

Seeking our inner being

In January this year, a project was launched called “Seeking Our Inner Being”. It aimed to gather information on individuals’ connections with their inner being or psychic being, as defined by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. So far, 35 participants have been interviewed on the topic (available on YouTube at <https://innerbeing.world/>). A small team has taken responsibility for organising the project. We spoke to Dan, the initiator, about the larger intention behind the project, and his hopes about how it might develop in the future.

Auroville Today: What was the origin of this project?

Dan: Partly, it was personal. I had been experiencing fear and uncertainty about my visa situation but, at the same time, I had been translating a small book by Loretta called *Finding the Psychic Being* into French. While diving into this for four or five hours a day, at some point I experienced a profound inner peace: there was complete relief from my anxiety. It felt that the pressure, the force of the outer challenge, was evoking something in myself that was completely peaceful. Then I understood there was a kind of inner split within me. The anxiety was related to the human stuff and the stillness, the peace, to something which was not human but divine. And I realized that this other ‘something’ had always been within me, pushing to be expressed, but I had not been capable of identifying what it was, and now I was beginning to understand it better. When I started to discuss this with different people, I discovered that many were experiencing the same thing: that while the turbulence was affecting many people in the community, they were also experiencing something different within themselves. And a sense was emerging that actually the present chaos might be a grace because it forces us to renew ourselves: to transform something we are painfully enduring into something we can invest with psychic qualities. So one of the main purposes of the project was to help people distinguish in themselves what belongs to the human part and what to the divine part. For, ultimately, we are all spiritual seekers with the capacity to understand that there is the human and there is the divine. And, for me, the only purpose of being alive in this human organism is to look for and find the divine, which is omnipresent but veiled in many of us.

This is not something we usually talk about. In fact, I am constantly surprised and shocked that there are so few discussions in Auroville about what we are here for. It’s like we are all living our own spirituality in our own little corner, while outwardly we are arguing and fighting and trying to make things happen on a very human level. So I thought now was an opportune moment to bring our individual experiences of the inner being to the forefront of the collective consciousness. There is also the wider dimension. Mankind as a whole is going through a shift of consciousness, so how is it possible to hasten and to consciously collaborate in making this shift? One of the reasons people in Auroville do not share their inner experiences is because Sri Aurobindo and Mother warned that sharing such experiences could lead to them being diluted or distorted.

Yes, when I started to talk about this project, some people told me that we usually don’t speak about this. However, in his interview Alok Pandey said that while we are not supposed to share our experiences, he thought it would be useful for others to hear about some of his, and that the time has come to document such experiences for the benefit of the entire world. I feel the same. I think that if people talk about their inner experiences, it can help others to recognise that what they are experiencing is a natural process of evolution to another humankind, and this could be a way of inspiring and connecting people. When I started this project, I reached out to a lot of friends to see if they would

be willing to participate, and some people said they were not willing to do so. However, because I had asked them they said this was the first time they’d started to reflect on whether or not they were in contact with their inner being. In other words, asking the question already has a benefit, even if it is not answered. So this is already an outcome.

Were there other similarities that you noted?

There are some similarities, but I think the first outcome is to see that although all spiritual paths are unique, all emanate from the same source, like the rays of the sun. This is the beauty of it: that we all have to find our own way back to the source.

At the moment, many people in the community are very focused on the outer aspect of the turmoil they are experiencing. If this project succeeds in shifting the focus to them exploring their inner beings, could that shift also have a profound impact on outer circumstances?

I am convinced that there is such a thing as a ‘psychic field’, and whenever someone is consciously focusing more on what is happening inside him or herself, they carry a vibration which can be felt and transmitted to others. We are starting to host circles and discussions on this topic, and something happens when a few people purposefully come together around the topic of the psychic being. In the Bible it says “where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them”, and something like this is happening in our gatherings. If people could acknowledge there is a value, a magic, in discussing such matters and we could spend a bit more time in our community on addressing this topic, I think the outcome, both inner and outer, would be amazing. And if all 3,000 of us would decide to explore the inner being, I am sure that Auroville would be a very different place. For it’s not a matter of improving the old world but of discovering a completely new world, and this can only happen with a shift in consciousness through the connection to one’s inner, deeper being. This is why the main aim of this project is to bring back spirituality to the core of our lives here.

Are you envisaging further steps after the interviews?

Yes. We are very much aware of the barrier of language in expressing this inner state and so we are starting to organise small sharing circles in French and in English, and, hopefully, soon in Tamil, Russian and Korean. These are confidential, not recorded, and there is an agreed framework – we only build on what has been said before, we listen deeply and don’t evaluate or reply to what others have expressed – to enable people to share deeply.

We have also launched a discussion on the topic of ‘Organisation from a psychic perspective’. It began with a French group, YouthLink and Tamil groups, and it will also happen with English and a group constituted only of women. The plan is to record the discussions, to extract the key ideas and possible similarities and then make a proposal to the wider community. Also, I would like to create a story of a spiritual seeker who begins from scratch and finally connects with their psychic being. The narrative would be extracted from the experiences shared by the 35 interviewees and then given to a theatre, dance or art therapy group to make an event focussed around the topic. I will approach artistic people to get them to participate and have already booked CRIPA Hall for the event next February. I’m fundraising for this.

This event would be a way of honouring the contributions of the interviewees but, as it will be recorded and filmed, it will also be a way of sharing this topic with the wider world. The interviews are available on YouTube. Additionally we have set up a website where people from all over the world can share with us their understanding and experiences of the inner being, of the higher self or inner guidance. We have contacts in the US, South America and Russia and, of course, in India, with people who are willing to participate. So who knows how it will develop, for the shift of consciousness is happening everywhere, and this project could become a bridge between Auroville and this wider global movement of transformation.

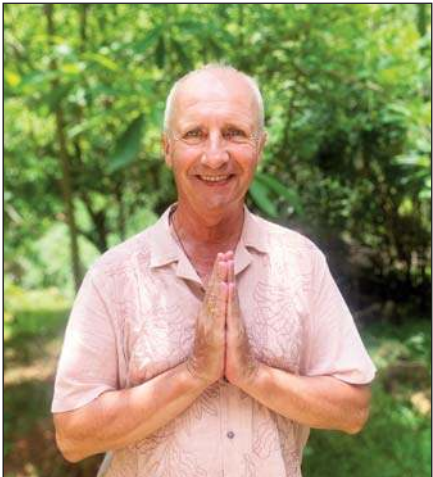
From an interview by Alan

A brief overview of the 35 interviewees is published on page 2.



PAINTING BY PRITI GHOSH

In any case, I think the more we speak about this the better, because my aim is to invite this community to put this topic, the discovery of the inner being, at the core of their lives in Auroville. Otherwise, what is the purpose of being in an intentional spiritual community? Socrates said “Wisdom begins with the definition of terms.” In this context I wonder if your use of the term “inner being” without further defining it may be problematic. Sri Aurobindo points out that the inner being includes all that is subliminal, unrecognized by our waking consciousness, and therefore includes not only the luminous planes above but also the sub-conscious below. Without understanding this, isn’t there a danger that people may fail to discriminate concerning where their inner experiences are coming from?



Dan

It’s a good point. The seeking for an inner being is not necessarily something rewarding at first because it also involves cleansing negative aspects of our being, like anger or fear that may be linked to deep impulses in us. But we are not looking to interpret people’s experiences. We are looking for something more uplifting, something that ultimately makes sense, and brings joy and faith. Moreover, it’s a question of vibration. Everything that is related to the higher aspects of the inner being is associated with particular qualities, energies, like sweetness, compassion, care, and the expansion of human senses and possibilities. These are the predominant qualities which are shared in the experiences of the interviewees.

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Harmony and unity can be established if we all work together for something higher than ourselves

Srimoyi writes in response to Auroville Today's questions

Can you tell us about your life in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram since you joined it in 1969? How were your meetings with The Mother, and what were your most memorable experiences?

My grandparents lived in the Ashram in the 1940s when Sri Aurobindo was still physically present. My two siblings joined the Ashram school with the blessings of The Mother in 1962 and 1964, I finally in 1969. Looking back I realise what a grace it was to have been accepted by Her and allowed into Her fold. It was the most wonderful time of our life when we lived and grew in Their atmosphere. We learnt everything we wanted to, were exposed to the highest form of art and culture, were given a thorough physical education, lived under Their protection and thrived in Their rarefied atmosphere, were exposed to the vast and profound teachings of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. My most memorable experiences, of course, were my meetings with Her. Though I had seen Her from the age of one, I recall most the last meeting with Her on my birthday in August 1972. The feeling of awe as I stood there in her presence unable to move while she was being so sweet wishing me again and again "Bonne Fete... Bonne Annee...". I can still feel Her hand going over my head as I bowed down to Her.

After your graduation from the Ashram school you lived for some time in Mumbai, where you further developed your interest in dance and the performing arts. You then joined Auroville in 1986. What brought you to Auroville?

Auroville was the Mother's creation and therefore very much part of our world as we grew up. In my heart it was always a very special place which interested me very much. I had always planned to be an Aurovilian at one point or another because I believed in it and was deeply inspired by Her dream of Auroville. I was in Mumbai during my early twenties full of energy and enthusiasm to discover myself through my life, my friendships, my artistic interests, the various kinds of work experiences that I collected there. It was a very enjoyable phase of my life.

Many people know you from the various dance and theatre performances you have been engaged in, in particular those based on Sri Aurobindo's works, such as the performances of sections of Sri Aurobindo's poem Savitri in which you played the role of Death and recited large sections of Savitri. What is the impact of such activities on you personally?

The performing arts have always been a challenge as well as an occasion to progress as a human being through interaction with fellow performers. Delivery and interpretation of the art have to be discovered. It is a deep inner process that can only be accessed with sincerity.

