eliminated.

**Do you feel attitudes have changed since then?**

Sadly, somewhat, but not enough. Some still believe that critics or dissenters should be pushed out, though I feel personally very uncomfortable with asking people to leave Auroville.

The Mother, in a message to Auroville after a devastating cyclone struck on 5 December 1972 [*Sri Aurobindo's Centenary Year and Mahasamadhi Day, eds*] made it clear that the cyclone was a warning from physical nature that those who do not want to change will have to go. The Mother, of course, was able to 'see' to what extent a person belonged in Auroville and could or wanted to change, and her 'seeing' was based on the inner state of the person. But she rarely decided that a person had to leave Auroville.

When someone asked Her if a person should stay or leave, her answer was that it was the Force that would decide. And when the Secretary appointed by Mother for Auroville mentioned the case of an Aurovilian who was on drugs and not working, the Mother asked that if he had not already been told to leave, "Can he be not given another chance?" She was always the Mother solicitous of her children.

I do not think anybody in present day Auroville has that capacity of 'inner seeing'. Those who have chosen to come and live in Auroville often have an inner reason, even if, outwardly, it looks like they are not doing any 'yoga' or have little understanding of Sri Aurobindo's or The Mother's work. They are here for a purpose.

I have never felt that, because people didn't agree with me, they don't belong here – even though I went through that hard period in my life. Luckily, through introspection based on guidance in dreams and inner experiences, I realised that all the conflicts were fundamental reactions of the ego.

For this reason, I felt the necessity to withdraw from all the controversies in Auroville, including the initial conflict with the SAS as indicated by a dream. Sitting in my home, I could see a hostile entity circling the house. Thinking to drive it away, I rushed out to attack it. Because it was a subtle negative force, as soon as I opened the door, it immediately slipped into the house, and it was now inside laughing at me, "You fool, you see what you have done!" And I was now locked out of my own home! I then understood my mistake. If I had remained quietly seated inside and not opened the door, this darkness could never have entered and affected me. Clearly, a reversal of attitude was in order.

The judgments of what is good and bad are only egoistic reactions to things that hurt us, or to things we don't like. We want to change things in a way that we think is the best, but is it the best? What I learned from this was a way to deal with misfortune – to seek a living contact with the inner being. Mother indicated how to do that; other spiritual systems have also helped.

For example, in Buddhism, there are practices for this: one is *metta* or friendliness, goodwill and kindness to all beings. As the Dalai Lama, the very embodiment of *metta*, stated, "My religion is a religion of kindness."

Another is called *satipattana*, which means mindfulness. You become conscious of all the different movements in your being. You start



Amrit

with your physical being and become aware of everything the body is doing – sitting, talking, brushing your teeth, going to the toilet, walking, and so on. You observe yourself. Once you are able to perfect that on the physical level, you go to the vital level, what you're feeling – irritation, happiness, anger, etc. The mental level is the most difficult to observe because thoughts are very subtle. But if you can do this, slowly, slowly, it detaches you from your ego because all these different aspects are, in fact, conditioned parts of your ego. This facilitates the emergence of the inner consciousness. When someone asked the Mother about how to know one has made spiritual progress, Her answer was only one word: "*detachment*".

The Japanese samurai, called the *Yamabushi* or Mountain Warriors, also engaged in a similar practice known as *uketamo*, meaning 'acceptance'. Whatever happens, good or bad, you say, "I accept"; you stop reacting to things to slowly abolish your likes and dislikes. No reaction. The next step is "*arigato*" or "thank you", to express gratitude.

This is quite similar to a response of someone very close to the Mother when asked the secret of her spiritual progress. She answered, "I take everything, good and bad, as a Grace and Blessing from the Mother!" The cultivation of this attitude, through whatever means, is a great aid in the fulfilment of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. For this consciousness enables a greater receptivity to the action of the Divine Shakti, which guides and protects. This the *Yamabushi* well understood; these practices prepare an opening to the universal *pranashakti*, termed '*ki*' in Japan, which is a Conscious Force of action. And to be a true warrior, this receptivity to act according to the *ki* is paramount. All these have been tremendous aids in my own personal development and have helped me to slowly understand what was happening in Auroville.

**You managed to apply this in your daily life?**

Hopefully. I started working again at the Matrimandir Nursery from late 1988. The previous years of being ostracised were, in fact, times of great Grace because they forced me to focus exclusively on my *Sri Vidya Puja* practice, meditation and inner development, resulting in one of the best periods of spiritual experience and growth. And the subsequent responsibility for the organisation of the general access to the Matrimandir, the reception of people and issuing of passes for visits to the Chamber compelled me to interact and speak with people – including with those who had actually caused the most difficulties – and people had to talk to me. I had to be respectful and kind and helpful: I had to be patient, never losing my temper and expressing my point of view without any antagonism or anger at the other's ideas. In fact, it was a blessing that the Mother gave to me because I had to deal with people who were very difficult. This forced me to change my attitudes, and to try to act more from within.

**How would you propose we heal the present divisions in Auroville?**

By trying at least to reduce, modify and soften the ego level and open to the Shakti, the Mother's Force. In Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, aspiration, rejection, and surrender are the three crucial elements for spiritual transformation. Aspiration is the yearning for the Divine, rejection is the conscious effort to eliminate negativity and falsehood, and surrender is the complete offering of oneself to the Divine, one step leading to the other. Some people think that surrender means passivity, giving up. But this is a misunderstanding. Surrender, according to The Mother, means 'surrender to the Shakti'. What is the Shakti? It's an energy. It's the Mother's energy, and if you open to it, you'll experience that it will guide you in what needs to be done. If more and more individuals in Auroville consciously open to the workings of this Force, the more will an harmonious resolution of our difficulties occur. For this, the Mother also emphasises the Sunlit Path, which is essentially similar to *uketamo*.

The Matrimandir is key. Mother called it "the Soul of Auroville"; it is the cohesive force to keep Auroville together without disintegrating and collapsing in spite of our stupidities. She also stated, "*The sooner it is there, the better it will be for everybody.*" This, I believe, means that the structure, and especially the Chamber, has a function in helping to open to the Shakti. For the Matrimandir is truly a symbol of the Yoga, and the Force there has the power to activate this awakening.

The Crystal symbolises the Psychic Transformation – the first of the three transformations mentioned by Sri Aurobindo. The light from the sun on the Crystal represents Sri Aurobindo's descending force of Spiritual Transformation, while the entire Inner Chamber with the Force radiating out to the meditation petals and especially the gardens stand for the Supramental Transformation, which in his book, *The Mother*, Sri Aurobindo describes as the fifth aspect of the Mother, the Anandamayi, who is the Mother of Transformation. For Ananda, Bliss or Joy, has the greatest power of transformation. In my experience, being in the Chamber helps to open to the Mother's Shakti.

**So the Shakti is the key to healing the present divisions?**

Yes, because the Shakti will guide and protect you, will show you what has to be done, and will give you the energy to do what has to be done. It's not a question of going to the Matrimandir for having a nice meditation; it is an attempt to open up to Her, surrender and inwardly listen. But how does this opening occur? The Inner Chamber has the actual power to help effect a very crucial process in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga called the descent of the force through the top of the head, working on all the energy centres in the body. This is indeed both the symbolism and power of the Inner Chamber, to effect not only inner changes, but even to alter external circumstances. And you will be surprised to see what can be done if you rely on the Shakti.

The willingness to work together and to open to the action of the Shakti in gratitude and joy are fundamental to the goodwill that the Mother regards as the essential attitude for a true Aurovilian. And this, I believe, will heal the present divisions. According to the Mother's advice to Piero when there were difficulties in Auroville:

*"Each one has good reasons to support his own opinion, and I am no expert to judge between them. But from the spiritual point of view, I know that with true goodwill all opinions can be harmonized in a more comprehensive and truer solution. This is what I expect from the workers of Auroville. Not that some give way to others, but that on the contrary all should combine their efforts to achieve a more comprehensive and perfect result. The ideal of Auroville demands this progress – don't you want to make it?"*

This admonition is as valid today as it was in 1971.