Taking part in all these performances is a great joy. I consider myself very fortunate that I am allowed / invited to participate in them. I was interested in the performing arts from school. The education in the Ashram put a lot of emphasis on the arts. In Mumbai I trained under Veenapani Chawla, and learnt Chhau, a martial dance of Mayurbhanj, Odisha. This dance form was used in her production of *Trojan Women* by Euripides and performed in Prithvi Theatre, NCPA and other venues of Mumbai. In Auroville, I have acted in Jill Navarre's productions of *The Legend of Irumbai*, *Nishtha*, the story of Margaret Woodrow Wilson who Sri Aurobindo named Nishtha when she became his disciple, as Ariel in *The Tempest*, as Maria in *As you like it*, as Lady Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, as Dorinne in *Tartuffe* and other productions. With Ellen, I have participated in some one act plays of Chekhov and other comedies by English playwrights. Under Aryamani's direction of Sri Aurobindo's plays, I have acted in *Perseus The Deliverer* as Athene and queen Cassiopeia of Syria, as Hertha in *Eric*, as Mother of Light in *The Triple Soul Forces*, as Death in *Savitri* besides other productions where Sri Aurobindo's text was used. As a dancer, I have performed as Maheshwari, Mother of Might, Sri Krishna, Durga and recently I presented the text of Maheshwari and Mahakali from Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother* in a dance performance. The most



Srimoyi

beautiful and enjoyable works are always Sri Aurobindo's and by far the most inspiring. Learning his lines is an experience of joy and wonder as their beauty, power, meaning reveal themselves to us gradually. They are intimate and personal experiences not easy to talk about. In brief, I simply love taking part in them.

Going to a more mundane level: in daily life you are taking care of the Samasti Guesthouse, you were one of the executives of the Matrimandir, and you were also involved in community activities such as the celebration of Auroville's 50th anniversary and the Water Ceremony. Can you describe what you see as the main focus of your work in Auroville?

In all the work I have done and continue doing in Auroville, I wouldn't call any part of it "mundane". Anything / everything I did has been joyful in spite of all the challenges. One of the most touching experiences for me has been to sweep under the Banyan Tree. I have always offered help wherever I thought I could be useful in Auroville.

The work of running Samasti Guest House came to me at a point when I needed work in Auroville. It was/is a guest house small enough for me to manage while taking care of my kids as a single mother and it gave me enough time later to actively work at Matrimandir for over 15 years, eight years as an executive, organising all that was needed to be done there for visitors reception. I have worked in the Auroville Town Development Council for a short while and for several years as a trustee of Guest House Trust. The last three years were in the Working Committee. I hope to be useful in whatever way possible, big or small, in manifesting the Mother's dream.

The Water Ceremony at the occasion on Auroville's 50th anniversary was a wonderful experience for all of us who participated in and organised it. The idea of bringing water from all over the world was a divine inspiration and in its execution it was a humbling soulful experience to see how everybody from all over the world, including somebody who brought water from the South Pole, participated enthusiastically in the celebration. It was a testimony of water having no boundaries, an element that cannot be contained. It is like the *Chit Shakti*, the force of the Universal Mother that flows into every nook and corner of the universe. Everything around the ceremony was a Divine gift. It was a special moment in the life of Auroville.

On February 15, 2021 you were selected as a member of the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly. About four months afterwards, Dr. Jayanti Ravi joined as Secretary of the Auroville Foundation. Can you reflect on the work of your group before and after the joining of Dr. Ravi?

It is only recently that the term 'Working Committee of the Residents Assembly' has come into use. Even when I was selected I recall it as being called just 'Working Committee'.

As far as I understand the mandate of the Wcom remains the same no matter who the Secretary is. And as a member of the Wcom I was trying to fulfill my role to the best of my ability.

What brought four of the Working Committee members, including yourself, to the decision on April 27, 2022 to dismiss the other three members and replace them with other Aurovilians, and so constituting a Working Committee without the endorsement of the Residents' Assembly? And was this done at the request or instigation of Dr. Ravi?

Whatever happened, happened because all of us as Aurovilians failed to remain centred on the purpose and aim of Auroville and strayed away from the teachings that keep us inspired to keep manifesting the dream. Had we all kept her words in our awareness then perhaps we might have found the strength to overcome the differences, challenges and struggle and found a way to go forward:

As long as you are for some and against others, you are necessarily outside the Truth.

You should constantly keep good will and love in your heart and let them pour out on all with tranquility and equality.

The Mother, 16.12.1966

This was up to us to deal with, as Aurovilians.

It is indeed unfortunate that because of decades of broken trust and broken promises and allowing the situation to deteriorate, that instead of allowing our better selves to take control of it, we could not bring ourselves to resolve it on our own.

Dr. Ravi and the Governing Board recognized the new Working Committee (consisting of the four selected members and the three new ones appointed by the four). Could you reflect on why this was done, and why the Residents' Assembly decisions of 10/05/2022 and 23/08/2022 were not respected by them, and why the members of this Working Committee ignored the Residents' Assembly decision of February 5, 2024 that constituted a new Working Committee?

I cannot speak on behalf of the Secretary or the Governing Board. In my opinion, the Foundation Office along with the Ministry of Education had confidence in us as we fulfilled the role of the Working Committee in the spirit of collaboration respectfully more than the others because none of them would have been happy working with people who had put a court case against the Central Government's administrative office.

As Working Committee members, for the sake of the entire community, it is expected that respectful negotiations are pursued with patience. Especially when we Aurovilians who have been here more years than others have been practicing to imbibe the 12 qualities.

And then, how is it that so many community members had no knowledge of these Residents' Assembly processes? I also consider it a strange question to ask since we were in a situation where one small set of residents is perpetually using lawyers and court orders.

Under normal circumstances, too, it would be difficult to accept such a Residents' Assembly decision when so many were excluded from the process. The Residents' Assembly does not comprise only a small faction of one view.

I have participated in most of them but at one point one begins to wonder why we cannot be a Residents' Assembly that is positive and says "yes let's do it"? Let's move ahead and see how to manifest this wonderful vision of Auroville? What about the adventure Mother called us to?

Can you share your reflections on the work of the Working Committee? Looking back on your experience with this WC what do you think the group achieved and where do you think you have failed, and why?

SPIRITUALITY

The 35 interviews: a brief overview

continued from page 1

The majority of interviewees are Aurovilians, although a few are guests or people connected to Auroville or to this quest for their inner being. While few of the interviewees state they are in contact with their psychic being, many spoke of an inner 'presence' which offers them guidance at crucial times in their lives. This guidance can come through a voice or a feeling in a particular part of the body, which is usually identified as the heart centre. The contact with the inner being is associated with experiencing synchronicities and with particular qualities. These include a sense of deep peace, freedom, joy, sweetness, wideness and harmony, being more 'in the flow', as well as a complete absence of fear or a wish to judge others.



As one of them put it, when their inner being is in front "There is no death, no loss, endless time. And nothing can ever go wrong". There is also the sense, as another put it, of "suddenly putting oneself back into the right place", or of being Mother's "instrument".

Some of the interviewees have had profound, life-changing experiences in their lives. These include being flooded with unconditional love for Mother, travelling outside their body, seeing golden letters in the sky, passing through a door into a world of light, experiencing immortality in the body, and perceiving themselves as an eternal soul after a near-death experience.

Some of the interviewees have no way of knowing when the inner contact will come. Others employ various practices to make contact. These included meditation,

repeating a mantra, prayer, centering themselves in the heart, and reading Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's words.

When asked what they think are the main 'traps' or threats that would interfere with this inner work, the most common is the pressure of outer circumstances and the emotions that arise in dealing with these, for it is generally agreed that the inner work requires both inner and outer peace: as one interviewee put it, "I need to be centred and quiet to receive guidance". Other traps or blocks include vanity and elitism – a feeling of spiritual superiority – always wanting to be in control of the outcome, fear, and a lack of faith.

As to the possible larger impact of this work, as one of them put it, "A movement of consciousness can transform situations and relations".

If you want to participate in this project and/or share your experience, please visit <https://innerbeing.world/> or send an email to innerbeing.auroville@gmail.com.

We managed to get the work going on despite the chaos. We updated the Register of Residents, a long and laborious task undertaken by a large team of Aurovilians, although sharing it with the community is still pending; we have maintained good relationships with Governing Board members and had regular interactions as mandated. Going forward, how everything unfolds remains to be seen. Personally, I would like to see Mother’s vision of the project of Auroville which includes the Matrimandir, the lake, the city, the Greenbelt for agriculture (not just for forest) manifest as per Her will and that we the Aurovilians collaborate with Her in making it happen.

However, looking back, I see that our time, energy, institutional memory and enthusiasm for Auroville could have been better utilised and a lot more.

One persistent complaint is that this Working Committee hardly ever reported about its work, apart from in a few public meetings together with other Governing Board constituted working groups and the Secretary. As far as I remember, this Working Committee did not publish regular reports, nor was there ever any report published in the News and Notes about the meetings of this Working Committee with the Governing Board. Why was there no transparency?

There were a lot of invitations to have interactions but the interactions were not enthusiastic and there is also the fact that people were being asked to boycott these meetings. Besides this, anything and everything we reported was immediately used against us, sometimes resulting in more court cases. Every action we undertook was dissected and hung out for nasty speculation and comments. Eventually, most of our work and responsibilities were being taken over by the Foundation because of the lack of an Aurovilian workforce.

Another complaint is that the Working Committee and/or the Secretary never allowed people to meet with the Governing Board to present their issues. The former Governing Board headed by Dr. Karan Singh would always interact with people, and the Working Committee would then schedule a time for them. Such Board meetings would usually take two days, one for presentations by Auroville working groups and individuals, the second for the meetings of the Board and International Advisory Council. It appears that the agenda of the present one-day meetings of the Board are fixed by the Secretary only. Did this Working Committee support this?

I would like to refresh our memory on how these meetings were conducted in the past decades. All working groups made a report prior to the Governing Board meeting and submitted them to the Working Committee and then met the Governing Board members to present their reports and have an interaction with the International Advisory Council and Governing Board members along with the chairman. We never had such meetings open to all Aurovilians. In fact, the Working Committee rationed out time slots of a maximum of 10 minutes and usually even shorter for such presentations because of the time constraints. I am sure you remember how it was, since one member of the AVtoday team has in the past been a member of many Working Committees.

Can you reflect on the Working Committee’s interaction with the members of the International Advisory Council?

There was good interaction with members who were willing to meet with us. These meetings were in person or online.