*In conversation with Carel*



# A path toward healing and reform

*Chali reflects on the fractures within Auroville and on the possibilities of restoration.*

**AVToday:** *The decisions of the Auroville Foundation's Governing Board and Secretary have not only affected many Aurovilians but also you personally when the Auroville Police filed a First Information Report (FIR) against you and others. What exactly happened?*

**Chali:** The matter is still pending investigation by the police so I won't go into too much detail. Basically, in 2022, the Auroville Foundation Office filed a police complaint against me and five others, supposedly for refusing to vacate the Working Committee office and hand over access to the computer/email passwords. The main issue, though, was a dispute over who the legitimate members of the Working Committee were. An RAD (Residents' Assembly Decision-making process) was called by residents in May of 2022 to confirm the membership of the Working Committee. The result of the RAD was that residents overwhelmingly voted to dismiss four members and reconfirm three of us. In the middle of the RAD, four members tried to remove three of us as members, which we considered unjustified and even illegal. The Secretary supported the decision of the four and escalated the situation by calling the police in an attempt to take over the office. Many residents were there in the Town Hall to show their objection to the attempted takeover.

The charges listed in the FIR were criminal ones: criminal trespass, trespass with intent to harm, inciting a riot, obstructing a civil servant, and several cybercrimes. I wasn't even in India at the time, but my name was included on the grounds that I was "instigating (these actions) from abroad". Even though we didn't break any laws so the charges are false and were clearly made to scare and intimidate us, we had to go to the courts to avoid possibly getting arrested. We were granted anticipatory bail, which is a relief, but we are all in limbo in a way while we wait for the process with the police and the court to be finished. We are sure they will see the lack of truth in the FIR and dismiss the charges, but it takes time. The question of who the legitimate Working Committee members are is still pending in separate cases at the Madras High Court.

**Why was this episode so particularly painful for you?**

The police complaint was signed by Mr Srinivasamurthy, the then Under Secretary of Auroville, someone we had interacted and worked with for decades, and considered a friend. Although I was deeply shocked, I could also understand, on some level, that he was following orders from the Secretary, his superior, and felt he had no choice. But what really hurt was that even afterward, no personal message came – nothing to acknowledge the long relationship we had and the impact this would have on me and possibly my life in Auroville. It took me over two years to be able to speak to him again.

**The group you are a member of, known as the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly, has been very active in objecting to or opposing some of the decisions of the Governing Board and of the committees it has formed or approved. What is your stand?**

In essence, it has to do with the interpretation of the Auroville Foundation Act and the Auroville Foundation Rules. We are defending the spirit of Auroville and the voice of the residents, the people who have dedicated their lives to and built Auroville.

Our role in the current situation is a bit different than it was. One of the main tasks we carry out is to make sure that the community and, at times,

the wider Auroville family, is informed of the actions and decisions of the Governing Board, the Secretary, and their appointed committees, particularly those which we believe are violating the spirit of Auroville as well as the letter and spirit of the Auroville Foundation Act, or which are propagating false narratives. We also make sure to systematically put on record objections to many of the decisions made by the Governing Board, the Foundation Office, and its appointees, even if these get no response, as well as our repeated call for true collaboration with the Residents' Assembly and its appointed bodies. Another role we play is advising and supporting people who are negatively impacted by their administrative decisions. A third is taking legal action when we believe it is needed and supporting other Aurovilians in doing so. We inform the community about our work regularly.

**Auroville Today has often published summaries of your reports in its News in Brief section. Does your reporting have any impact on the Governing Board and its committees?**

Unfortunately, no. The Board ignores us, bypasses the Residents' Assembly and largely ignores the International Advisory Council, which has not met with the Governing Board since last year. Even the minutes of the meetings of the Governing Board are not published or are published very late. Most of the time in the last few years, these minutes have only been obtained through RTI (Right to Information) requests. The Board and its committees have this in common, as well as the pattern of making decisions without any consultation with the wider body of residents or taking any advice from the International Advisory Council. There is no real collaboration at all, even though they pay lip service to that word.

**Have you and your fellow Working Committee members ever discussed if some kind of healing would be possible?**

Yes. But we need to make a distinction between the Governing Board and its Secretary, who are not interested in real dialogue, and the Aurovilians who are working for them. A healing with the Secretary and Board doesn't seem likely and I don't believe they are interested in that. A healing with the Aurovilians might be possible. But one of the deepest wounds that has been inflicted is the loss of trust, and any healing, even if well-intended and sincere, will take time – it's definitely not going to happen overnight. The healing possibilities will depend on what the person has been doing in these years, and for what reasons.

**How would you approach healing with Aurovilians?**

Speaking personally, if I see a genuine acknowledgement of responsibility, some expression of remorse, I can forgive. Not forget, necessarily, but at least forgive. There doesn't have to be an abject apology but at least some kind of statement that things could have been done differently and that maybe things went too far. That was what Mr Srinivasamurthy did after he retired from the Foundation Office and the Civil Service: he published a public apology in the *News and Notes*. That, for me, opened the doors once again. Of course, by then he had gone through his own hardships with the Foundation Office, which ended with him being suspended three months before his retirement, for what were probably fabricated reasons. This reinforced what I've often seen with this and other tyrants and their regimes: people think they are safe because they are in a certain position,

but in the end, nobody is safe and everybody is disposable. Mr Srinivasamurthy and I met by chance last year at the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture and I could express how hurt I had been, but that his public apology had opened the door that allowed me to take a step towards healing my friendship with him. He was very touched, and so was his wife. That helped me to put this issue to rest. He had taken the step of taking responsibility, acknowledging the hurt he had caused and apologising for this.

**Did this experience help you in conceiving how a general healing might be possible?**

I came to realise that there are different 'categories'. Some people have wholeheartedly embraced and initiated destructive and divisive actions, often done with impunity, that have caused real difficulties on many levels to their fellow residents, and that have violated the spirit and intent of Auroville. There are others who have used their position for personal financial gain or for other self-interest. There are those who want to feel important and have control and power, either because they think that they're better and can do better than anybody else, or because they feel that they have been slighted and marginalised before. There are those who sincerely believe that they are working for the realisation of The Mother's ideals, some to an extent which, for me, borders on 'religious fanaticism', which justifies to them the hurt they are causing fellow Aurovilians. They believe that the end justifies the means, forgetting that how we get to our goal is just as important as getting there, particularly in this yoga and in Auroville. Lastly, there are people who have a skeleton in their closet, who have something to hide, which they are afraid will come out if they don't do what they are being told to do, or which is known to those in power who use this to force them to do their bidding or stay silent.

**So how do you propose to deal with all these different categories?**

There are people who propose that we forget about the past and just move on. I do not share that. We can't just pretend that the last four years didn't happen. We can't ignore the willful destruction and hurt that has been caused. So yes, we have to move on at some point, but not without some kind of process.

I feel that there are a small number of people who should be made to leave Auroville for some time or permanently, those who have crossed acceptable limits and have been actively involved in the attack on the body and spirit of Auroville, and those who have engaged in corruption or violence.

There are others who I think should not be asked to leave but would need to be restricted from holding any position of responsibility in Auroville's governance or management structure for a certain period of time.

**So you are not in favour of a Truth and Reconciliation process as was done in South Africa?**

The truth first has to be there. Reconciliation can start after there's been some acknowledgement of responsibility and perhaps an expression of remorse or regret. I don't think any existing process would be appropriate to transplant as a whole but I'm sure something that synthesises aspects of different 'healing processes' could be found or developed specifically for Auroville. And it's likely that different processes will be needed for different people rather than expecting that one process can be applied to the whole community with all its diversity.