During your tenure as Working Committee member, many things have happened which have shaken the community to the core. There was the midnight raid on the Youth Centre; the cutting of maintenances; the dismissal of forest workers; the takeover of the Auroville Archives, the Auroville Media Liaison Service, the Safety and Security Team, the Auroville Radio and the Auroville.org.in email server by the Auroville Foundation; the filing of police complaints by the office of the Foundation against individuals who believed they were the rightful Working Committee members; there were problems of obtaining recommendations for visa; and there was an increased scrutiny of community finances including those of its more than 800 units and activities. At the same time, we have seen the Secretary taking decisions to popularize Auroville by inviting many groups of people from outside Auroville for events, without community participation. Last but not least there is the drive to manifest the Crown, radials and outer ring road as indicated – but not specified – in the Auroville Universal Township Master Plan (Perspective 2025). What has been the position of the Working Committee in all

these events? And would you agree that all this amounts to a Government of India takeover of Auroville

Now we come to the crux of the matter.

“...Many things have happened which have shaken the community to the core...” Is this a subjective view?

Residents have been put through a lot of trauma and stress for having to choose a side or be boycotted. Every topic you have mentioned is contextual and needs an interview separately. The list you have mentioned has a background. The context and story of each issue is known only to those who have lived here for decades and gone through all that we have had to go through. Saying anything here would be over-simplifying. However, it is important to inquire deeper into each topic. For example, to reveal the complaint that was lodged with the police and then ask if it was necessary to do that or not, would be an interesting discussion. When a theft occurs, it is normal to make a police complaint and that’s what was done. Removing official documents from an office and deleting all data from an official computer, appropriating laptops, are serious offenses as per the law and need to be reported. This is what I understand.

In the same way, it is prudent to ask if a security team is qualified to secure/protect Auroville from vices and ensuing repercussions when it announces in writing that they will not report on drugs in Auroville.

Let us talk about the clearing of the Youth Centre. This is a story that goes back to 1996/97 when the Youth Centre was intentionally built on the location earmarked for the Crown road and trees planted all along on it. When objections were raised we were reassured that the trees would be removed when the road comes, the timber used to build the city. In the years that followed, we saw that not only were these promises not kept but this area which was meant to be the city-centre with Matrimandir at its very centre, was being turned into a forest. Then it was turned into an environmental issue, cutting down trees to lay the much needed electrical cable was not allowed, the markings for the Right of Way removed and destroyed, the surveyors chased out... and all this again and again...

There were meetings galore, usually attended by hundreds of forest people and their supporters who booed, hooted and jeered at any attempt to build the city. In 2012, after cyclone Thane had uprooted and felled most of the trees in Auroville, an office order had been issued by the then Secretary of AV Foundation to complete the Right of Way for the infrastructure of the Crown. The Green Group people talked of human unity and dialogue about community consultation, Residents’ Assembly approval and the whole *spiel* that was given to us innumerable times before and continued to be given to us for another decade. We would go home exhausted. I heard somebody once say, and I agree, “We came here for the Mother’s Dream. Why do we have to fight for it now? Isn’t this the Mother’s project?”

In my opinion, these individuals need to be asked, what made them feel they had the right to obstruct what was approved by the Mother for Her project? If they didn’t believe in Her plans why did they continue to live in Auroville which is Her project? Why did they use everything in Auroville, be supported by Auroville which is Her project and yet work against Her plans? Did they ever think that the land they occupied were acquired with donations offered by Mother’s children for manifesting Her Dream? Why did they use the youth? It is very easy to inculcate the youth with an ideology and use them to fight their battle for them. These adults responsible for doing all these things need to answer these questions.

Very soon after her arrival, from July to November 2021, the Secretary had a series of meetings with all those who objected, were against the city, and were occupying large tracts of land as stewards and preventing development of the city for decades. To be fair to her, she tried, though unsuccessfully, to reach out to them to convince them to allow the development of the Crown. The current Governing Board in its first meeting asked that the work of clearing the Crown and related infrastructure be built without further delay. The Secretary then issued an office order to the Auroville Town Development Council and they in turn issued a work order to do the work.

If my memory doesn’t fail me, I think that between 5th and 9th December, the Secretary in consultation with the Youth Centre spokesperson, a representative of the YC, the youngest member of the WC, and other respected members of the community came up with a solution, an agreement was reached that would have taken care of all aspects of the situation and cleared the Crown in the Youth Centre area in collaboration with the youth themselves. An official statement was issued with details of the agreement reached, stamped and signed by the Secretary. But her plan was sabotaged in the implementation stage by adults who came and stopped it repeatedly over two days. Has anyone ever asked these

adults why they sabotaged a plan that would have allowed clearing of the Crown in a peaceful manner?

Then came 9th December and all that came to pass thereafter. It is evident that there was never any intention on the part of the squatters and their supporters to allow the Crown to manifest, at least not in ‘their’ areas.

As for cutting of maintenances of the farmers, no member of the Working Committee agreed to or supported it. The matter should/could have been handled in a different way. We tried our best to initiate a dialogue with no success with the members of the Funds and Assets Management Committee.

As more and more Aurovilians boycott Auroville and stop working and participating in Auroville activities, their places are being given over to employees of the Foundation. At the same time, one hears from other Aurovilians how they have no work or that their maintenances have been cut all of a sudden by Bundget Coordination Committee.

This can be resolved when we as Aurovilians resolve to take responsibility for Auroville and what belongs to Auroville and contribute to its sustenance as a service to the Mother and not to the people who are in power.

Because no matter what, the project of Auroville is and will always be under the control and protection of the Universal Mother.

What is your take on the fact that so many court cases have been instigated by individual Aurovilians against the Auroville Foundation, often questioning the Foundation’s adherence to the Auroville Foundation Act?

The problems of Auroville need to be solved by Aurovilians and not through court cases.

Dr. Ravi has executed a number of land exchanges, exchanging lands outside the master Plan area for crucial lands inside the city area. What role has the Working Committee played in these exchanges?

Working Committee members have been diligently working to negotiate and resolve the problem with these exchanges as much as they can, given the situation where a land committee has been created to handle the exchanges.

You resigned from the Working Committee in March this year, as your term of office of three years was over on February 15 this year. One other member of your Working Committee also resigned. However, the community was not informed about these resignations. Why did this not happen? And on what grounds do the remaining five members believe they can continue to act as Working Committee, ignoring the Residents’ Assembly resolution of February this year, and also that their own term of office ended on February 15, 2024 as well?

I sent in my resignation to the team. It was up to them to announce it.

The impact of three – most probably difficult – years as member of the Working Committee must have been heavy. How have you personally dealt with it? And, on hindsight, do you feel you could have done things differently?

It is not quite right to assume that they were the most difficult years of my life. I never thought of them as such.

I signed up for the work with full awareness of what it entails. I am privileged to be given this chance by the residents. Every experience is a learning experience and I stand by my conscious choice.

A major issue we all have seen developing in the recent years is the breaking up of community harmony and the development of many discords. Families have split, friendships have been broken. How do you see the future of Auroville and how do you believe harmony can be re-established?

Unfortunately, discord and disharmony have always been part of this community. May I remind you of the split among the Aurovilians during the 1980’s. Our *sadhana* as Aurovilians has always been to go beyond these limitations and human chaos. Only when all of us replace our individual desires in the matter and put ourselves sincerely at the service of the Divine will these issues vanish. We need to be disinterestedly passionate. Harmony and unity could be established if we all stood together and work for something higher than ourselves, for which we are all here. Sincerity plays a big role in it.

Srimoyi

The Auroville Foundation Act and the Auroville Foundation Rules on the Working Committee

The Auroville Foundation Act 1980 contains a special section on the Working Committee of the Residents’ Assembly. It states that

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

(2) The Working Committee shall consist of not more than seven

members to be chosen by the Residents’ Assembly from among themselves.

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

(4) The Working Committee may, with the approval of the Governing Board, create or constitute other organisations, trusts, societies or associations relatable to Auroville if the Working Committee is satisfied

that such organisations, trusts, societies or associations have:

a) their headquarters at Auroville;

b) declared that in all matters relating to Auroville they shall act in conformity with the decisions of the Governing Board and that their main object is to promote the ideals laid down in the Charter of Auroville proclaimed by The Mother on the 28th day of February, 1968.

The Auroville Foundation Rules 1997 state [*in brief, eds.*] that the Governing Board has to consult the

Working Committee (1) when it wishes to enter into agreements with the government, public or private organizations or individuals; (2) when acquiring by purchase, lease, gift or otherwise any immoveable property; (3) when investing the funds of the Foundation in securities as may be determined by the Governing Board; (4) when taking over and acquiring by purchase, gift, or otherwise from foreign nationals and international non-Governmental Organisations moveable and immoveable properties; (5)

when selling, transferring, leasing or otherwise disposing of any immovable property of the Foundation, on the condition that no property of the Foundation shall be sold without the previous sanction of the Central Government if the value is more than rupees five lakhs; and (6) for borrowing on the security of the properties of Auroville.

Consultations have to be completed within a period of sixty days and the decision of the Governing Board after such consultation shall be final.

In response to the Auroville Today interview with FAMC member Torkil

Dear Torkil,

Many of us in Auroville have read the interview with you in the latest Auroville Today [*September 2024, # 422, eds.*]. It has been met with interest because it seems the first time that a member of the group speaks in some detail about the vision and beliefs of the GB-FAMC team. Until now the community has mostly experienced unexplained decisions and measures, many of which have been extremely disruptive to life individually and collectively.

What I take from the interview is that your actions are based on a number of goals that on the whole we all share. This is good news. Where the difficulties arise is in HOW you are trying to reach these goals. If we can improve our understanding of the latter, this would hopefully allow us to find ways of transforming the current reality while avoiding the trauma, damage and alienation that have shaken us all, bringing us closer to the divine Dream Mother invited us to realise.

Step 1: Goals we agree on:

1. Prosperity for all Aurovilians
2. Social security for children, senior citizens, and fair treatment of employees
3. Housing for all who serve Auroville
4. Aurovilians work for Auroville
5. Transparency, compliance with ground rules, elimination of corruption
6. Growing a prosperous economy
7. Food security and self-sustainability
8. Bulk procurement of basic needs; streamlining of resources
9. Visitors are valuable
10. Avoid court cases
11. A trusted FAMC with power to implement
12. Balancing needs - synergies and miracles

Step 2: How to move towards the goals

Here’s where it becomes interesting. We trust that you are as dedicated to the ideals of Auroville as any of us. And while a healthy economy is an indispensable foundation, Auroville has no meaning if its values and principles are sacrificed in the process. In other words, ‘the aim justifies the means’ simply cannot be the way to manifest Auroville.