Chali

**Some people feel protected because they are functioning under the umbrella of the Governing Board and its Secretary. What is your take on this?**

They may be less safe than they think. We have seen time and again that once people aren't considered useful anymore they are discarded or sidelined by the Secretary and/or the Governing Board. And on another level, I do believe in karma and the Governing Board and the Secretary can't protect anyone from that.

**Apart from addressing wrongdoings of the past, healing also implies looking at the future. You yourself have on quite a few occasions acknowledged that Auroville has made mistakes, that we were stuck on some levels and areas. How do you see that we can evolve?**

An American friend recently shared with me a one-page manifesto published in the *New York Times*, put together by a large number of US citizens. It outlined the values and principles they stand for. I think something similar might be very useful in Auroville's present conditions, to renew our commitment to the Charter, the Dream and the core values and principles that are given to us and that we have committed to by coming to Auroville and dedicating our lives to it and to Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

As far as moving forward in the day-to-day work of building Auroville and developing the different sectors of society, one idea is to invite qualified, independent outside researchers and facilitators to help us go further in the many areas of Auroville. I'm talking about specialists who would work with focus teams consisting of Aurovilians and outsiders on specific issues of Auroville, and come up with proposals for progress. In late 2023, Prof Raag Yadava published a 900-page (including annexures) framework study on governance, in which he gave his in-depth views on more than 14 areas of Auroville [see *AVToday* # 411, October 2023]. I'm not proposing that they engage in more studies, since there have already been so many, but that each research team could take those studies as a basis, sift through them and distill what is useful for taking the next step, taking the present situation into account but using past experience and learning as a springboard. I've spoken to Prof Yadava. He's willing to help. I believe this work could help revive Auroville's community spirit and accelerate Auroville's growth and progress on all levels, not only in the area of physical development.

*In conversation with Carel*

# The Heartweaving experiment

*Heartweaving is quietly bringing together Aurovilians with different perspectives to manifest possible ways forward through sustained inner work.*

**Auroville Today:** *What is Heartweaving and where did it come from?*

**Deven:** In 2022 the International Advisory Council (IAC) chairperson, Dena Merriam, invited Raghu Ananthanarayanan to provide a perspective on the conflict in Auroville. This proposal was also approved by the Governing Board (GB) and the Auroville Foundation Office (AVFO). Raghu called me to assist him in speaking to Aurovilians who held different perspectives, and I connected him to almost 40 individuals with whom he had one-to-one conversations. He also met with working groups from both sides of the spectrum.

Raghu has decades of experience in applying yogic principles in organisational and social development. On the basis of his first-level landscape study of the conflict in Auroville, he made a presentation

of his findings and some ideas about the way forward to the Governing Board, the International Advisory Council and the Auroville Foundation Office and, later, through open sessions for Auroville residents and also a wider community through online participation. [A recording of Raghu's presentation can be viewed at [bit.ly/heartweaving](https://bit.ly/heartweaving)]

One thing he discovered and liked very much was the 'dreamweaving' experiment, which brought together architects in Auroville to work towards a collaborative outcome for the Crown Road. But he felt there was also a need for what he termed 'heartweaving', where people with different perspectives would come together and, through sustained inner work, drop their resistances so that they could work together and manifest things harmoniously.

Therefore, an open invitation was extended for people to come together for a period of one year to attend a couple of workshops and to participate in regular group practices for heartweaving. About 25 people signed up and the experiment began in early 2023.

**Did the people who signed up represent different perspectives?**

Yes, they included people from different sides, from what could be termed opposite ends of the spectrum, as well as some who did not really identify with either side.

**What practices did Raghu introduce in the workshops?**

While the term 'heartweaving' is new, the process he uses is something he has been working on for several decades with groups

*continued on page 7*



continued from page 6

and with organisations in order to improve their functioning and collaboration. He has taken core yogic principles and synthesised them with process work and some western psychological principles, like the archetype and shadow concepts of Carl Jung. The particular framework he used with us initially was based upon the allegory of ‘Samudra Manthan’ (churning of the ocean) between the ‘Devas and Asuras’ (forces of Light and Darkness) aiming for ‘Amrita’ (the nectar of immortality). Through theatre-based practices, we physically experienced the difference between fighting a tug of war and a Samudra Manthan in which we learn to coordinate towards achieving a common goal. [See box for one participant’s summary of this experience].

#### Can you share a bit more about other practices?

Sure. At one point he took some stories (“Pralhada and Hiranyakashyapu”, “Robin Hood”, etc.) and used certain characters to represent universal archetypes or forces, like that of the ‘judge’ who believes only he is right and you are wrong, or the ‘victim’ who overlooks his role in the conflict and blames the other. As a group, we acted out a story twice according to the given script, and then on a third enactment could improvise and have a new outcome, and that’s when we could see magical possibilities emerge. When we operate from the space of a Saakshi (a Witness attitude) then a narrow judgement can be transformed into inclusive wisdom, a victim can be transformed into a healer and so on.

At another point he took the film “12 Angry Men” which we saw together as a group. We paused in between various scenes to enact theatre-based reflective practices to get an experiential understanding of the various archetypes. Personally, what I learnt from this exercise was how some ‘loud voices’ can dominate and give colour to narratives which would neither be true nor in the best interest of the collective, and how a ‘gentle voice’ with deeper truth and inner strength can guide the collective into taking a more conscious decision. So the kind of space we are holding in heartweaving is a space for deep transformation within ourselves and with each other.

At the base of all the processes and tools Raghu shared with us are yogic principles derived from the *Yogasutra* and *Mahabharata*.

#### Why did Raghu use the Mahabharata story for his definition of these archetypes, rather than what has been written by Sri Aurobindo or Mother? And how well do you think it fits with their teachings?

The wisdom in the *Mahabharata* is timeless. It highlights the importance and nuances of living a life rooted in *dharma* and Sri Aurobindo has given such a wide and deep meaning of this almost untranslatable Sanskrit word. Raghu feels that the archetypal terms he is using are universal and could be applied in any context.

Also, his experience has been that sometimes in communities, people used their own ‘special’ language as a way of winning arguments and avoiding addressing their shadows. This is why during the workshops he would tell us that if we refer to words from Sri Aurobindo or The Mother, we should also explain how we have understood them and what it evokes in us, so that we can avoid using the subjective understanding of their words as an absolute dogma.

#### The group has been working together now for almost three years. What progress do you feel you have been making? And has it had an impact upon the larger community?

It is difficult to measure the progress, but I can certainly say that the trust and bond between the people who are practicing together has grown stronger, and we have succeeded in creating a space where differing perspectives can be expressed so that we can work upon them with a harmonious collective aspiration.

As to the impact of our work upon the larger community, we try to carry what we have learned into our life and interactions with people and groups we are involved with in Auroville, but not in any missionary sense.

#### I understand why you want as a group to keep a low profile, but have you ever felt because your work is so important that you need to be more proactive, to engage with those people who are in power at present who would not join the group on their own?

This keeps happening organically. Sometimes when situations – like the current decision to convert a farm into a technology campus – arise, people bring their recommendations for actions to the group and members provide feedback and suggestions. Wherever there is resonance, people take actions either as individuals or in small groups as residents (but not with the label of a heartweaver) and then keep bringing their learnings, challenges and reflections from the action back into the heartweaving group for feedback and support.

It has been decided from the very beginning that, as an amorphous heartweaving group, we don’t take any sides, and our communication from the administrative team is limited to invitations and updates for heartweaving workshops, practice groups, etc. This way we are able to hold space for learning and transformation for people having diverse perspectives in a manner that is authentic, organic and based on trust. We are very open for new members to join this experiment.