Let’s have a look at the goals you have stated, and where your actions result in friction and disruption. Let’s explore if these same goals cannot be reached in ways that embody the spirit of Auroville, allowing a growth in harmony rather than shock, trauma and hardship.

To start with, a reflection on your belief that ‘development is by nature messy’, that there are no guarantees of outcome, and your affirmation that “we in the FAMC are painfully aware that the effect of our long ‘cleaning’ work has a negative impact on the growth potential of Auroville.”

True, in joining Auroville we have accepted Mother’s invitation to a journey into the unknown. Yet She has also equipped us with the essentials for the adventure, and all along, we get to experience again and again that the Divine’s way is one of harmony and grace, not of destruction and deprivation. So would we not attune ourselves to Her promise of a gradual emergence from the old world and beyond the present chaos into an unfolding divine wonder?

Here’s a look at our shared goals, with some basic reflections on their implementation:

1. Prosperity for all Aurovilians (basic needs such as food and clothing)

A great ideal. It is understood that spiritual development tends to reduce one’s material needs and desires. But Auroville is not conceived as an Ashram, and its goal of ‘unity in diversity’ means that this diverseness needs to be respected also in the material field. A reasonable freedom of choice catering to individual needs and natural affinities is therefore essential. ‘One size fits all’ won’t do for Auroville. Rather, a life “*simply rich and beautiful*” must be our aim (Sri Aurobindo).

2. Social security for children, senior citizens, and fair treatment of workers

Assuming that we all agree on these as non-negotiables, we expect those responsible to make sure they get fulfilled ASAP. (Calling the situation of the dismissed forest workers and refused gratuity ‘stupid’ may be apt, but does not restore justice to those affected!)

3. Housing for all who serve Auroville (free or affordable)

An agreed priority. Let’s not forget that:
– Participatory planning with the community is essential (Dream weaving)
– While housing is urgently needed, it cannot be ‘build at any cost’: Auroville habitat needs to be respectful of the environment and bioregion, and as much as possible pioneer sustainable technologies (as per the Charter!)
– Sufficient choice must be given to suit individuals’ genuine needs and affinities. (Location, size, aesthetics... – 30 m2 per person is not a divine law!)
– Communities are living entities and while they are expected to welcome new members, their affinities should be taken into consideration.

4. Aurovilians work for Auroville

It is assumed that we all share the wish to see the tendency of separative individualism replaced by a greater community spirit, more dedication to the service of Auroville as a whole.
Sri Aurobindo beautifully shows us the future society:

*All turned to all without reserve’s recoil:
A single ecstasy without a break,
Love was a close and thrilled identity
In the throbbing heart of all that luminous life. [...]
There Oneness was not tied to monotone;
It showed a thousand aspects of itself [...]
Each gave its powers to help its neighbours’ parts,
But suffered no diminution by the gift;
Profiteers of a mystic interchange,
They grew by what they took and what they gave,
All others they felt as their own complements,
One in the might and joy of multitude.
(Savitri: The House of the Spirit and the New Creation)*

How then do we best create the conditions for the emergence of this consciousness?

5. Transparency, compliance with ground rules, elimination of corruption

There is not the slightest doubt that corruption (of any kind) has no place in Auroville. While addressing this is an important concern, painting a woeful picture of incompetence, unprofessionalism and ‘hardcore fraud’ as the predominant reality of Auroville, is neither truthful nor beneficial. For all the time, energy, and expense put into investigating units and individuals, it appears that very few serious financial improprieties were found. Meanwhile, can you imagine the impact of all this on the many Aurovilians who conduct their activities impeccably and in a spirit of service?

Making people feel controlled, hamstrung and monitored, treating them as ‘employees’ at best and as suspects at worst, is always counterproductive. In a place where everybody is essentially a volunteer, it undermines its very essence! The challenge given to us is to develop an environment where each one is encouraged to discover the joy ‘to surmount his weaknesses and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the concern for progress take precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the search for pleasure and material enjoyment’.

As for dealing with dishonesty and corruption, there is a growing consensus that we need some effective system of restorative justice by and for the community, a step which we have been long hesitating to take but which can no longer wait, and for which we have to call on our highest level of collective wisdom, integrity, maturity and receptivity.

6. Growing a prosperous economy

In shaping our economy, our beliefs are paramount. If we have the faith that money follows energy – and not the other way around – and that generosity and trust engender abundance, then we need to create a society that celebrates growing, learning, discovering, creating, and serving, supporting each person in their unique *swabhava* and *swadharma*.

Systems that stifle freedom, imagination, creativity, enthusiasm and initiative, lead to progressive paralysis of any economy, besides being direct contradictions of the spirit of Auroville.

About streamlining and re-aligning...

The GB-FAMC is critical of the multitude of small activities and units making little or no profit, considering them useless and seemingly intent on shutting them down.

While there can obviously be improvement in this domain, it is essential to remember that not all activities in Auroville are meant to be commercial. Research, education, arts, culture etc. are all investments in humanity’s future. Denying them support and forcing them to be financially ‘self-sustaining’ is to profoundly pervert them. Similarly, forcing community services into a profit-mould is against the very basics of Auroville.

As for ‘redirecting resources’ of the collective, this can only be effectively done with reasonable consultation and with the trust of the community, especially of those directly affected. One-sided impositions may bring short-term gain but result in long-term damage.

You envision Auroville’s future economy based on a few ‘very big companies’, managed ‘professionally’ and separate from Auroville. What are the models for this? Since you don’t mention anything else, is financial profit the only benchmark for success? What about the equally important criteria of ethics, social and environmental sustainability, and research and innovation (*boldly springing towards future realisations*)?

The insistence on ‘very big companies’ seems a misunderstanding or an outdated paradigm that has been replaced even in mainstream thinking with a very different outlook. As stated by the Executive Director of the Joint Agency of the UN Conference on Trade and Development and the World Trade Organization in an article titled *Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Are Key to an Inclusive and Sustainable Future*, “MSME’s are, quite literally, the foundations of the global economy.”

7. Food security for Auroville

Mother’s vision for Auroville to be largely self-sustaining in its food production has always been an agreed goal, even if still far from achieved.

Recently, however, our farms have been pushed to the edge of survival, due to maintenances cuts, public tender of their fruit trees, devastating land exchanges and re-purposing of land.

The insistence on centralising farming, imposing uniform practices on vastly diverse conditions, and even talk of ‘agro-industry’, seem derived from an outdated paradigm similar to the plan to ‘streamline’ our businesses. Similarly, it is the United Nations that have recently recognised the vital importance of small farms for a sustainable future and food security.

A paper *Assessing the value of Auroville’s farms* has been shared with the Governing Board and the GB-FAMC in 2022 and 2023 respectively, but has received no response. Please request a copy if it is no longer available to you.

If food security and a self-sustaining town is still an accepted goal, then Auroville’s farms need to be supported rather than paralysed. A starting point would be a trusting dialogue, and invitation to the farmers to share their decades-long experience in working with Auroville’s earth.

8. Bulk procurement of basic needs, and sharing of resources

We read that past efforts at bulk buying of basic provisions have not been successful. Are the reasons for this failure known? Some centrally coordinated procurements should certainly be welcomed. Here too, apart from price, important criteria should be ecological, social and ethical sustainability, as well as a reasonable range of diversity, avoiding excessive uniformity.

Sharing of resources – administrative and others – is certainly an advantage, as long as it doesn’t adversely affect the functioning of participating activities and the quality of services. Experimentation being the very core of Auroville, this must not be discouraged by centralisation. Resource sharing is normally best planned by the participants themselves. The role of the FAMC can be in encouraging and facilitating the meeting of units and activities, and proposing different options of resource-sharing.

9. Visitors are valuable

While our community holds a range of attitudes towards visitors and guests, they are generally appreciated not only as a window of Auroville into the world, but also an important source of income.

The push to maximise this revenue – following a recent trend in India to market ‘spiritual tourism’ – has the risk of visitors feeling exploited, with negative effects in the short and long term.

A more essential question is how best to help visitors and guests to get in touch with the Divine Dream. What kind of Auroville is currently being showcased? What changes do we wish to make, allowing visitors a taste, or foretaste, of the City the Earth needs, the City at the service of Truth, the City of Dawn?

Ample experience shows that authenticity, a genuine welcome and generosity are more likely to open visitors’ hearts and willingness to support Auroville than glossy tourist facilities. The world is full of wealth that is waiting to be channeled to where its owners find true inspiration, hope and trust.

10. Avoid court cases

We all agree that legal action has a heavy price and should have no place in Auroville. Each case filed has been a last resort to safeguard Auroville and its ideals. Today, major cases which had received balanced rulings restoring the provisions of the Auroville Foundation Act are stuck due to appeals filed by the Foundation Office. A return to Auroville’s spirit and principles can still eliminate the need for court cases, and prevent the further draining of the community’s resources in terms of funds, time and morale.

11. A trusted FAMC with power to implement

You are saying: “The only (worldly) authority we have is through the Foundation, and if that disappears we are back to zero”. This sounds like a rather desperate stance i.e. “Let’s quickly change as much as we can before we lose the power”. Would it not be preferable to establish your authority on being at one with the community, the real base of Auroville, which is not changing like governments, and to place your faith in its collective wisdom and aspiration, even if these have been imperfect and slower in evolving than hoped for? Have you not felt the widespread wind of change in the community, more and more deeply aspiring for a collective re-birth into the Dream of the Divine?

12. Balancing needs– synergies and miracles

Finally, when you speak of correcting imbalances by going to the extreme other side, with “the middle-of-the-road being a very difficult place to find”, these images suggest a flat landscape with very limited options. Imagine that in this same landscape the FAMC is joined in its solo act by the community, that they put their hearts and heads together to find novel solutions, and the Divine pours its grace on to the game... Can you see the miracle of evolution bringing forth unexpected possibilities of harmony and beauty in a whole new dimension?

Jasmin

Statement by the Forest Group

After having read the article, “A challenging and controversial task: the work of the Governing Board-appointed Funds and Assets Management Committee” published in Auroville Today, issue # 422, in particular Torkils perspective regarding the Auroville Forest Group, we would like to include a response in this edition of Auroville Today. Ideally, this rejoinder would have been published in the same issue, as the article presents a singular viewpoint and omits important information and facts, however we hadn’t been informed beforehand.

Quoted passages from the interview:

[Alan:]

No doubt, the FAMC has to deal with financial shortfalls as well as abuses. The question is if it is being done in the best possible way. Your work has resulted in much pain and social disruption, and the impact has not only been financial but also social, and this has extended far beyond Auroville. For example, the decision to cut the foresters’ maintenances resulted in many forest employees from the villages being laid off. Many of these workers had worked all their lives in Auroville and they are too old to find other jobs, even though their families rely upon their income. From a strictly economic point of view there may be too many maintenances for the amount of forest, but isn’t the financial and social cost of cuts like these disproportionate?

[Torkil:]

After talking to the government forest department people the conclusion was we need perhaps 12 - 18 people to steward our forests, whereas more than 100 maintenances and staff salaries were being paid. This was because historically the focus was on planting the forest. But that was many years ago and, like so many other things in Auroville, this situation just ‘froze’ and was never adapted to the present need. There were a number of attempts to get a meeting with the Forest Group to discuss this, but they refused, saying they did not want to discuss any change. A conflict like this has no good ending. The administration was left with only two options: to surrender or cut the funding, so we cut the money. I don’t think it should have ended like this. It ended up as a stupid situation, a black and white story, which nobody wanted.

Firstly, we would like to point out that the initial question only hints at the fact that the GB-appointed FAMC has for the past 15 months refused to release money for the gratuity payments

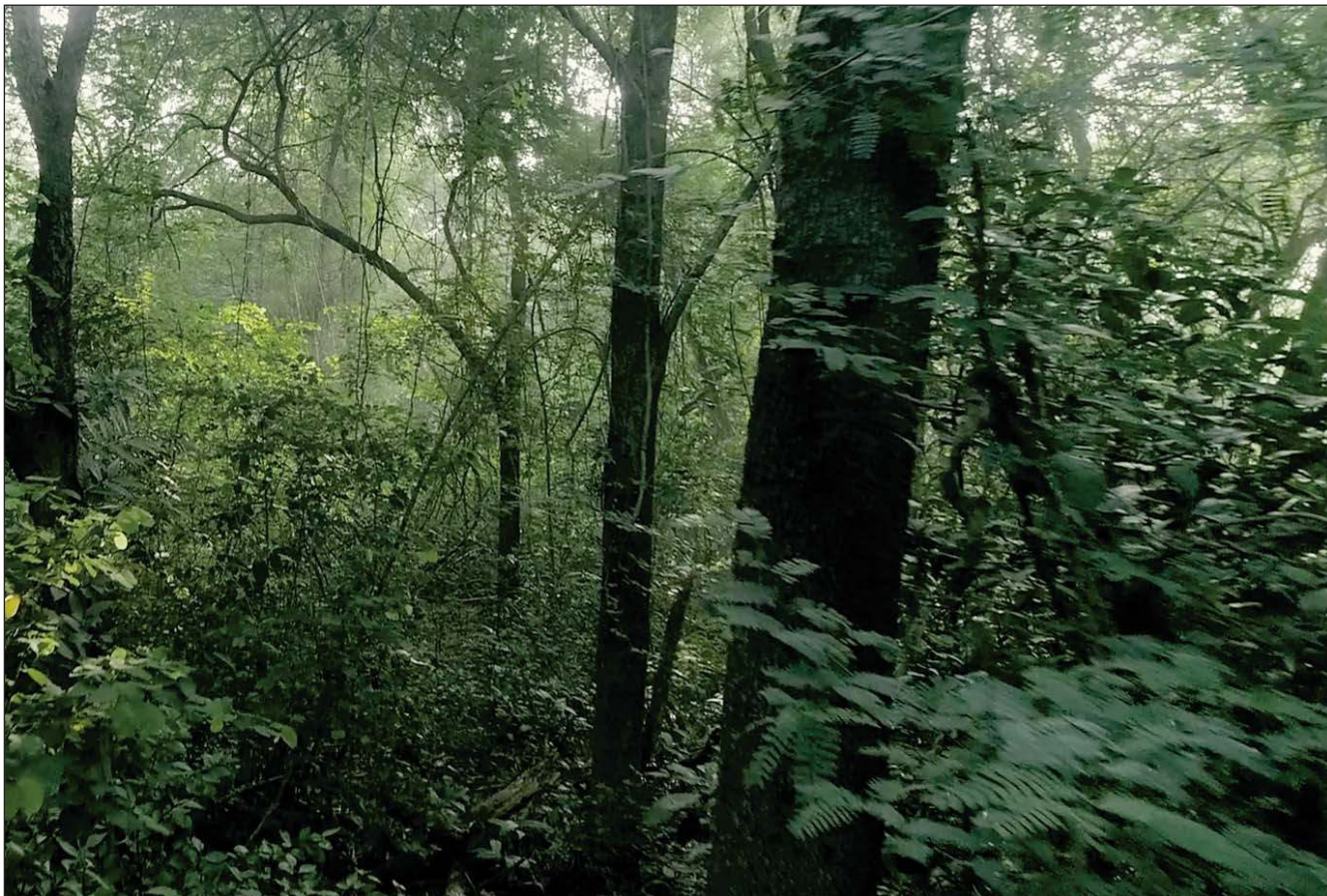


PHOTO: CHRISTOPH

towards the 60 employed forest workers who had been laid off with a one-week notice in July 2023. Gratuity payments for employees who have worked at one workplace for 20+ years are, even if in some cases not a legal, at least an ethical obligation for the employer.

Secondly, the Forest Group never stated anything in the line that “the group does not want to discuss any change”. This is entirely fictitious. However, this quoted accusation had already been stated in an email by the GB-appointed FAMC to a few individual Forest Group members on June 21, 2023 informing them about the cut of maintenances and forest budget from July onwards. Admittedly communication with the GB-appointed FAMC has been laborious from the moment of their questionable appointment in June 2022.

Last but not least we would like to comment on the alleged estimation by the government forest department regarding management of the current Auroville forests. It has to be pointed out that there is no single comparable reforestation project in India run by any government or non-government organisation. Reforestation of degraded land with indigenous plant species, a focus on maximizing biodiversity and recreating a severely endangered vegetation type, paired with water conservation and the keeping of nurseries and seed banks as is done in Auroville, is absolutely unique. The fact that the Forest Group for the past 40 years has not been working with the mindset of an organization but rather that of a collective is the very reason for its success. In fact, over the years many forest department officers have visited the Auroville forests in awe, eager to learn from Auroville foresters’ experiences.

The main reason for the outstanding success of the reforestation efforts done in Auroville over the past 50 years is the unique community supported long-standing ability and dedication to protect and manage its forest plantation areas. Fence lines of Auroville forests are unusually long due to the fragmentation of Auroville lands. And fences are indispensable for successful reforestation as the keeping out of cattle, goats and other destructive elements is key.

To a layman’s eye it might seem that the reforestation in Auroville is completed by now and all that’s left to do for the forester is to watch the trees grow. Far from that. Most tall trees we find in our forests today are pioneer trees which only create the environment needed for the slow-growing indigenous species to flourish. Most of those species haven’t reached their maturity yet and inter-planting of indigenous saplings is continuously done by the Forest Group up until now.

In conclusion, the unsubstantiated claim that the 1200+ acres of forested Auroville land could be managed by 12 – 18 people completely disregards the proven successful method of reforestation carried out by a long line of dedicated and passionate community members. In the light of various development projects taking place in forested areas of Auroville since the maintenance and budget cut in July 2023 (Outer Ring Road through Silence, Miracle, Revelation, Espace, Baraka; bridge construction in Darkali; clearing for PTDC outlet and car parking in Bliss; clearing for Matrimandir-Lake-Soil-Hill and access roads in the northern forests including the NFA sanctuary) it seems that the true intentions behind the abrupt cut of funds for the Forest Group were not only economical, as suggested by Torkil, but rather a strategic move to discredit, discourage and silence the voice of the Forest Group; just another brick in the wall of fabricated false narrative to justify current developments while suppressing community participation.

It is clear that the agenda of the GB-appointed FAMC clashes with the Forest Group’s ecological vision for Auroville’s green spaces. We are hopeful that a healthy combination of ecology and economy paired with common sense, respect for the collective, ethical behavior and solidarity will prevail in the City the Earth Needs.

*The Forest Group of the Residents’ Assembly
of the Auroville Foundation*

The challenges of bringing out Auroville Today

This issue of Auroville Today marks 36 years since our first issue was published in November, 1988. That issue also came out at a difficult moment in Auroville’s history. The Auroville Foundation Act had just been passed, and there were concerns regarding what a fuller government involvement in the community’s affairs would mean.

At that time, the only media outlet to the outside world was the Auroville Review. However, this was coming out irregularly and not covering what was happening in Auroville in any detail. This made it difficult for the Auroville International Centres, in the pre-internet era, to provide accurate and up-to-date information on what was happening here to people who were considering visiting Auroville, or even relocating here from their home countries.

Therefore Auroville Today, as its name suggests, began with the aspiration to cover whatever was happening in the community. Among other things, this meant not only reflecting people’s higher aspirations, but also trying to represent the different viewpoints Aurovilians hold rather than being the mouthpiece for a particular orientation. As our first editorial put it,

Our attempt in this new magazine is not to try to define but to provide a forum, a meeting-place for different perspectives and views...

While not seeking an artificial balance or suggesting equivalence between different views, for clearly there are times when certain views command greater community assent, our aim was, and is, to provide readers with sufficient information for them to make up their own minds concerning what is happening here. Even when our writers strongly disagree with interviewees’ viewpoints or are uncomfortable about presenting possibly controversial notions, we still feel that the community has the right to understand those viewpoints.

This is challenging. It’s not just the fact that Aurovilians hold a bewildering variety of views on many topics. We soon discovered that we could not run Auroville Today like a normal magazine. Outside, a journalist can conduct an interview and then ‘spin’ it however he or she likes. That is not possible for Auroville Today which depends upon us being trusted by those with whom we share our daily lives. Consequently, before publication each interview is fed back to the interviewee, who has the full right to refuse its publication, or make corrections and changes as she or he deems necessary.