#### Some people feel this is not the time to be talking with those in the other camp, not the time for healing and resolution because so much damage has been done, and this can only happen if those responsible have shown remorse and apologised for their actions. How do you feel about this?

If someone feels that refusing to talk to certain people is their way, then we respect that. Equally, we support those who feel that they can engage with the people from different standpoints with an intention to understand each other better and heal the wounds of the past.

Personally, I am deeply influenced by historical stories of radical transformation in the lives of Angulimala and Ratnakar when they met the Buddha and Narada respectively. In both, there was such a deep transformation from them cruelly killing people and robbing them to becoming an *arahant* serving people with compassion, or becoming the sage Valimiki who gave us the epic Ramayana. I believe that no matter what kind of forces are using a person, the potential for transformation is there in everyone. The question is, how do we create the right conditions for such kinds of healing and transformation?

Even in situations when one feels absolutely sure that one is on the side of *dharma* and eliminating the other who is on the side of *adharma* is the only answer, what are the qualities of the one who fights for *dharma*? In the *Mahabharata*, when all possible ways of peaceful resolution were extinguished and a war was the only option, through the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna to fight from a certain inner poise of being, a *sthitaprajnya* (rooted in steadfast wisdom) which requires a great deal of *chitta-shuddhi* (inner purification).

Do we need to repeat the mistakes of the past that lead to more violence and destruction? How committed are we to our own inner-transformation instead of pointing fingers at others? How sure are we that we are on the side of *dharma* when we think the other is on the side of *adharma*?



Deven

wetting its feathers and then shaking them over the flames to release tiny droplets of water. Eventually, Rama Setu bridge did get built and the forest fire did get extinguished, and it all happened due to a sincere aspiration that was answered by the Divine Grace.

I am absolutely optimistic about the future of Auroville because Mother has said it is the Divine’s project and it will manifest, in spite of us! How much of it happens in our lifetime, who knows? This is dependent upon how well the instruments here allow the Divine Grace to work through them, so we cannot put a timeline on it. We can just do our bit with sincerity and truthfulness.

#### What has been your biggest learning from participating in the heartweaving process?

I think for me the biggest learning is becoming more aware of how these different archetypal forces flow through me, of the need to dissolve my own biases and judgements, to keep uncovering within myself one layer after another, and to realise that all of us are a work in progress, souls in evolution.

While I still hear some people in Auroville say that there is no point in talking to those who have a “contrary perspective”, when I see in heartweaving that people holding diverse perspectives and sometimes even opposite standpoints are able to see each other beyond their differences, I understand that transformation is a possibility; and that, despite holding opposite views, there is a meeting point in the psychic.

This realisation and experience have been very inspiring.

From an interview by Alan



Samudra Manthan: Churning the ocean to obtain the nectar of immortality

In my experience, the heartweaving framework, experiential tools and reflective practices offered by Raghu have helped us to see more clearly that we are all a play of the larger forces. They help us to recognise which forces or archetypes, in the given moment, are playing through us. They help us transform the fighting instincts and surmount our weaknesses and ignorance, so we can be closer to being the “willing servitors of the Divine Consciousness”, which is at the core of Auroville’s Charter and our purpose for living here in this emerging “city at the service of Truth”.

#### How have the IAC and the Foundation authorities responded to your work?

Last year in February, when we had a meeting scheduled with Dena Merriam, we were wondering what to say. We felt we had put so much effort into our work but the larger conflict was still going on, so what had we achieved? But when we shared with her what we were doing, she was very happy and said: don’t worry, the fact that so many of you continue to dialogue with each other despite your differences is a great achievement, and it will have its ripple effect. Around 20 of us also met Dr Jayanti Ravi to share updates and reflections. She appreciated our work and was supportive of what we were doing.

#### The Foundation supported Raghu coming in and was paying his travel and accommodation expenses. This makes some people feel that he may be biased toward the Foundation in his approach to the conflict.

Initially there was quite a strong feeling about this, and many people told me not to get involved as his findings would be biased or get misused. I went with the inner guidance I was receiving through my concentration in the Matrimandir and took a leap of faith because I felt we really needed a space where people from different viewpoints could listen to each other, and I believed it was worth trying it out with Raghu. Since then, our confidence in Raghu and gratitude for his offerings has kept growing, and even some of those who initially doubted him and were also quite vocal about it started to appreciate how his work has helped us.

Last year Raghu said that he had shared the basic training and tools with us and would now only intervene when we called him. We have only called him twice since to give workshops. The rest of the work continues through weekly or monthly practice sessions because the heartweaving participants are finding value in it, and we are able to hold space amongst ourselves. From the beginning of heartweaving in 2023, Naveen, who had worked with Raghu for many years, took the overall

In a recent workshop, the heartweavers chose to explore the polarity of ‘active and passive positions’. We began by together defining ‘active’ and ‘passive’ with regard to how individuals respond to outer circumstances.

**Our definition of an active position:** When a person is identified with a purpose, and is inspired/driven to take action towards achieving results. Persons with active positions have a tendency to protect their ideals, rather than cooperate with people holding different perspectives. They sometimes tend to see the spiritual shine in themselves and deny it in others.

**Our definition of a passive position:** When a person doesn’t want to be involved in a confrontation of interests or fight to protect his or her point of view. He/she is likely to accept any result, or disagree in silence, and not engage in over-dispute as she/he doesn’t see a reason or meaning to participate in a game of confrontation of viewpoints. This can sometimes encourage habits of spiritual bypassing, eg “Leave everything to Mother; we don’t need to do anything.”

After shared reflections on the positive and negative aspects of both positions, to explore polarity the group physically recreated the Samudra Manthan (churning the ocean) scene. There were:

- two opposing parties (five people on each side);
- the mountain (three people standing close to each other) to transform pulls of opposite parties into rotation;
- the snake (the long, strong rope), which symbolizes our human connections.

#### The learnings

- Just pulling the rope towards ourselves is a non-productive activity, a waste of energy, and it will create even more disagreements and confrontations.
- Our values, which are in the centre (mountain), are going to suffer and become compromised if work is not coordinated.
- Work becomes compromised and feels shaky if the centre (values) is not stable.
- We will either create a deadlock if the forces are in balance, or suppression of opposition if one side is stronger at the time. In both cases the aim will not be achieved.
- Both sides are right. Or let’s say there are no wrong sides.

#### The group’s observations for shifting from non-constructive to positive engagement:

1. The need to find or remind ourselves of our common purpose: What is our aim? What is the result we want? What are we fighting for? (Auroville Dream and Charter).
2. A tool (medium of forces) needs to be created and used to transform the pull of opposite forces into useful work (human relationships, goodwill, love).
3. This tool doesn’t have endless strength and needs to be used consciously to not be broken.
4. A stable base is needed upon which the process can take place and create results of work (our Auroville Values).
5. Coordination (to give and to take) is the key to productive actions. Like a breath – living relation of breath in and breath out. It can be achieved only through deep listening to each other, feeling and recognising each other.

Alexey



# Enlarging Auroville to the world

*In October 2024 we interviewed Dan Capdeville who launched the “Seeking Our Inner Being” project in January of that year. Now, one and a half years later, he has decided to formally close it down. What was the purpose of the project, what did it achieve, why is it being terminated, and what are the next steps envisaged by Dan and his partner, Svenja, who participated in the running of the project?*

**Auroville Today:** What was the objective of the “Seeking Our Inner Being” project?

**Dan:** Our initial aim was to help people explore and express their experiences of their inner being as a means of strengthening human unity, of going beyond our differences and finding new solutions to our present challenges. For if we can relate to each other from this inner place, then we can be together in a different way and create something truly different in Auroville. This is why the main aim of this project was to bring spirituality to the core of our lives here. If all of us decided to get into contact with the inner being, I am sure that Auroville would be a very different place, filled with love and care for one another. For it's not a matter of improving the old world but of discovering a completely new one, and this can only happen with a shift in consciousness through the connection to one's inner, deeper being.