The advantage is that the article fully represents what the interviewee wants to share and the whole community knows that the interviewee stands by their words; the disadvantage is that important parts of the original interview are sometimes deleted or severely watered down by the interviewee, making it difficult at times for the reader to ascertain what he or she truly thinks or stands for. Outright refusals to be published, though rare, sometimes take place at a late stage in our monthly publication cycle, leaving us with the predicament of filling the space.

Then there is the challenge of writing for a diverse readership which has varying understandings of the nature of this experiment in consciousness evolution. For Auroville Today is read not only by Aurovilians, by the Governing Board and by Auroville-connected people around the world, but also by those in government offices and in embassies in India.

These are just some of the challenges we have been facing monthly for the past 36 years. However, it is particularly challenging to publish today when emotions in the community are running high, and some are eager to promote their views while others are much less so. In fact, representatives of the perspective which currently wields a great deal of power often don’t disclose information

about their intentions and motivation. The dearth of crucial information, along with the fact that the small Auroville Today team lacks the means to do investigative reporting or comprehensive fact checking, results in us being accused at times of publishing misleading or incomplete information, or of favouring a particular orientation by publishing only information from the perspective which wants to be published.

Additionally, although we generally try to provide differing perspectives on a contested topic within the same issue, the different interviewees may not be available within our monthly time frame, or may not have approved the article in time for our monthly deadline. In such cases, different perspectives may be offered in the following issues. When the ‘balance’ of our coverage is viewed only on a per-issue basis, this also leaves us open to accusations of bias.

Of course, the editors of Auroville Today have personal opinions. Sometimes these are expressed under their own name in the ‘Reflections’ or ‘Open Forum’ sections. But, when it comes to covering what is happening in the community, as far as possible we try to set our personal preferences aside to provide a true picture and make Auroville Today a ‘meeting-place for different perspectives and views’.

There are dangers in this. It can lead to confusion or to the hardening of party lines. But it can also lead to people gaining insight into views very different from their own. This can help broaden perspectives and dismantle the barriers which we erect between us when we feel that our strongest beliefs are threatened by those who think differently.

And this could be a small, yet significant, step towards the human unity which we all, in our deepest hearts, aspire for.

The editors

Coming home again

Jivatma was born and raised in Auroville (in the 1980s) and after finding her path abroad, she recently decided to move back with her partner Daniel and young son Kailash.

Auroville Today: Can you tell me about where you were born and your early childhood?

Jivatma: I was born at our home on the beach in Chinamudaliar Chavadi village, just outside Auroville. When I was around six months old, we moved to what was called back then Fertile Windmill, now known as Baraka. My mom was friends with Vijay at the time. I actually had my first birthday at Fertile Windmill. We stayed in a little dome-shaped hut which is still standing today. We lived with very little, just a mosquito net and a kerosene stove, and my first steps in life were barefoot and naked through the forest.

Shortly after my birthday, my grandpa became very ill, so we went to Spain and stayed there for about a year. That is where I spent my second birthday. When we returned to India after my grandpa's passing, we lived in Pondy for almost three years. My mom was working at the Ashram at that time and we rented a home in town. I was about three years old then, and my older sister Xenia was about 12 years old.

How did your mother's connection to Auroville influence your upbringing?

My mom always felt a strong calling to Auroville, and had had a connection to Mother and Sri Aurobindo for most of her life, but it took a while to make our way to living within Auroville. As our needs grew – like needing more of a social scene, schools, and nature – my mom decided to make a more permanent move to Auroville. Until then, we only visited Auroville on the weekends. Those trips are among my first memories, and I remember how exciting it was to go on those moped rides from Pondy to be in nature and run free on the red earth. Auroville felt like such a raw and wild secret place back then. I miss that feeling; everything has changed and developed so much now.

When did your family finally settle in Auroville?

It was around 1987 when my mom started looking for a place to settle in Auroville. We heard that Marco (later known as Matriprasad), was living in Existence and needed help with forest work. We visited, and my mom immediately recognized it as the place in a lucid dream she'd had – it was a clear guiding sign for her. We started by spending weekends there, and then moved into a tiny hut while my mom built our home, which was just another slightly bigger hut. We had no electricity, no running water, and we lived very simply, using candlelight and hauling water from Matrimandir with a wheelbarrow. We didn't have a refrigerator until I was much older.



Daniel, Jivatma and Kailash

How do you feel about your childhood experiences?

I grew up very simply, and I really treasure that lifestyle. It was such a simple time, and it was so easy to be happy. Nature and the simple things around us were enough. My childhood was one of the happiest times of my life, even though it wasn't always easy. Overall, I feel very connected to, and appreciative of my younger years in Auroville.

What about your education? When did you start school?

I didn't start school until I was nine. Until then, I was home-schooled. When I finally started school in Mirramukhi, I could already read, write, count, etc.. I also spoke a pretty good level of Spanish, French and Italian. I wasn't very social until much later. My family unit at that time was just my mom, me, and then my younger sister Amrita who was born when I was seven.

How was your experience at Mirramukhi?

I liked Mirramukhi, though school was always difficult for me, especially academically. Math and sciences were a nightmare. I struggled with school in general, and I was also very shy, which made things like performances or reciting poetry in class really painful. Socially, I was always the odd one out and was teased a lot. It wasn't until I was 15 or 16 that I started to feel more confident and accepted.

You tried another school briefly?

Yes, I tried Transition School for about six months, but it was too 'rough' for me. I went back to Mirramukhi because it suited me better – it was more arts-focused, contained, and disciplined. But when I was 14, I started to become more aware of certain aspects of Mirramukhi that didn't sit well with me. It felt closed off, almost cultish in some ways. My mom and I decided it was best for me to leave, so I went to Last School for two years before moving on to Center for Further Learning, which is now Future School. I graduated from Future School, doing my O and A levels there as part of one of the first groups.

What did you do after school?

While I was still in Future School, I found my passion for massage therapy. I did a massage course with Umberto when I was 19, and I immediately knew it would be my life's path. Shortly after, I met my ex-husband Jeremy, who connected me to a dance summer programme in the USA. We traveled together, eventually moving to Hawaii, where I attended a massage licensing school on Maui. That was the start of my professional path in massage. I didn't have any desire to pursue further academic studies, so massage became my path, and I've been dedicated to it ever since.

When I was living in Hawaii I met my current partner, Daniel. We met through the massage community and our journey started as a close friendship and a work adventure while creating a technique we named Sarga Bodywork.

Sarga Bodywork is a barefoot massage method that was born out of a lot of experimentation and fun. It started off with bouncing ideas back and forth, creating without a specific end goal in mind. But gradually, it became more concrete and solid. The method itself came from our shared love of barefoot bodywork, which I discovered while living in Hawaii with my mom and sister for a couple of years. At that time, I was working intensely, really overworking, and that's when I started using my feet to do bodywork. It just made so much sense to me, and I fell in love with it.

Using the feet for massage provided more strength and leverage, which was crucial given my workload. It was not only effective for my clients but also easier on my own body, so I gradually



Jivatma practising Sarga Bodywork

integrated it into my practice. Our love for barefoot work, myofascial work, and Daniel's Rolting background came together. We aimed to create a portable barefoot massage method, unlike others that rely on bars or ropes overhead. We wanted something that didn't require drilling into ceilings or walls, that also focused on myofascial release.

We started to teach Sarga Bodywork in 2016, first to a small circle of people, which later grew to regular workshops. The method became more than just a technique; it was like this embodiment of our shared experiences, our travels, and all the things we had learned along the way. We wanted to create something that wasn't just a new technique, but something that was holistic and adaptable. It was important for us to ensure that the method was accessible and could be applied in different contexts, whether it be in high-end spas or more therapeutic settings.

It was a steep learning curve because we were learning the ropes of running a business and creating something from scratch. We had to go into debt to start the business, and there were so many layers of learning along the way. Many times we asked ourselves, 'What are we doing? Should we just throw in the towel?' But we kept going.

By 2018, Sarga was really taking off, and we started to focus on it full-time. That's when we began to solidify the teaching aspect, holding workshops and training sessions, first locally in Hawaii and then in other parts of the U.S. and internationally. The method continued to evolve, with input from practitioners around the world who started using it and sharing their experiences.

So, in essence, Sarga Bodywork was this very organic creation that grew out of our shared journey, and it ended up becoming something much bigger than either of us had anticipated. It brought together all these elements of our life experiences, from Auroville to Hawaii, and became a way for us to share something that we felt was truly unique and impactful in the world of bodywork.

So, has it been a successful experience?

Yes. We now have a team of about five instructors who teach Sarga in the U.S., and we're starting to expand into Europe. Last summer, we trained two instructors in France and Italy who will be teaching courses there. It has been successful, and I feel that it could grow even more, but right now, it's stable and it sustains us.

What made you decide to come back to Auroville?

There were many reasons for us to come back here. I would say that being closer to my mom and dad and a desire to be back home after such a long time away was the main driving force. Also, after our son Kailash was born in 2021, we were overworking just to make a living in Hawaii, and it felt discouraging. We were working all the time without time to enjoy the beauty of Hawaii or our family. It didn't make sense anymore, and we also

wanted to expand Sarga Bodywork into Europe and live away from the U.S for some time.

Everything pointed to coming back to this side of the world and leaving our base in Hawaii for a while, so that's what we did. Now we're mostly based here, expanding our business into Europe and Asia. We came back last December, so it's quite fresh.

And how is it landing back here?

For me, it's been so beautiful. I feel like I was finally ready to come back to Auroville because, after all this time and experiences, I don't feel deprived anymore – I don't feel like there's anything out there that I'm missing out on. The sense of feeling 'stuck' here isn't there anymore because I have something that sustains me and keeps me connected to the rest of the world. I never felt that I could only work locally and be satisfied with that. I needed something that cross-pollinates and keeps me engaged in different areas of the world. I think that because I have those things now through our business and our lifestyle, I don't feel stuck or deprived being here, so I can really enjoy it.

I feel so grateful to have this time back in Auroville, especially with my son now, while my parents are still around and healthy. It's such a precious time. I think when you start getting into your late thirties and forties, you begin to have a different perspective on what things are worth – your worth, your sense of worth for the people in your life, places and experiences. It changes. In my twenties, I didn't appreciate things and people as much. Now, I feel so fortunate to be with my son and my mom and dad, and those things become much more important because you see the passing of time and the impermanence of things in a different way.

I feel much more connected to that level of gratefulness and I feel thankful to be here, to see Kailash go to school, and to give him the experience of Auroville at such a young age – it's really important to me to give him that.

And what does it mean to you?

I can't put it into words. It's just the experience of Auroville – the energy, the atmosphere and the people here. It's very specific and yet very abstract. I can't really say what Auroville is – is it a place, is it the people? Is it the energy of it? Is it who I am when I am here? I think it's a little bit of all of that.

Also because Auroville is in a moment of so much change there's a bittersweetness about the Auroville that we've known. Auroville is changing, which doesn't mean good or bad, but the Auroville I grew up with is definitely changing and fading...maybe transforming would be a better word. So to be able to share it as a family, with Daniel and Kailash, to have that experience together is really valuable to me.

In conversation with Chandra

Memento mori

These days, more and more of the space in Auroville Today seems to be taken up with obituaries. It made me begin to reflect upon death and our attitudes to it. These, of course, may vary widely. But this is also true of the past.

For example, when Prospero says at the end of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, "Every third thought shall be my grave", he wasn't being morbid; for him, death was not unwelcome. In this he was embracing the Christian theology which told people to focus upon eternal life after death rather than the fleeting life of this transitory world, although, according to Christian doctrine, the way we live life in this world will decide whether our eternal lives will be lived in heaven or hell. This reminder to live a 'good life' was summed up in the phrase *memento mori* ("remember that you must die"), a reminder which was taken to its extreme by those Carthusian monks who would sleep every night in stone coffins.

But not all those who practiced *memento mori* were believers in an after-life (or rebirth, like the Hindus, who, like many other faiths, believe that a well-lived life will have its later rewards). The ancient Greek and Roman sect, the Stoics, did not, but still they believed that people should live their lives as if death was possible at any moment. This was so they could live life to the full, and treasure every moment upon earth. It was also to help them cultivate equanimity, not to be disturbed by either success or failure, as the daily admonition, *memento mori*, was a reminder that everything in life is fleeting.

In this sense, *memento mori* can be applied by anyone at any age. As Seneca put it, "Death ought to be right there before the eyes of a young man just as much as an old one".

This has also inspired many artists. Some of the most arresting images in art are the skulls, hourglasses, wilting flowers and dead animals in paintings which signify the

transience of life. Other representations of this include the grim reaper with his scythe and the Danse Macabre, which was a particularly popular image in the late Middle Ages. Poussin makes the same point in his famous painting, *Et in Arcadia Ego* ("I am also in Arcadia"), which depicts an idyllic pastoral scene in which shepherds are seen to be examining an austere grave.

In fact, a whole artistic genre, termed vanitas, is devoted to such representations on the theme of the ever-present shadow of death.

In Auroville, it is unfashionable, almost a taboo, to urge people to think daily about death. This is not just because of fear of creating 'negative formations', but also because Mother spoke forcibly about the need for the 'death of death'. Indeed, Mother described death as being merely a 'habit' which would no longer be necessary in a supramentalised world.

This explains the profound shock experienced by those early Aurovilians when they heard of Mother's passing. As one of them told me, "We were sure that Mother would succeed in the transformation of her body so that none of us would die." This has fostered an unspoken sense, at least among some Aurovilians, that death in Auroville is in some way a defeat and not something we should acknowledge as a fact of our present lives.

But perhaps this is a mistake. For while we should continue to aspire deeply for transformation, there is no harm in doing what the Stoics did: using the lever of our present mortality, the likelihood of our eventual demise, to consider daily if we are satisfied with the way we are living our lives, and to constantly remind ourselves of what a worthwhile life in Auroville would look like.

And not to be continually cast down or uplifted, like a crazed rubber ball, by the big dipper moments we are constantly experiencing in this extraordinary place.

Alan

Articulations of nature and heritage

Stepping into Deepti Munot's *Fragile Layers* exhibition of collages at Centre d'Art, I was instantly transported to the sea-side rock pools of my childhood. Sporting goggles, I would repeatedly dive underwater to wonder at the intricacy and colours of this otherworldly realm. Munot's artworks – which aim to delve into the fragile layers that form the elaborate beauty of nature – deftly evoke such ornate and delicate natural worlds.

Through layering of painted paper, natural fibres and found objects, the artworks become densely rich visual compositions. The eye is increasingly drawn in through the layers, each with its own suggested form of natural life and beauty. Together, they depict the complexity and grace of nature when it is left undisturbed.

The collection ultimately reminds us of our connection to the environment, its vulnerability and the necessity of preserving it – even if only for the 'selfish' motive of continuing to enjoy its beauty.

Pondicherry artist Aarti Manik's *Voyage* exhibition provides a bold contrast. Consisting primarily of ceramic artworks in muscular forms, Manik's



Collage by Deepti Munot

works suggest hardy watercraft of an ancient era, reimagined in chiselled shapes. Are these craft in motion? Or simply confidently inhabiting space? In any case, my imagination was quickly taken to Pondicherry's harbour, replete with its battered, handcrafted fishing boats, and generations of boating tradition.

The artworks suggest diverse influences such as architecture, abstraction, heritage and 'interior dialogues', as Manik states. Nature, such as water and wind, is implicit yet not foregrounded.

Manik has long been associated with the Golden Bridge Pottery, a renowned studio established by Deborah Smith and Ray Meeker in Pondicherry in 1971, and is now a teacher there. She is one of a number of the studio's fine ceramic artists who have exhibited in Auroville over the years, the studio having played a significant role in the vibrant arts culture in the Auroville-Pondicherry region. Long may it continue.

Lesley



Ceramic artwork by Aarti Manik

Vaishali Jain



Vaishali Jain, a radiant 27 year old young woman, known to her close friends as Vishu, left her body on September 1st due to a traffic accident.

Originally from Delhi, she made Auroville her new home in 2021. She immersed herself in the life and culture of Auroville, being active and volunteering for several activities in Auroville, such as the Youth Centre, Revelation Forest, Kalabhum, Upcycling, and numerous art festivals and events. She was a beloved member of our community, touching many lives with her bright smile.

Being an artist herself, Vaishali was also known amongst the artists of Auroville for her generous and open heart. She was passionate about the arts and organized spaces where artists could co-create and collaborate. She will be remembered by our community as a free-spirited, fun-loving, and kind soul who held space for the sharing of art in and around Auroville.

Vaishali's remains were cremated at the Auroville Burial and Cremation Grounds on September 3rd.

Aurienne



Aurienne Fator passed away on September 1st in the USA because of a stroke.

Aurienne was born in Auroville on Dec 29, 1971 and was given her name by The Mother. She lived with her family, her mother Myrtle, father Kenneth and sister Durgaura, in Certitude. Myrtle and Kenneth had moved to India and the Ashram in 1965 and were early Auroville pioneers.

Aurienne was very dedicated and began to volunteer in the kindergarten at the age of 15. She began her own home studies at this same time to complete her high school education, with the goal of attending university in the USA. She left Auroville in 1988 at age sixteen, and obtained her bachelor's degree in English at the young age of 19. Her dream was to return to Auroville, but life circumstances came in the way. In 1998 Aurienne began a new chapter: being a mother to her son Kanyen.

Aurienne lived her life with the true resilience of a child of Auroville. Regardless of the housing, work or financial challenges she faced, she was a fighter and found solutions and continued to create a happy and loving home.

Soham



Soham (Jacques C. H. Philippeau) passed away at his home in Transformation on 19th September, 2024, due to cancer. He was 73 years old.

Soham spent some of his younger years in Corsica on an isolated goat farm, where it was hard to get even essential amenities. He came to Auroville in 1987, together with his former partner Djouna, and continued this simple life in Auroville. He was known to have been a disciplined and hard worker. As a lover of flowers and nature, he worked for a long time in the Matrimandir Nursery's hibiscus garden, and tended with meticulous care to his own garden in Transformation, sharing his plants and flowers with others.

Many years ago, Soham lost his voice due to cancer of the throat and began to feel isolated, and eventually fell prey to depression. He worked on overcoming the instability in parts of his being with the help of Dr. Alok Pandey. One of his carers mentioned that a recent insight of his was that his yoga was a selfish one and that he hurt people because of this. Physically he had to face many difficulties but managed to address his health problems using alternative means, and in the meantime kept his discipline and ability to smile.

Soham was a gifted artist. He showed a deep understanding of mandala symbolism and intricate design. He recently donated his mandalas and other paintings to Art for Land. His paintings can be seen online in the website of Art for Land, artforland.in.

He was immersed in the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's writings and, at the same time, kept himself informed about happenings in Auroville and the world outside. He occasionally published long extracts from Sri Aurobindo's works in the weekly News & Notes, adding his – equally long – unusual comments and distinctive views about Auroville and the world to it.

During his last few months, Soham volunteered and was happy to do shopping for Mahalakshmi Home for the elderly.

Soham's remains were cremated on September 22nd at the Adventure Burial and Cremation Grounds.

Marry



Marry, also known as Marretje Kroon, passed away in Kalpana on 16th September, 2024. She was 76 years old.

Marry was born in the Netherlands and joined Auroville in 2007. Her main interest was the study of the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and translating.

Many got to know her through her knowledge of the Feldenkreis method, a series of physical exercises that enhance body awareness and wellbeing. For a number of years she offered good Feldenkreis classes and excellent individual treatments. She intended to stop with the classes and treatments and focus on her yoga, but continued with individual treatments till recently, on the request of many grateful Aurovilians who had benefited from her treatments.

Since last February, Marry suffered from cancer (myeloma). She showed courage and was positive throughout. Her son and his family visited her a month ago, which made her very happy, and they were also very impressed when they discovered Auroville. After their visit, Marry prepared to go 'through the tunnel of light' as she put it.

Marry's remains were buried on September 21st at the Auroville Burial and Cremation Grounds.