Another objective was to make discussion of this topic more acceptable, more a part of our communal lives, for we see that when we are talking about the inner being, a particular mindset or heart-set is naturally put in place – we bring it forward.

**How would you summarise the most important outcomes of the project?**

**Dan:** The project involved Aurovilians from many different backgrounds and nationalities. We did over 50 interviews where people spoke of exploring and experiencing their inner guidance, and there were also almost 30 group discussions in the languages of the participants on the theme of organising Auroville from a psychic perspective. Some of these discussions were with groups consisting only of women or of youth.

**Svenja:** When the interview with Bhagwandas came out as a podcast, a few of the French at the French Pavilion came together to listen to it and started discussing it. And that gave birth to other meetings in the Tibetan Pavilion and the French Pavilion. These were deliberately not recorded. However, anybody was welcome to attend these meetings and quite a few people came to reflect upon the topic of the inner being.

**Dan:** In this way, as well as through making all the interviews available on YouTube [<https://www.youtube.com/@TheInnerBeingProject>] I think we succeeded in involving many people in speaking about this topic and making it more a part of our public discourse. The one-on-one interviews also provided many insights into how people experienced their inner being. These included a sense of increased aliveness, of peace, joy, faith, effortless flow, empathy and aspiration; of guidance shaping the course of their lives; of clarity and intuition as a guiding compass; and a profound sense of purpose, meaning and fulfillment in their lives.

They also spoke of the challenges of keeping contact with their inner being. These included inflation of the ego arising from spiritual experiences, the difficulty of embracing vulnerability and letting go of control, and the influence of ingrained belief systems and the social environment.

The discussions on organisation from a psychic perspective were held with eight different nationalities in their native languages (Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Korean, Spanish and Tamil). While the youth and women's groups definitely brought their unique angle to every topic, one commonality which emerged from all the groups was that they all shared this fundamental need to feel safe, acknowledged for who they are as individuals, and heard in any group dynamic. What also emerged is that there is something universal in our ability to access psychic qualities like intuition, peace, and compassion. It looks like we are all wired with the same inner capacities.

Another commonly held perception in the groups was the need to make the shift from the ‘me versus you’ way of thinking and behaving toward

something more inclusive and collective. And when we asked what we should do in order to make things happen in a better way here, it seemed that all groups felt that an inner work needs to be done, that an inner clearing and cleaning needs to take place, but oriented towards love and compassion for the other, rather than to selfish fulfillment, as is too often the case. Like all participants, we do believe that the next step of evolution for humanity will necessarily be the collective.

The discussions had this lovely quality of being both thoughtful and humble – people shared their genuine experience and observations without making definitive statements.

All the material which has been documented for this project will be handed over to the Archives because we feel this belongs to Auroville and everybody should have access to it.

**What has been the impact upon you two of being involved in this project?**

**Svenja:** It confirmed for me that when we are able to transcend our mental state, something else like a collective energy emerges.

**Dan:** Since childhood I have had this quest to discover my inner being, but listening to people speak about their inner being has helped it become more tangible for me. Now it gives sense to everything I do, and I have faith and trust in its inner guidance.

**As it has been so important for you and so many other people, why are you closing the project? After all, it could be argued that at such a difficult time in Auroville's history, it is particularly important that the community focusses more upon this topic.**

**Dan:** We are closing this project as it has been run so far in Auroville and expanding it to include the larger world. By this, I mean that now we will continue the exploration of the inner being with people and communities outside Auroville. This is because we feel that the concept of The Dream, the inner being and even what it means to be a true Aurovillian, cannot be limited to a given place. Countless people and groups worldwide are working towards a shift in consciousness, collaborating to create a new paradigm, and they could also be called true Aurovilians, even though they might never have heard about Auroville.

**So this new project would be a first step in redefining Auroville as not simply a small place in South India but also as something which exists as a vibration, a perspective, elsewhere in the world.**

**Svenja:** The expansion of the project has already begun organically because the last interviews we conducted were with one Korean and two Russian communities outside Auroville and with other individuals who are not Aurovilians. We were asking for their connection to The Dream, which we had translated into different languages for this purpose. A page on our website was created where people from all over the world could share with us their understanding and experiences of how the Dream of the Mother could indeed apply to any place in the world, irrespective of the outer circumstances.

**Dan:** The second reason we are closing the project in Auroville is because of everything that is happening in Auroville at present. It has become discouraging to fundraise because of the bureaucratic complications. Also, we feel that the project is clearly of a spiritual nature, but the authorities in Auroville today are giving more importance to administrative structure and rules than to growing organically from an inner guidance. So the climate is not at all conducive to our work.

There is a possibility for people to continue the work here. When we started interviewing in differ-



Dan and Svenja

ent languages, we expanded our team to include interviewers in Italian, French, Russian and Chinese. And when we were out of Auroville recently, this team continued interviewing Aurovilians.

However, we closed the project formally at the end of July. My goal now is to expand Auroville's ideals to the entire world, particularly through this inner quest for our psychic being, and to bridge Auroville with other communities. In return, I hope this new project will ultimately benefit the true Auroville which is already manifesting on a subtle plane. Our spiritual path is enriched through the understanding that, while its essence is universal, it is expressed in a diversity of ways in different individuals and cultures worldwide. Also, putting people and communities with a similar orientation in contact with Auroville may provide us with new ways of dealing with our present challenges.

**Svenja:** Dan has identified Aurovillian resource persons in various languages, so whenever we come across an individual or community outside that is willing to interact with Auroville, we will set up Zoom meetings with Aurovilians who can converse in their own language.

**So, practically, what are your next steps now?**

**Dan:** We will register the inner being project as a non-profit association in the Netherlands to allow us to fundraise for our activities outside Auroville. We plan to temporarily leave Auroville by the end of the year, buy a camper van and then visit other communities for a couple of years, visiting and learning from like-minded individuals and communities, and documenting everything in a blog [<https://innerbeing.world/travel-blog/>] for the reciprocal benefit of Auroville and the world.

**Svenja:** As we planned to begin visiting like-minded communities in southern Spain and southern Italy, we started to communicate with the AVIs in those countries, so one of these communities might be a starting point. And from there word-of-mouth is probably going to lead us to the next one. We are not planning far ahead.

As a trained therapist, I will also be offering workshops on the theme of exile and grief. Again, this was an organic development with links to the inner being project. It is born out of the fact that Aurovilians who have lived here for many years are leaving because of the present situation. They are having difficulty reintegrating into their own cultures, and there is a lot of grieving because they are having to tear up their roots. The online programme

I have put together will last for 12 sessions over 3 months, and my role will not be so much a therapist as a facilitator to help people to work on issues of exile, grief and nomadism.

This is something I would like to offer free of charge initially to Aurovilians who have left or are thinking about leaving, but as exile and rootlessness is a worldwide phenomenon now, I will also offer it online [<https://h-e-r.world/>] and as shorter workshops in the communities which we visit under the principle of gift economy.

**Dan:** In one sense, exile is a universal phenomenon because many of us are exiled from conscious contact with our inner being. In this sense, this work is very much a continuation of the work we began here. This is why I'm sure we will continue to feel we are in Auroville, even if physically we are located elsewhere.

**Svenja:** We need to emphasise that we are not leaving Auroville for good or in a negative frame of mind. Right now it is just not possible for us to continue the inner being project in the way it seemed to want to go, and other doorways have been opening up with like-minded people and communities. We are simply continuing the same work we started here, but from another space-time.

**How are you going to define ‘like-minded’ communities, because there are so many communities out there with different ways of doing things and different ideals from Auroville.**

**Dan:** Agreed, but there is increasing agreement today that the problems we are facing in the world are not due to outer circumstances but to ourselves, that we are the ones who must change. This perception is reflected in things like the drawing up of Inner Development Goals and the work and orientation of many alternative communities worldwide. The communal environment plays an important part in influencing this work: it can either uplift you or bring you down. We have a couple of friends who are in Findhorn at the moment, and they tell us that this is a place where love is at the base. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Auroville today. I think when we enter a new community, we have the capacity to assess the spirit of the place, to see if we are together on the same plane. In this, we will always try to be guided by our inner navigation, our inner compass.

**Svenja:** What I will miss most when I am away from Auroville is the multicultural aspect, the interaction of people from all horizons and cultures and languages, and the moments when we all come together through this heartfelt energy. This is the beauty of Auroville. I don't think we will find many other places like this, which is why I think we have to target communities with a mixture of nationalities.

**Dan:** The multicultural aspect is an essential part of Auroville, and one which we may not find easily elsewhere. But we feel called to do something, to try to make Auroville the world, or the other way round, and the new scope of our work will be limited by us staying here. The energy, the faith that we are doing the right thing derives from all the work we have been doing with Aurovilians in exploring the inner being. It has helped something grow stronger within us, and now we feel ready to face whatever may happen in the next few years.

**Svenja:** It's just like the way we came to Auroville nine years ago. Everything in France had stopped, there was a big void and we needed to start something else. When we finally decided to go to Auroville, which had been on our minds for some years, everything fell into place very easily. And right now, the same thing is happening. Doors are closing here and opening elsewhere and we are simply following the signs, the inner guidance. How the new project will develop we don't know, but we have profound trust that we will be guided.

*From an interview by Alan*

## EXHIBITION

Auroville has a striking new art gallery – Maji. Located in the compound of Maroma, which is sponsoring the initiative, the first exhibition, ‘Petals’, opened in February 2025 and featured artists from the project's first ceramics residency. The second show, ‘Touching the Sublime’, opened on 14 July, and featured artists from Auroville and Pondicherry. As the curator,



A view of the Maji exhibition room

## Maji gallery

Supriya Menon Meneghetti, put it, “the exhibition brings together diverse artistic voices rooted in sustainability, spiritual inquiry, and cultural harmony”.

The exhibits included Paul Pinthon's original candle sculptures, Kirti Chandak's intimate self-portraits which portray elements of her personal development, as well as pottery by Indrani Singh Cassime. These pieces



Ceramic artwork by Indrani Singh Cassime

were fired in an Anagama kiln, a traditional Japanese wood-fired cave kiln, for around 72 hours, creating something which is strong and deeply textured. In addition, Ranjita Bora exhibited her high-fired stoneware, blending art and function through objects meant for daily use, while Priya Sundaravalli continued her explorations in organic forms in her delicate and instantly recognisable porcelain work.

*Alan*



# 'Capturing Life'



John Mandeem passed away just over a year ago. John was a photographer who worked for many years with the Ashram Press, but he also extensively documented life in Auroville from the

early 1980s, including important stages in the construction of the Matrimandir.

Recently, Centre d'Art staged an exhibition of the photos he took in Auroville between 1980–2020. Titled



'Capturing Life', they showcased his purity of line and composition – for he was a perfectionist – as well as his ability to capture what Henri Cartier-Bresson, one of his inspirations, termed

the “decisive moment”, that instant when everything in a scene momentarily coheres to create something magically memorable.

John’s integrity and his ability to



capture such moments on film make his photos an invaluable archive not only of the physical developments but, above all, of the spirit of those earlier Auroville years.

## PASSINGS

### Ricardo Martinez Delgado



Ricardo Martinez Delgado (New Creation) left his body on 26 July in Paris. He was 71. He will be remembered as a fine healer in kinesiology, joyfully serving the Spirit of Auroville.

Ricardo came to Auroville for the first time in 1984 and wanted to settle here, but life had other plans and he could only come here ‘for good’ in 2019.

Supported and accompanied by his partner Caroline, he spent the last nine months of his life trying several treatments for the cancer which had been diagnosed in 2024. After his most recent treatment in Spain, he was waiting for his health to improve enough to travel back to Auroville as he was still very determined to heal and serve Auroville.

The deterioration of his physical condition was accompanied by a progress in the contact with his inner being; it was uplifting to meet him and feel this immobile Presence. Just as when he would give kinesiology sessions, one could feel a generous stream of light and faithful encouragement flowing from him.

Before he passed on, he expressed gratitude to all who supported him throughout his trying journey: his son Emmanuel who took care of him in Spain and in France, Véronique Jobard who went to Spain to take over when Emmanuel had to leave, and many other friends who showed their care and love in Auroville and in Paris. He also wanted to thank Olivier, an oncologist from Avignon who accepted to help him remotely without knowing him.

Caroline too is very grateful to all who helped her through this challenging time, in particular her son Noé and also Marie from Revelation who showered her with love in the last moments.

Ricardo’s body was cremated on 6 August in Paris at the Père Lachaise cemetery.

### Eugeen Liven d’Abelardo



Conductor and composer Eugeen Liven d’Abelardo passed away in Laren, the Netherlands on 18 August at the age of 75. Along with his impressive musical career, he was also known to be an enjoyer of life. Eugeen and his wife Marijke first visited Auroville in 1999. During their next visit in spring 2000, Nuria invited Eugeen to ‘do something’ with the Auroville Choir, which proved a positive experience for all involved. In January 2001 the couple came to Auroville for a highly fruitful one-and-a-half-year sabbatical. Eugeen again conducted the Auroville Choir and also initiated a new ensemble called Auroville Renaissance Cappella, gave solfège classes, and started a salon de musique every Sunday afternoon in Pitanga where he explained all kinds of western classical music. For Eugeen himself, the sabbatical opened the doors to understanding something of the spiritual background of Auroville, in particular when reading Sri Aurobindo’s and The Mother’s writings on music. Eugeen and Marijke continued returning to Auroville whenever their busy schedule allowed. Eugeen had studied music with a focus on Gregorian chant and orchestral conducting, and served as conductor of the radio orchestra of the Belgian broadcaster BRT and at the Flemish Opera in Ghent. As a specialist in Gregorian chant, he founded and directed three Schola Cantoria. He was also visiting professor Gregorian chant at the KUG University in Graz, Austria, and guest professor at the NTNU University in Trondheim, Norway. Eugeen’s visits to Auroville continued for many years; at each visit he would convene Auroville Renaissance Cappella to perform both in Auroville and several times at the Église Notre-Dame-des-Anges in Pondicherry. In February 2023, for what turned out to be the ensemble’s final performance, Eugeen chose music around the theme of peace. *Requiescat in pace*

### Colleen Pouyet



Colleen, partner of Jean from Two Banyans passed away at Marika home in Samasti, on 26 August.

Colleen was born in Montana, USA, in 1944. She was raised on a large ranch, where besides farming, about 5,000 head of cattle were raised. After working for some years as a high school teacher in the US and in Ghana as part of the Peace Corps, she eventually found her way to Pondicherry in the early 1970s, where she met The Mother and Jean, her husband-to-be of 55 years. Finally, she had reached a place where man strove to create a world “without rivalry and competition”. She was home.

She and Jean first lived in Hope with Vijay, Denis and Boris Corso and worked with Raoul Mercier in Auro Orchard, learning about watershed management, soil health and biodynamic farming. Those years would come to be the spring-board for the next fifty years of environmental restoration to which Colleen and Jean consecrated their lives entirely.

Their daughter AuroAsha was born in 1972.

In 1973, the family moved to Two Banyans with Mother’s blessings to do dryland farming and reforestation on the most degraded parts.

For Colleen, the growth of Consciousness on Earth, our contribution to the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, could only come about with a healthy and flourishing environment. Her conviction that wild, diverse and protected forests were indispensable tools for spiritual growth and the Auroville experiment was unwavering until the very end. Colleen was instrumental in establishing, motivating, and energising the newly formed Forest Group, which led to the creation of the two thousand acres of protected forest we have today.

Colleen was humble, a silent, structural architect of the City the Earth Needs: diligent and brave, she never lost faith in the Mother’s dream,

never questioned the ultimate Victory, and never succumbed to cynicism.

In October 2022, Colleen suffered a stroke and was in a coma for three days. In Marika’s Home she found a peaceful and caring environment, surrounded by kind people for the last two years of her life.

She passed away on 26 August and her body was cremated on 31 August at the Auroville Cremation ground.

### Vijay



Vijay (Vittorio Gresele) passed away on 30 August at his home in Baraka.

He was born in Turin in 1942, and from a young age he desperately sought to discover who he was and the meaning of the world and his own life. He initially sought it in philosophy, psychology, the unrealizable dream of world revolution, in the flower power movement, and so on, until at twenty-two, after wandering widely throughout Europe and the Arab world, he finally met his first teacher, Krishnamurti, and followed him for several years.

In 1967, at the age of twenty-five, he went to live in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, where he met the Mother and practiced Integral Yoga.

In 1969, he moved permanently to Auroville, and, during the first 20 years, having started the Fertile Windmill community, he planted trees, banded and fenced land which was later taken over by Darkali, Revelation, Bliss, Dana, Minati, etc. A few years later he started a business selling healing crystals and stones, called “Memories from the Future of Light”. Aurovilians and guests used to visit his small stone and jewellery shop for many years, getting crystals and healing stones. Many people also remember him as a trusted spiritual friend and teacher, and over the last decades, many visited him to seek his advice and guidance.

Despite his failing eyesight and the fragility of his physical body, which he lovingly referred to as his “old motorbike” which had to be “just

good enough to get the job done,” he worked tirelessly on several books. His works include a book about the healing properties of stones, his “Spiritual Encyclopedia” and his most recently published book, “Wake up! It’s time to start your real life.”

In his profile on Auronet, Vijay writes about himself, but ends with the following:

“But all this is on the surface and not really who I am. This poem gets a bit close to it.”

*This is the first stanza:*

*WHO AM I?*

*Isn't it ever so strange  
that this primal Question, Who Am I  
the most essential of all,  
the only truly real,  
ignored remains by almost all?”*

Vijay’s final message to the community was posted by Arthur on Auronet, “Vijay wishes to convey his sincere thanks to the entire Auroville Community for all the love and support he received over his lifetime. He also expresses his hope that Auroville will prosper and evolve as the City of the Future that Mère envisioned. He sends you all his blessings and infinite love.”

Vijay’s remains were buried at the Auroville burial ground on 1 September.

### Nadine Fabret



Nadine Fabret passed away in France on 7 August 2025 at the age of 59. A valued member of the Sve Dame community and a unique spirit, she could be warmly social yet also deeply comfortable in her own company. She was a strong woman with a big, infectious laugh, which she shared with all who knew her.

Nadine cared passionately about learning. In recent years, she shared her gifts by teaching French at Transition School and lending her support in the school library. She also brought healing and care to the Auroville community through shiatsu sessions and hypnotherapy.

A funeral service to honor her life was held on 14 August in Vidauban, France.



### VIP visits

Lt General Dhiraj Singh, General Officer Commander-in-Chief, Southern Command of the Indian Army, visited Auroville on 17 August and interacted with the Secretary, Auroville Foundation, and other Auroville representatives. According to a report in the Newspaper *The Hindu*, the discussions centred around initiating a comprehensive collaboration programme between Auroville and the Indian army, featuring innovative modules to benefit the youth of Auroville and its bioregion. These include physical education programmes designed to prepare young people for opportunities in the Indian Armed Forces and enhance National Service Scheme initiatives for children and youth in the Auroville community.

On 26 August, Shri Digvijaya Singh, Raya Sabha MP and Chairperson, Parliamentary Standing Committee of Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, made an official visit to Auroville to assess the various development initiatives. The projects reviewed included the Crown Road, the Matrimandir Lake development, and the progress of various educational initiatives of the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research. He also visited Annapurna Farm.

### Save Annapurna Farm petition

A petition calling upon local authorities and decision-makers to save Annapurna Farm from conversion to an IIT campus in an ‘unjust transformation’ had received 13,780 signatures in support by 30 August. The petition is still open for signing at [change.org](https://change.org)

### A4A stepping into its 12th Year

Acres for Auroville reminded purchase lands for Auroville. Its work has resulted in 187.14 missing Master Plan acres to be added to 41 Auroville communities, farms, forest areas, and nature preserves. To receive its Newsletter, visit [www.land.auroville.org](https://www.land.auroville.org).

### Request to stop land exchanges

Through a 12-page letter to the Prime Minister and Minister of Education of India dated 31 July, Shri R Sarvesh Kumar, General Secretary Nammo Peravai, Tamil Nadu, drew attention to large losses suffered by Auroville in recent land exchanges. Stating that the reputation of the Government is suffering because of this, he requested an independent investigation and an immediate pause on all land exchanges in process.

### Discipline lands lost

The Discipline community has lost 2.5 acres of forested land after the AVFO decided not to appeal a court order that awarded the land to private claimants. The land, which has been nurtured by Auroville foresters for over 40 years, was cleared of trees and fenced by private parties on 7 June 2025.

### Legal updates

The Working Committee constituted by the Residents’ Assembly informed the community that the case concerning the Admission and Termination Regulations (published by the Secretary in the *Gazette of India* in January 2024) was heard in the Madras High Court on 31 July, in front of a Divisional (Appeal) Bench. This was the final hearing. At the end of the debate both parties were requested to make written submissions by 8 August. A final verdict is expected in due time.

The case concerning the Working Committee regulations made by the Governing Board, also published in the *Gazette of India* in January 2024 and two other cases concerning the Working Committee are still pending in the Madras High Court.

### Matrimandir progress

The August 2025 Newsletter of the Matrimandir highlights the work done in the Garden of Bliss, where the five bowl-shaped fountains are being illuminated, and the work for manifesting the Garden of Youth is under-

way. Underneath this Garden, a 240 square metre underground room will house garden maintenance. Once built, it will be covered with 75 centimeters of composted soil to allow for plantation.

An electric stair-climbing wheelchair has been donated for the Matrimandir entrance staircase. This chair, and another soon to come which will climb up the curving interior staircase of the Matrimandir, will add a long missing feature to assist those who need this form of support to reach the Inner Chamber.

While new excavation and soil movement for the lake are awaiting permission from the authorities to carry the work forward, work is underway to place a new set of electric cables under the bed of the future lake which will bring in all the electricity from the solar plant, the generators, and the State electricity grid to power the activities of the Matrimandir.

### Road diversion

To enable the development of the Western portion of the Matrimandir Lake the road between the Matrimandir viewing point entrance and Town Hall has been closed from 4 August. Traffic is diverted via the Crown Road in front of Savitri Bhavan, Unity Pavilion, Language Lab, and then via the new road next to the Matrimandir Nursery which has been illuminated with street lights. Once the Darkali bridge work is complete, the Crown will connect all the areas, and the new road next to the Matrimandir Nursery will be closed.

### Master Plan implementation.

L’Avenir d’Auroville, Auroville’s Town Planning Council constituted by the Governing Board, informed the community that it is “taking decisive steps in the implementation of the Auroville Master Plan, which has been extended [by the Governing Board] to 2035 to allow for the complete realisation of the township as originally envisaged”. It has completed the Zonal Development Plans for all four zones, “setting the stage for the more detailed Sector Plans, now under preparation. This is more than just planning on paper. It is the translation of the Galaxy Plan into the tangible blueprint for the city’s growth over the next decade, a leap forward that echoes the bold spirit of both Sri Aurobindo’s vision and India’s tryst with destiny.”

L’Avenir explained that while the Auroville Master Plan provides the vision and the structure and lays out the overall scheme of the city – the four zones (Residential, Cultural, Industrial, and International) surrounding the Matrimandir, the Crown, the Radial and Ring roads, the Green Belt, and the integration of nature and built space – the Zonal Development Plans zoom into the next level of detail and are the framework plans for each zone. They define land use allocation in alignment with the Master Plan, identify detailed road networks and mobility infrastructure, reserve land for public amenities and community services, plan for infrastructure corridors for water, electricity, and communication, integrate green corridors, open spaces, and biodiversity area, while respecting existing settlements and guiding future growth in a coherent way.

The Sector Plans are the finishing details for implementation. Each zone is divided into sectors – smaller planning units that can be developed in phases. Sector Plans will detail block layouts for buildings, public spaces and open areas. They will have phasing strategies to guide what gets built when, ensuring services keep pace with growth. They detail infrastructure, including water supply networks, electrical distribution networks and waste management systems; pedestrian and cycling routes; and ecological integration, with tree planting and water bodies embedded in the design. This layered approach ensures that every road, park, building cluster, and service hub is part of an integrated whole. For more information contact [avenir@auroville.org.in](mailto:avenir@auroville.org.in)

### Auroville Tomorrow

On 20 August, the community was informed through mass bulletin that the last five issues of Auroville Tomorrow, a newsletter published under the Auroville Media Interface of the Auroville Foundation and focusing on Auroville’s life, activities, developments, and present and future projects, are now accessible. Beginning with the Darshan Day issue in April, these editions offer insights and updates on the community’s collective journey. For more information contact [mediainterface-avf@auroville.org.in](mailto:mediainterface-avf@auroville.org.in).

### Dalai Lama and Auroville exhibition

On the occasion of the 90th Birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture presented an exhibition on “Dalai Lama and Auroville – Three Memorable Visits (1973, 1993 & 2009)”.

The exchanges between the community of Auroville and Tibetans have been frequent and regular, starting from Auroville’s inauguration day in 1968, when soil of Tibet was put into the urn by a young Tibetan girl, continuing in 1971, when the Mother took 12 Tibetan children into the Auroville school and in 1973 when the Dalai Lama spent two days in Auroville and Pondicherry (on 17 January, he met the Mother in the Ashram),

In December 1991, the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture became a unit of the Auroville Foundation through a resolution of the Governing Board under Dr Karan Singh and Dr Kapila Vatsyayan, the famous art and Tibetan scholar. In January 1993, His Holiness agreed to be the Patron of the Pavilion. Later in the year, he came to Auroville to lay the Foundation Stone of the Pavilion, and in January 2009 he returned to inaugurate the building.

### Film Premiere: Sri Aurobindo - A Call to New India

The premiere of the 12-minute animation film Sri Aurobindo: A Call to New India, dedicated to sharing Sri Aurobindo’s transformative vision with young people across the world, took place at Cinema Paradiso on 15 August. The film centres on the Five Dreams of Sri Aurobindo – a powerful message he delivered to the nation on the eve of India’s independence, 14 August 1947. The film is a sequel to the previous animated production, Sri Aurobindo: a New Dawn, released on 15 August 2023. Visit: <https://www.anewdawn.in/> for more information.

### Dominique Darr Grant exhibition

The Dominique Darr Grant was launched this year to enable young photographers to exhibit at Centre d’Art. The first such exhibition, with the theme “The Sun, the Moon and the Truth, three things cannot be long hidden”, opened on 15 August and featured the work of six young Aurovilians – Anantini, Simran, Aadi, Balaji, Arati and Bhavyo.

### Audiobook rendition of *The Life Divine*

Prisma announced in its August 2025 Newsletter that in collaboration with many people and with Auroville Radio, it has released an audio version of the first 15 chapters of Book One of Sri Aurobindo’s Magnum Opus *The Life Divine*. The recording has been voiced by Deepti Tewari. This audio project is offered on a gift economy basis. It can be accessed at [www.life-divine-audiobook.co](https://www.life-divine-audiobook.co) as well as through the Prisma Audio Books podcast, available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and other major podcast directories.

PRISMA has also launched SupraText, a powerful new app designed to simplify access to and enrich understanding of Sri Aurobindo’s extensive works. Conceptualised and designed by a group of researchers, SupraText allows for chapter-by-chapter analysis of Sri Aurobindo’s works, such as *The Life Divine* or *Savitri*. The app also allows the user to search for specific terms and displays word clouds

which visualise which other words are connected to the searched term and how frequently they appear. SupraText is envisioned as a precision tool for scholars and authors. Currently, SupraText offers an interface for Book One of *The Life Divine*; the vision is to eventually create interfaces for the entire Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo and to offer mobile access, translations, and improved responsiveness.

The idea for Supra Text was conceived by Dr Frieder Herb, a Swiss-German physicist who wanted such a high-powered tool to facilitate his own research into Sri Aurobindo’s texts.

### Auroville Dog Shelter update


The Auroville Dog Shelter has warned that rabies continues to be present in the Auroville area. Due to budget constraints, it is unable to renew the 1 500 dog and cat vaccinations it did last year and is also forced to halt its successful “1 000-dog-in-a-year” sterilisation programme, which, it warns, will lead to an exponential increase in the number of puppies in the entire area. All pet owners have been urged to contact their veterinarians to get their animals vaccinated with multi-vaccination (and not just rabies protection) in view of the high number of parvovirus cases in the area. For more information visit [www.aurovilledogshelter.com](https://www.aurovilledogshelter.com).

Meanwhile Tine and Arthur, the executives of the Dog Shelter, received news that they have been replaced by new executives by an Office Order from the Auroville Foundation. No explanations have been given. As the Shelter has been running successfully and in full compliance with all rules, laws, and regulations, they have sought clarification from the Auroville Foundation for why they have been removed from office.

### 69th Governing Board meeting further updates

In the last *Auroville Today*, we reported that the 69th Governing Board meeting had taken place and we noted some of the major decisions which had been taken. Further decisions made at this meeting included:

- **Security Infrastructure:** Construction of a dedicated security complex, including a ‘master control room’ in Auroville’s Southern Service Node.
- The GB also approved several **exchanges of highly valuable Auroville land** for scattered parcels of land, many in the Greenbelt and some on the outer ring road outside the master plan, as well as some land in the city area. Affected communities are Eternity, Djaima, Auro Annam, Felicity and some land lying on the Kulalpalayam main road.
- The Board also gave prior approval for the **deployment of 15 members of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)** for a period of five years “to safeguard Auroville’s development zones and uphold law and order.” The CRPF is India’s largest paramilitary force under the Ministry of Home Affairs, typically deployed for internal security, counter insurgency operations, and maintaining law and order in sensitive areas. The deployment of permanent CRPF personnel in Auroville represents a significant escalation in security measures for the township, which has already seen a huge increase in security and surveillance since the takeover began in 2021.
- The GB also approved **new status categories** including ‘Auro Mitra’ and ‘Auro Hiteshi’ for collaborators and well-wishers.
- A **"Free Progress"** school within Auroville under SAIIR.
- **University-level programmes** under the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research, to be established outside the Master Plan.
- **Serviteurs Volontaires housing:** A 100-bed facility for long-term volunteers and newcomers. Subsequently, an application announcement shared by the AVFO ‘ATDC’ on 24th July informed that approval had been given to Jothi Prasad to build a temporary ‘prototype’ building in sector 4 of the residential zone.

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