Preventing a public health emergency: the Auroville Dog Shelter and AVI USA in action

An Auroville health scare started some weeks ago, when three aggressive dogs were reported in and around the Auroville grounds. The Auroville Dog Shelter was on call, and was able to collect and quarantine all three dogs. The test results for all three came back positive for rabies. In the Auroville bioregion, rabies vaccination is often left to individual families, with some dog owners bypassing the safety measure. The uneven state of rabies vaccinations in the Auroville bioregion is due to a combination of high costs, limited access to vaccines, and a lack of sufficient information. Additionally, with only a few dogs sterilised, the rapid increase in the number of puppies continues to pose new health risks, further straining resources.

It was highly unusual to see three affected dogs in Auroville within the span of a week. As the dog population grows, sometimes the vaccinations lag behind. The local shelters or veterinary offices address emergencies, but this time, the alarm bell rang in Auroville. After a week of tracking down a few dogs that appeared unwell, it appeared that Auroville and surrounding villages were at risk of a rabies outbreak.

The Auroville Dog Shelter swiftly developed a mass vaccination programme designed to avert the situation. However, they faced a critical challenge: there were no rabies vaccines in stock and no funds available to purchase them.

With time running out, crowd funding or seeking donations were not an option. And the official administrative bodies were not in a position to release funding without going through a lengthy proposal and assessment process. The Dog Shelter was in a precarious situation as they scrambled to address the situation.

On August 19, 2024, AVI USA received an urgent message from the Auroville Dog Shelter seeking help. AVI USA was able to respond to the call, sending the funds within 24 hours. The Auroville Dog Shelter soon had not only rabies vaccines but also multi-vaccinations. These protect animals from seven different viruses, including rabies, canine distemper and parvo, ensuring broader protection for the dog population and helping to avert a potential health crisis in the region. All vaccinations began the following day.

As the funds from AVI USA arrived, the Auroville Dog Shelter was able to put the vaccination plan in motion. The Auroville Dog Shelter followed protocol by promptly informing the Department of



Animal Husbandry about the confirmed rabies cases. Thanks to the partnership with Mettupalayam Veterinary River College, established through a Memorandum of Understanding in July, veterinary students were assigned to assist the shelter in managing the crisis. The World Health Organization recommends that 70% of dogs and cats in any given area must be vaccinated to effectively contain the rabies outbreak and mitigate further risks. The Mettupalayam College veterinary students, already familiar with the dogs and the shelter, appeared in shifts to help with the vaccinations. Local veterinarians joined in, such as Dr. Vinoth, vaccinating dogs in an expanding radius outside Auroville, from dawn to dusk.

Many villagers and Auroville residents were delighted by the opportunity for free vaccinations and eagerly brought their pets to see the veterinary doctors. For many animals, this was their first time receiving treatment, so the Auroville Dog Shelter also provided deworming, as well as care for skin problems, wounds, infections, and other health issues. In addition, a comprehensive study and database

of the canine and feline populations in the area was created, forming the foundation for a future mass sterilisation program.

The Auroville Dog Shelter is continuing its free mass vaccination program for as long as vaccine supplies last. A mobile vet clinic is set up weekly in front of Solar Kitchen, and the shelter is also conducting targeted home visits for pet owners who request vaccinations. This ongoing effort ensures broader coverage of the community and supports the health and safety of both animals and residents in Auroville and surrounding areas.

Since its inception in April 2023, the Auroville Dog Shelter's new leadership has prioritised collaboration with local and state animal care institutions. They have worked to rebuild relationships within the Tamil Nadu animal care community, establishing partnerships with prominent organizations like *People for Animals*. This has facilitated ongoing cooperation with the Tamil Nadu Welfare Board, Mettupalayam Veterinary College, and the Department of Animal Husbandry, under the leadership of Dr. Latha, all of which are crucial in advancing animal welfare and care in the region.

The Auroville Dog Shelter prioritises the wellbeing of both the canine population and the broader community of Aurovilians, villagers, and their pets. Their collective approach is crucial in preventative care for all dogs in the area. With 300 dogs in their care at any given time, the shelter's dedicated work and community-focused efforts have become a source of inspiration for many. Through collaboration and compassion, they continue to safeguard the health and safety of all living beings in the region.

AVI USA deeply values its relationship with the Auroville Dog Shelter and was happy to be able to join in the efforts to stem this community emergency. It is looking forward to closer and richer collaborations in the future.

The Auroville Dog Shelter is fully dependent on donations and on the work of many community members and medical volunteers. Visit @Auroville.Dogs on Instagram for updates!

Matthew

(This article was first published in the AVI USA September newsletter. An edited version is published here with permission of AVI-USA.)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Confluence

On September 17th, at the occasion of the pre-full moon, the Matrimandir executives organised a 'confluence' in the Peace Area of the Matrimandir Gardens, inviting Aurovilians, Newcomers and friends to a *Coming Together* in a consecrated atmosphere in silence, sound contemplation, walking, observing, listening, with simple offerings of flowers and candles under the Banyan Tree. There were flower decorations in the Garden of Unity, the installation of Mother's symbol in 36 languages, there were soundscapes in the Garden of the Unexpected, and children offered Sanskrit chants in the Stone Circle. After live music in the Amphitheater, there was silence, flowers and candles.

No news about new Secretary

Still no news has been communicated to the Auroville community about who will replace the former Secretary to the Auroville Foundation, Dr. Jayanti Ravi, whose term of office ended on July 4th, and who was appointed Additional Chief Secretary in the Government of Gujarat on July 31st, 2024. The office of the Auroville Foundation has meanwhile published a recruitment notification for the three deputy secretaries, e.g. Deputy Secretary (Security), Deputy Secretary (Accounts and Audit), and Deputy Secretary (Administration) and for the post of Under Secretary. The notice stated that applications have to be sent on or before October 4th to the Secretary, Auroville Foundation.

Social science income tax exemption

The Government of India has approved the Auroville Foundation as 'Other Institution' for Research in Social Science or Statistical Research for the purposes of clause (iii) of sub-section (1) of section 35 of the Income

Tax Act, 1961. This section of the Income Tax act allows donors to deduct the full amount of their donation to the Auroville Foundation from their taxable income. The notification is valid from the financial years 2024-25 to 2029-2030. To obtain the approval, around 45 Social Science and Statistical Research documents in compliance with CBDT's strict parameters and conditions were submitted to the office of the Auroville Foundation. The office stated that it is important that each unit, activity, and project, does research in the areas of social science or statistics to continue the exemption in future.

Petition against FAMC decisions

Concerned residents have submitted a petition to the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly (RA-WCom), signed by 540 Aurovilians, regarding recent decisions made by the FAMC appointed by the Governing Board (GB-FAMC). The petition received the support of 527 Aurovilians, 8 Newcomers and 5 Auroville youngsters; one person did not support the petition. The petition condemned "the continuous arbitrary decision-making being done by the persons appointed by the Governing Board as the 'FAMC' in taking over assets (both tangible and intangible) created by the Auroville Community; the dismissal of three Aurovilians as executives of Afsaneh's Guesthouse; and the dismissal of an executive of the Pour Tous Purchasing Service. The petition stated that the residents calling themselves the 'FAMC' do not enjoy the confidence of the Residents' Assembly; that no valid reasons for these decisions have been given; that the principles of natural justice had not been followed; and that no proper process for dismissal of managers and executives as defined in the Code of

Conduct (CoC), 2017, has been followed. The petitioners also object to the GB-FAMC's policy of extracting monthly contributions from [foreign] Aurovilians in order to get a 'no dues certificate' to apply for a visa, which, said the petitioners, can be considered as blackmail, extortion and/or a bribe, is creating hardship and bad will, and is discriminatory. Also the GB-FAMC's policy of no longer honouring previous waivers and imposing payment of community contribution dating years prior to the newly created policy was objected to. The petitioners called for an immediate halt to these actions and reversal of these decisions.

Legal notice to GB-FAMC

On behalf of the RA-WCom, a legal notice has been served to the GB-FAMC. Taking into account all the facts, the RA-WCom directs the GB-FAMC (1) to immediately cease dealing with and conspiring with imposters posing as the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly of Auroville in contempt of the orders of the Madras High Court; (2) to immediately cease and desist from making any changes to the executives/trustees/managers of the units and Trusts of Auroville without the written and express approval of the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly till final decisions have been given in the matters pending before the Madras High Court; and (3) to take necessary steps to restore all maintenance support that was being given from community generated funds to those working in community services and groups selected by the community.

Legal opinion re RA-WCom status

The RA-WCom shared with the community a legal opinion regarding the current status of

the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly. The opinion, after considering the various facts of the matter, concluded that "there is and can only be one Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly, and no body of persons without the mandate of the Residents' Assembly can claim to be the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly".

Legal opinion about the Entry Board

The RA-WCom shared with the community a legal opinion on the functioning and validity of the "Admissions Committee" (also known as "Entry Board") constituted by the Residents' Assembly under the Auroville Foundation (Admission and Termination of Persons in the Register of Residents) Regulations 2020 ("2020 Regulations") in the light of the enactment of the Auroville Foundation (Admission and Termination of Persons in the Register of Residents) Regulations 2023 and the stay granted against the same by the Madras High Court via order dated on 23.2.2024. The opinion concluded that the Admissions Committee selected by the Residents Assembly can continue to function under the 2020 Regulations subject to any further or other orders passed by the Hon'ble Madras High Court.

Road safety

The RA-WCom informed the community that, after the road accident that tragically took the life of a young volunteer at the road curve near Evergreen, it has approached the relevant authorities to urge them to put in place safety measures and ensure that the speed breakers that have recently been re-installed are adequately marked.

About Auroville Today

Auroville Today is an activity of the Kattidakalai Trust of the Auroville Foundation. The GST number is 33AAATA0037BXZV

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Subscription information

Subscription rates for 12 issues: India: Print + digital edition: Rs 850 Other countries: Print + digital edition: Rs 4,000 equivalent. Digital only edition: Rs 3,000 equivalent.



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Editorial team:

Alan, Carel, Chandra, Gita, Peter. Proofreading: Alan, Gita. DTP: Carel. Print editing: Jean-Denis. Digital editing: Krishna V. Published by Carel Thieme on behalf of the Auroville Foundation. Printed by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry, and published at Surrender, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu.