



WORKING COMMITTEE
of the Residents' Assembly
AUROVILLE FOUNDATION

Rewriting Auroville's narrative

CENSORSHIP & TAKEOVER OF COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS

2/3 AUROVILLE DOSSIER
DECEMBER 2022



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Auroville is an **international, experimental** and **spiritual community** located in Tamil Nadu, south India. Founded in 1968 and based on the teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, Auroville is supported by the Indian Government through the Auroville Foundation, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Education, and by UNESCO through five resolutions of support.

What follows is a compilation of events that Auroville residents have been faced with since the appointment of Dr Jayanti Ravi as Secretary to the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation. This dossier is focusing on the takeover of Auroville's communication platforms, practices of censorship and attempts to rewrite Auroville's narrative by the Office of the Secretary **between December 2021 and December 2022**.

Two other dossiers on related themes are currently being compiled, and will be released as and when available.

A Dream

“There should be somewhere on earth a place which no nation could claim as its own, where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme truth; a place of peace, concord and harmony where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weaknesses and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; ...

In short, it would be a place where human relationships, which are normally based almost exclusively on competition and strife, would be replaced by relationships of emulation in doing well, of collaboration and real brotherhood.”

*Extract from “A Dream”
one of Auroville’s foundational texts
written by the Mother in 1954*

Censorship & Takeover of Communication Platforms

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Introduction

Auroville was founded in 1968 by The Mother as an experimental society dedicated to manifesting Sri Aurobindo's vision of a "life divine", as part of "an effort to create a new life-formation which will exceed the ordinary human society" (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* - II, p. 1060). 'A Dream', a text written by The Mother in 1954 on which is founded Auroville's vision and purpose, mentions **a place "where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme Truth"** - and this is what Auroville aims to become.

Auroville being first and foremost a collective adventure, a unique framework - **the Auroville Foundation Act (1988) - was created to grant the community the freedom to experiment, innovate and grow as a group Soul.** This freedom is asserted mainly via its Residents' Assembly, a statutory body composed of all adult residents of Auroville. This liberty and duty to explore new forms of collective being over the last 54 years has given birth to innovative approaches to education, construction, farming, self-governance, healing, conflict resolution, financial systems, afforestation, sustainable lifestyle, as well as a thriving communal life.

With the rise of new technologies at the end of the 20th century, Auroville started exploring digital tools to further enrich its collective dimension. An online domain, **auroville.org.in**, was registered in 1996 and email accounts were created under it for all Aurovilians. Several mailing lists were then set up for residents and their representatives to be able to reach each-other, and an online discussion forum was created for Aurovilians to have a space on which they could share ideas, information and projects. **These digital tools have increasingly become an essential asset for the self-governance of Auroville.** With the recent appointment of Dr Jayanti Ravi as the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, these digital tools have progressively been taken over, and **censorship is being enforced** as an attempt to restrain Auroville's liberty and ability to experiment with new ways of organising itself. Those working under the Secretary's authority also wish to **propagate their narrative about Auroville and its development, supplanting the living expression of Auroville that has emerged over its decades of existence.**

From the beginning, the Mother had specified that **Auroville does not want any advertisement nor recruitment**, citing Sri Aurobindo's words from 1934: "It means that hundreds or thousands of useless people join in and corrupt the work or reduce it to a pompous farce from which the Truth that was coming down recedes into secrecy and silence" (*From a letter by Sri Aurobindo, October 1934, On Himself, pp. 375-76*). However, the press has progressively - and even more so over the past 25 years - been interested in Auroville's unique values, achievements and heritage. For this interest to be channelled efficiently, including the prevention of propaganda and advertisement, and to better reflect the ideals of Auroville, the Auroville community has created its own processes for welcoming and guiding visiting journalists, and has delegated this task to a group of trusted residents. With the recent takeover of this community service, called 'OutreachMedia', there have been many attempts to **rewrite Auroville's narrative for the sake of recruiting 12,000 new residents by 2025**, an objective set by the newly appointed Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation. Many fallacious statements and heinous comments on Auroville, its residents and their achievements have also started to stem in the media, in an



attempt to justify the takeover of Auroville's assets and **appropriate the hard work poured into this land by its pioneers and residents.**

This forceful appropriation of Auroville's representation has also led the Office of the Secretary to take control over the Auroville Archives, founded by the highly respected Major General Krishna Tewari in the early years of the community to preserve elements of Auroville's unique history and evolution - including documents, testimonials, pictures, video footage, and more. The residents no longer have control over this precious heritage of their common past and are concerned about the possible **altering of Auroville's history** - a move that would go along with other ongoing attempts to rewrite Auroville's narrative. It is this unlawful takeover of Auroville's narrative and associated issues of censorship, which put into peril the very aims, ideals and heritage of Auroville, that is detailed in this dossier.

Overview of useful definitions

On Auroville's structure and governance:

Auroville Foundation: Autonomous Foundation registered under the Ministry of Education as a body corporate with autonomous arrangements for its own governance, enshrined in an Act of Parliament (Auroville Foundation Act, 1988). Constituents of the Auroville Foundation are:

Auroville Foundation Office (AVFO): Office of the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation. See below 'Secretary'.

Governing Board (GB): The Governing Board is composed of 9 individuals, 7 of which are appointed by the Central Government and 2 of which are ex-officio members. It is vested with the "general superintendence" of the Auroville Foundation. The GB is briefed on pertinent issues by a Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, and by the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly (WCom).

International Advisory Council (IAC): The International Advisory Council is composed of 5 eminent international figures who are devoted to the ideals of human unity, peace and progress, also appointed by the Central Government. Its role is to advise the Governing Board, especially to ensure that the Aurovilians are given freedom to grow and to experiment in accordance with the ideals set forth in the Auroville Charter.

Residents' Assembly (RA): The Residents' Assembly is composed of all adult members of the Auroville community, as entered into the register of residents. It is responsible for all day-to-day management, administration and decision-making of the community, and further has the authority to undertake such duties in whichever way it sees fit.

Secretary: The Secretary of the Auroville Foundation is appointed by the Central Government and stationed in Auroville to conduct its duties under the authority of the GB. The duties of the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation pertain to the legal and financial administration of the Foundation, such as endorsing visa applications for non-Indian Aurovilians, authorising the creation of entities (Trusts) within which Auroville's economic activities are accounted, filing



Auroville's income tax returns, and overseeing the purchase, sale, and protection (from encroachment) of Auroville land.

Working Committee: Auroville's 7-member Working Committee (WCom) is the statutory body responsible under the Auroville Foundation Act for assisting the Residents' Assembly and liaising with the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation. It also functions as the official representative of the Residents' Assembly to local officials, the Government of India, and other outside bodies. Members of the Auroville Residents' Assembly are periodically appointed for the Working Committee by the Residents' Assembly itself.

Auroville Council: The Auroville Council (AVC) is composed of up to 9 residents appointed by the Residents' Assembly and has an overall mandate to look after the internal affairs of Auroville, ensuring the adherence of Auroville's working groups to their individual mandates and arranging mediation and arbitration for conflict resolution amongst residents whenever necessary.

Funds and Assets Management Committee (FAMC): Auroville's 9-member Funds and Assets Management Committee is the statutory body responsible for the management of the Auroville Foundation's funds and assets, and required to advise the Governing Board on the utilisation of funds generated by and for Auroville and management of its assets, including the sale/acquisition of immovable assets, and on taxes and audits. The FAMC oversees the performance of Trusts and Units of the Auroville Foundation, approves the creation and closure of Trusts and Units and the appointment and resignation of Trustees and Executives, respectively. It evolves guidelines and policies for the management of Trusts, Units and immovable assets such as housing and other public buildings, and funds held by the Auroville Unity Fund

Working Groups: Since its early years, the Residents' Assembly has gradually formed a number of administrative 'Working Groups' to take up management or coordination of various aspects of community life. These Working Groups remain accountable to the Residents' Assembly as a whole, and are also restructured by the Residents' Assembly when this is felt to be necessary to improve their role and functioning.

IMPORTANT NOTE

The Office of the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation ('Auroville Foundation Office' - AVFO) has reconstituted many of the important working groups and committees of the Residents' Assembly, **creating parallel groups**. For the purpose of clarity, names of these parallel groups will be preceded and followed by slashes, e.g. /AVFO 'WCom/'

NB: For more definitions and a better understanding of Auroville's governance (and its takeover), see the Dossier: Takeover of Auroville's Internal Governance.

On the sphere of communication in Auroville

Auronet: Auronet is an online forum that is accessible only to members of the Auroville community. It was created in 2000 and has about 500 visitors on a daily basis. Before its takeover



in May 2022, the Working Groups would share their reports and announcements on Auronet, on a regular basis.

Auroville Media Interface: Auroville Media Interface is the name of the public relations cell of the Office of the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation. The channel only presents the perspectives of the AVFO and the Governing Board and does not seek to represent the views of the Residents' Assembly.

Auroville Media Liaison Service: Auroville Media Liaison Service is the name of the public relations and communications cell created by the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly in July 2022, following the takeover of Auroville OutreachMedia (see below) in an attempt to give a voice to the perspective of the Auroville residents which would otherwise be silenced.

Auroville OutreachMedia: Auroville OutreachMedia has been, since 1996, Auroville's interface with the press and visiting journalists. OutreachMedia has always been managed by a team of dedicated Aurovilians. Shortly after it was taken over in February 2022, OutreachMedia was renamed into 'Auroville Media Interface' (see above). The heritage of OutreachMedia continues to live through the work of 'Auroville Media Liaison Service' (see above).

Domain: An Internet domain name is a unique name of an organisation or person on the Internet. All websites have a domain name, which is combined with a generic suffix such as .com or .org. Auroville has several domains, such as auroville.org and auroville.org.in.

Auroville.org.in: Since its registration in 1996, the auroville.org.in domain has been used for online tools related to the internal affairs of Auroville. For instance, the Auronet community forum's address is <https://www.auroville.org.in> and the email addresses of Auroville residents, Working Groups, enterprises, services and other entities end with @auroville.org.in.

Auroville.services: Since the takeover of the Auroville.org.in domain in May 2022, and the blocking of several Aurovillian users from their email accounts, the Working Groups of the Auroville Residents' Assembly have registered new email addresses under the domain auroville.services. Official email addresses of Working Groups selected and endorsed by the Residents' Assembly now end with @auroville.services.

Google workspace: The tool used to manage the email addresses of all Aurovilians, all Auroville units and communal services is provided by Google and is called the 'Google workspace'.

Massbulletin: The Massbulletin is an emailing tool that has been in place for many years and has been serving as the main tool for communicating urgent and important messages to the Auroville residents.

Sysop: Sysop is the name given to the System Operators and administrators of the @auroville.org.in Google workspace. For years, the Sysop team has been in charge of creating new email accounts for Auroville, and managing the existing ones. The longstanding Sysop team was dismissed by the Office of the Secretary in May 2022 and replaced by unknown administrators.



Censorship in the Press & the Media

Executive Summary

Since 1996, the official communication channel between the residents of Auroville and the visiting Press & Media has been **Auroville Outreach Media**. Outreach Media is a community service officially recognised by the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly, and was officially approved by the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation in 2008.

In the beginning of December 2021, national and international media began to show interest in covering the current Auroville crisis, initiated by the unprecedented and violent destruction of Auroville's endangered Tropical Dry Evergreen forests and its Youth Centre, perpetrated at the behest of Dr Jayanti Ravi, Secretary of the Auroville Foundation. Two days after these events, the Office of the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation (AVFO) instructed Outreach Media to not issue any statement on the current affairs of Auroville. Instead, it appointed its own "Official Spokespersons" in order to **control the narrative and discourse produced by the media on Auroville, and the crisis it is now facing**. The two spokespersons chosen by the AVFO are individuals who are known to have controversial views on Auroville's management and development. Since then, intimidation has repeatedly been used to dissuade residents from speaking up and approaching the media, while these "Official Spokespersons" continue to issue fallacious statements that do not represent the voice of the residents and are harmful to Auroville's reputation.

In January 2022, the Auroville Foundation Office (AVFO) requested Outreach Media to hand over its office and assets - including its email accounts and digital archives - to the 'spokespersons' for their press activities. Both the Outreach Media executives and the Auroville Funds and Assets Management Committee (FAMC) – responsible for overseeing all the funds and assets of Auroville – requested that first, substantial reasons for it be given in writing. Two weeks later, this takeover was forcefully executed.

Without a representative, officially recognised communication channel, the Residents' Assembly struggles to get its views communicated by the media. This **silencing of Auroville residents** has gotten worse in the months following the Outreach Media takeover, with a systematic censorship of Auroville's internal communication channels and unprecedented restriction of communications between residents, detailed in the following sections.

Glossary

Auronet: Online discussion forum for the Auroville community.

Auroville Council (AVC): Auroville Working Group responsible for the internal affairs of Auroville.

Auroville Foundation Office (AVFO): See 'Office of the Secretary' below.

Auroville Media Interface: Public Relations cell of the AVFO.

FAMC: Funds and Assets Management Committee of the Auroville Foundation.



Governing Board (GB): One of the three statutory bodies of the Auroville Foundation, consisting of seven members nominated by the Ministry of Education, Central Government of India, as well as two ex-officio members.

Office of the Secretary (AVFO): Office of Dr Jayanti Ravi, Secretary to the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation. Also referred to as 'Auroville Foundation Office' (AVFO).

Outreach Media: Body which has historically, since 1996, liaised with the visiting press, on behalf of the Auroville residents.

Residents' Assembly (RA): Residents' Assembly, one of the three authorities of the Auroville Foundation, composed of all Aurovilians over 18.

Undersecretary: Mr Srinivasmurthy, Undersecretary in charge of Finances & Accounts for the AVFO.

Working Committee (WCom): Representative body of the Auroville Residents' Assembly of the Auroville Foundation.

Timeline of Events

Dec 5
2021

Bulldozers are sent at 1 am by the AVFO to destroy Auroville forests and assets of the Auroville Youth Center

Aurovilians and well-wishers, including well-connected press supporters, are in shock. The next morning, several reporters ask to cover this event. In the following days and weeks, several press articles on this unprecedented situation and the rise of violence in Auroville are released.

Dec 6

OutreachMedia requests the Press not to cover the event, but the AVFO calls for a Press conference

In a press release, OutreachMedia requests the media to "hold off from covering these events, while the Auroville community finds a peaceful way forward". The same is instructed to the community through Auronet. However the same day, the Secretary to the Auroville Foundation calls for a Press conference to have her version of the events covered.

→ [Appendix A-1 - Press release by OutreachMedia](#)

→ [Appendix A-2 - Community announcement by OutreachMedia](#)

Dec 7

OutreachMedia and Auroville residents are instructed not to issue any statement to the press, while official 'spokespersons' are nominated

The AVFO instructs that "the OutreachMedia of Auroville and others shall refrain on issuing any statements". Instead, AVFO appoints two official 'spokespersons' without seeking any approval from the residents. The said 'spokespersons' are known to have extreme views on Auroville and are publicly associated with QAnon, an American political conspiracy theory and political movement.

→ [Appendix A-3 - Email from AVFO to OutreachMedia](#)



Dec 7 -
ongoing

An anonymous group of residents register a new domain, standforaurovilleunity.com. In the following days they create “Stand For Auroville Unity”, a website and its social media channels, to ensure that the perspective of residents is voiced. From that moment onwards, residents have been using these anonymous channels to inform wellwishers across the globe of what is happening in Auroville.

Dec 8 - 10

OutreachMedia, residents of Auroville, and the Auroville Council respond
OutreachMedia writes a response to the AVFO questioning the suppression of freedom of speech, and the appointment of biased spokespersons for Auroville. Parallely, residents sign a statement in support of OutreachMedia, while stressing that “the two spokespersons of the Secretariat do not represent Auroville.” It is signed by 695 individuals in a few days, which is close to 30% of the adult population. In a community announcement, the Auroville Council addresses the Undersecretary of the AVFO, stating: “you have not consulted with all the necessary authorities (GB, IAC and RA) in order to make these appointments of spokespersons”. They further insist that the individuals chosen for the task “are of a divisive nature in our community and are not well respected by many in Auroville.”
These responses receive no answer nor acknowledgment.

- [Appendix A-4 - OutreachMedia’s response to the AVFO](#)
 - [Appendix A-5 - Statement in support of OutreachMedia](#)
 - [Appendix A-6 - Auroville Council community announcement](#)
-

Dec 8 - Jan 20

OutreachMedia does not issue a single statement to the press on the situation that Auroville is going through. Residents reach out to journalists in an unorganised and organic manner, without the involvement of OutreachMedia. The ‘spokespersons’ appointed by the Secretary issue several statements to the press which do not represent the residents’ views.

Dec 11 -
ongoing

Residents launch a petition on Change.org and collect over 50,000 signatures denouncing the bulldozing of Auroville trees and assets.

- [Change.org petition “SOS from Auroville”](#)
-

Jan 20
2022

The Office of the Secretary requests OutreachMedia to vacate the office, asking its manager “to hand over all the movable and immovable, tangible and intangible assets”. The reasons given are the fact that this material was obtained through a grant by the Government of India for the 50th anniversary of Auroville, and that the same is “required for Information and Public Relation activities of the Foundation”.

- [Appendix A-7 - OutreachMedia handover by the Secretary](#)
-



Jan 21 - 22 **OutreachMedia manager and the FAMC respond to the Undersecretary**, explaining why they do not agree with the Undersecretary's demand and the reasons mentioned in it. None of these responses receive any answer nor acknowledgment.

- [Appendix A-8 - OutreachMedia executive response to the Undersecretary](#)
- [Appendix A-9 - OutreachMedia executive response to the Undersecretary](#)
- [Appendix A-10 - FAMC response to the Undersecretary](#)

Feb 9 **The Undersecretary issues an Office Order to change the OutreachMedia manager**, dismissing and replacing her by the two 'spokespersons' of the Foundation Office. This is done without the agreement of the residents, nor of the FAMC. The same day, the main entry to the OutreachMedia office is locked and sealed by the AVFO.

- [Appendix A-11 - OutreachMedia Office Order](#)
- [Appendix A-12 - OutreachMedia office locked](#)

Feb 10 **OutreachMedia manager writes to the Undersecretary** in an attempt to dispel "serious and false accusations" against OutreachMedia and personally against her. It remains unreplied.

- [Appendix A-13 - Letter from OutreachMedia executive](#)

Feb 12 **AVFO reports the "change of management" of OutreachMedia** on AuroNet with the intent to officialise the takeover.

- [Appendix A-14 - AVFO announcement regarding OutreachMedia](#)

Feb 14 **Residents publish an open letter in support of the dismissed OutreachMedia**. The said letter, signed by over 400 residents, states its support to the dismissed manager of OutreachMedia. It also raises concerns about the AVFO's 'spokespersons', who are said to have "made numerous false claims to reporters regarding the protests" and to not represent the voice of the residents. This letter remains unanswered.

- [Appendix A-15 - Letter in support of the dismissed OutreachMedia](#)

Feb 20 **OutreachMedia manager writes a letter to the community**
The day before the Mother's birth anniversary, the OutreachMedia manager dismissed by the Undersecretary writes a letter to the community, explaining the situation and the unfolding of events over the past weeks.



→ [Appendix A-16 - OutreachMedia executive letter to the community](#)

Mar 3 **/AVFO 'Outreach Media'/ cooperates with Mr. Vikram Ramakrishnan**
Team members of the new /AVFO 'OutreachMedia/' are seen with Mr. Vikram Ramakrishnan, who is known to have defamed Auroville and Aurovilians through several web platforms and social media. This raises questions and concerns on the aims of the new team.

→ [Appendix A-17 - Picture of the new /AVFO "OutreachMedia team"/ with Vikram Ramakrishnan](#)

Early June **/AVFO 'OutreachMedia/' is renamed to 'Media Interface'**, probably in response to the court case filed in regards to the takeover of OutreachMedia. This is later announced in a publication of the new 'Media Interface' that mentions: "Auroville Tomorrow is a publication of Auroville Media Interface (AMI), formerly called Outreach Media."

Jun 11 **AVFO 'Spokespersons' announce the creation of an Auroville TV channel**
Auroville Media Interface, the new name for /AVFO 'Outreach Media/' which had been taken over by the AVFO and their spokespersons, announces the launch of an Auroville TV channel in collaboration with Jio. In the same week, several short videos are published over YouTube to promote Auroville, some of them with wrong images or information. This is of concern to many residents, since the Mother has clearly said that there should be no promotional publicity relating to this unique experiment.

→ [Appendix A-18 - An Auroville TV Channel is announced](#)

Aug 12 **The case filed by Anita Gaur in regards to OutreachMedia is dismissed** on the basis of an absence of *locus standi*. The judge informs that the removal of Fabienne Marechal as an Executive of OutreachMedia was a "person-centric" issue. As the Office Order was challenged by a third party who was not affected by the Office Order, the judge found in favour of the AVFO.

→ [Full OutreachMedia case judgement](#)

Nov 25 **An article is posted in The Hindu, based on a press release from 'Media Interface' impersonating the Residents' Assembly.** The article includes fallacious statements and tries to distort the voice of the Auroville residents, effectively having them say the opposite of what they stand for.

→ [Appendix A-19 - The Hindu article wrongfully quoting the Residents' Assembly](#)



UPDATED TILL 1st DECEMBER 2022



WORKING COMMITTEE
of the Residents' Assembly

AUROVILLE FOUNDATION

Auroville Dossier 2/3 - December 2022
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Takeover of Internal Communication Platforms

Executive Summary

For its internal functioning, the Auroville community uses several digital communication tools such as an email domain under which all Auroville residents, committees and enterprises have a dedicated email ID (@auroville.org.in), an emailing service called 'massbulletin' which reaches all Auroville residents, and an online discussion forum for Aurovilians called 'Auronet'. **Over the years, these essential services have been managed by trusted residents of Auroville.**

From early May 2022 onwards, the AVFO has systematically interfered with the internal communication platforms of Auroville, basing its actions on an unsubstantiated complaint "regarding the rise of anti-government and anti-national activities in Auroville through all forms of electronic media, as well as other means". This complaint has never been shared with the competent Auroville committees, and seems to be **a ploy to censor, harass and threaten the many Aurovilians who do not agree with the direction the Secretary is taking and the methods she is using.** On these fallacious grounds, the AVFO has been taking over admin keys, appointing its own admins without any transparency towards the community, censoring contents which are not in line with its narrative, and targeting individual users that do not agree with its actions.

Since May, many users have been blocked from accessing either their @auroville.org.in email id, their Auronet account, or both. Most legitimate committees of Aurovilians, formed under the provisions of the Auroville Foundation Act, have been **denied access** to their mailboxes, their Auronet accounts and other such online tools. **Most channels of communication - massbulletin, Auronet, and other mailing lists - are being heavily censored and restrained.** Individuals and enterprises using their @auroville.org.in email id have been blocked from sharing contents of their online Drive with others, which has created havoc.

As of today, Aurovilians have no idea who is currently administering these important communication platforms, and the list of Aurovillian individuals and organisations arbitrarily blocked from Auronet and email accounts grows daily. In response, many of our Working Groups have set up alternative email ids, which are consistently blocked from communicating with @auroville.org.in email ids. As a result, most Aurovilians have left their Auroville email addresses for purposes of daily communication as their ability to communicate with their Working Groups, as well as their privacy, is severely impacted. There are first hand accounts proving that these unknown admins are reading people's and group's @auroville.org.in emails, **in complete disregard of the most basic laws of privacy.**

Glossary

Auronet: Online discussion forum for the Auroville community.

Auroville Council (AVC): Auroville Working Group responsible for the internal affairs of Auroville.

Auroville Foundation Office (AVFO): See 'Office of the Secretary' below.

FAMC: Funds and Assets Management Committee of the Auroville Foundation



- /AVFO 'FAMC': FAMC appointed by the Office of the Secretary.
- RA FAMC: FAMC appointed by the Residents' Assembly.

Governing Board (GB): One of the three statutory bodies of the Auroville Foundation, consisting of seven members nominated by the Ministry of Education, Central Government of India, and two ex-officio members.

Massbulletin: Mailing list used to contact all Aurovilians, as and when needed.

Office of the Secretary (AVFO): Office of Dr Jayanti Ravi, Secretary to the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation. Also referred to as 'Auroville Foundation Office' (AVFO).

Residents' Assembly (RA): Residents' Assembly, one of the three authorities of the Auroville Foundation, composed of all Aurovilians over 18.

Residents' Assembly Service (RAS): A service that coordinates the decision-making activities of the Residents' Assembly. It is not a decision-making body.

Undersecretary: Mr Srinivasmurthy, Undersecretary in charge of Finances & Accounts for the AVFO.

Working Committee (WCom): Representative body of the Auroville Residents' Assembly of the Auroville Foundation.

- /AVFO 'WCom': WCom endorsed by the Office of the Secretary.
- RA WCom: WCom appointed by the Residents' Assembly.

Working Groups: Administrative groups and committees of the Residents' Assembly in charge of management and coordination of various aspects of community life.

Timeline of Events

May 10 - 11

Ex-members of the Working Committee are dismissed, but attempt to takeover the group's official email and Auronet accounts

Following a vote of the Residents' Assembly, four members of the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly are removed from office with immediate effect (for more information, see the *Dossier: Takeover of Auroville's Internal Governance*). However, the AVFO does not accept these results and instead decides to support the members who have been dismissed (Anu, Arun, Partha and Srimoyi). The same day, the dismissed members write to the Secretary with cc to Auronet and Sysop requesting that the passwords and accesses to these accounts be reset to enable them to retain control over these.

The Undersecretary instructs Sysop & Auronet to comply

This is followed by an email from the Undersecretary, instructing that "the Sysop may immediately reset the Working Committee group mail and share the new passwords with the new members", referring to those who have been dismissed from office. A similar request is made to the Auronet admins. The Auronet team contacts the Auroville Council for advice.

- [Appendix B-1 - Dismissed WC members email to Secretary](#)
- [Appendix B-2 - Undersecretary email to Sysop and Auronet managers](#)



May 12

Auroville Council responds to the Auronet team

In its response, the Auroville Council emphasises that “Auronet is an internal service of the Residents’ Assembly under the supervision of the Working Committee and the Auroville Council”, and “the request from Mr Srinivasmurthy can respectfully not be honoured”.

→ [Appendix B-3 - AV Council response to the Auronet Team](#)

May 17

The Undersecretary requests Sysop and Auronet teams to hand over the admin keys to the auroville.org.in email and the Auronet platform.

The reason stated for this takeover is that “the Auroville Foundation office is in receipt of a complaint regarding the rise of anti-government and anti-national activities in Auroville through all forms of electronic media, as well as other means.”

The same day, the FAMC and bonafide Working Committee (hereafter called the RA WCom) respond, expressing the need for the complaint, and its associated evidence, to be shared, so that this serious allegation can be investigated. The RA WCom also notes that this substantiation is necessary as handing over the admin keys would amount to a substantial breach of privacy for individual users. Both Sysop and Auronet admins are unwilling to hand over the admin keys without the evidence first being shared with the RA WCom and FAMC.

- [Appendix B-4 - Undersecretary to Sysop](#)
 - [Appendix B-5 - Undersecretary to Auronet admin](#)
 - [Appendix B-6 - FAMC response](#)
 - [Appendix B-7 - Working Committee response](#)
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May 18

Auronet password reset by one former Auronet admin

One former Auronet admin who supports the takeover of the AVFO hands over the admin keys to Auronet against the wishes of his team, and the Auroville Council. The Council duly informs the community of the same. Shortly after the Auronet admin keys are handed over to the AVFO, the membership of the Auronet group for the Working Committee is changed without informing anyone. New members of this group are not approved by the residents of Auroville, and include those who have been removed from office by a vote of the Residents’ Assembly.

- [Appendix B-8 - Message from former Auronet admin](#)
 - [Appendix B-9 - Communication from Av Council](#)
 - [Appendix B-10 - Membership of WC on Auronet is cancelled](#)
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May 19 - 20

The AVFO allegedly reaches out to Google HQ to request legal access to the auroville.org.in Google workspace. Upon the AVFO’s request, Google disables access to all current and past workspace administrators’ accounts.



In a joint statement to the community, the Auroville Council and RA Working Committee inform the community that the auroville.org.in admin access has been changed and is now in the hands of the AVFO, including mails and other related services.

→ [Appendix B-11 - Joint statement from the AVC and RA WCom](#)

May 21

The RA Working Committee reassures the community

In its communication, the RA Working Committee asks the community to stay calm and rest assured that all possible steps are being taken regarding the takeover of internal communication platforms. It also states “that alternative communication methods are being explored.”

→ [Appendix B-12 - Communication from the RA Working Committee](#)

May 23 -
ongoing

Auronet users are banned without notice, and content deleted on a repeated basis

An announcement about the takeover of Auronet is posted by the AVFO on the Auronet platform itself, citing a police complaint received about “unlawful activities” on the forum. It is noted that “a preliminary review of the platform is currently ongoing, and in the interim days/ weeks certain users may find their access temporarily restricted.” From this moment onwards, several users who have expressed contrary opinions to those of the AVFO find that they are no longer able to post, comment, or even access Auronet. These individuals have not posted any contents of an ‘anti-national’ nature. Several Auronet posts are also removed without notice, although they are not of an ‘anti-national’ nature - they may have simply been differing to the views of Dr Ravi.

→ [Appendix B-13 - AVFO announcement regarding Auronet](#)

→ [Appendix B-14 - Screenshots of residents banned from Auronet](#)

May 27

Auronet admin & moderator support team resign

As they do not agree with the decision to handover the administration’s credentials without due consultation, the Auronet admins, as well as the moderator support team, resign from their positions. Since the new admins are unknown, there is no clarity as to who is moderating the platform, restricting user access, and deleting posts.

→ [Appendix B-15 - Auronet admin and moderator resignation](#)

Jun 1

AVFO is granted admin access to the @auroville.org.in domain by Google

Google responds positively to the request of the AVFO to hand over the admin keys (presumably because “Auroville Foundation” – of which the Residents’ Assembly is one pillar – is named on the agreement with Google).



From now onwards, AVFO has full control over the @auroville.org.in email addresses, including all information stored on Google Drives and in people's private inboxes, calendars, and address books. The Sysop administrators are locked out of their administrators access, and also lose access to their personal auroville.org.in email ID's.

→ [Appendix B-22 - AVFO update regarding sysop and Auroville email \(15 Jun\)](#)

Jun 3 - 4

Public announcements regarding the illegitimate reconstitution of Auroville Working Groups, including the FAMC

The residents of Auroville are informed through Auronet that both the FAMC and ATDC are 'reconstituted' by the AVFO (for more information, see the *Auroville Dossier: Takeover of Auroville's Internal Governance*). In complete disregard of Auroville processes, new members are appointed directly by the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation on the recommendations of the Secretary, without any disclosure on the criteria for selection. The communication on the matter is left unsigned and does not give the names of the newly selected members. In an attempt to legitimise these appointments, the AVFO sends out a press release - the changes are reported in the Times of India.

→ [Appendix B-16 - Communication of the AVFO on Auronet](#)
→ [Appendix B-17 - Newspaper article, Times of India](#)

Jun 8

The Auroville Council and RA Working Committee inform the Residents' Assembly about risks related to invasion of privacy and security of their personal information; and the creation of alternative @auroville.services email ids. In a joint communication, the RA Working Committee and Auroville Council alert the community about the risks related to invasion of privacy and security of their personal information and communication by the AVFO. They also inform residents that the Office of the Secretary has disabled a number of personal and working group accounts.

The RA Working Committee and Auroville Council also inform the community of the creation of new email addresses for Auroville Working Groups under a new domain, @auroville.services, given that these RA selected groups no longer have access to their official @auroville.org.in email accounts. However, they also note that the new domain of the legitimate committees of the Residents' Assembly (@auroville.services) is immediately blocked from communicating with @auroville.org.in email accounts. This means that the AVFO admins of the @auroville.org.in domain are actively restricting communications between Auroville residents and their selected representatives.



The RA Working Committee and Auroville Council advise community members to set up alternative email addresses so that they can receive communications from the Residents' Assembly appointed Working Groups.

→ [Appendix B-18 - AVC communication regarding email situation](#)

Jun 9 -
ongoing

The Auroville Massbulletin is taken over

The Massbulletin is the email list of all Auroville residents used to communicate vital announcements such as Residents' Assembly decisions, emergency situations, community events, obituaries, and Working Group updates. This service was provided by a trusted Aurovilian for 20 years, but from one day to the next, this Aurovilian was blocked from accessing the Massbulletin email account. Since June 9th, there is no clarity as to who is currently running the Massbulletin service, which is being used exclusively to spread announcements that are in line with the AVFO's narrative and perspective.

→ [Appendix B-19 - Auroville Massbulletin takeover](#)

Jun 11 -
ongoing

The 'Compats' email forum is taken over

The Compats Forum, is a long-established email forum consisting mostly of early pioneers of Auroville and other well-wishers currently living abroad. The owner of the forum, who had created it in 1996, was replaced from one day to the other by a supporter of Dr Jayanti Ravi, and banned from posting on the platform.

→ [Appendix B-20 - Compats email forum is taken over](#)

Jun 11 -
ongoing

The 'Auroville International' mailing list is taken over

The Aurovilian in charge of the liaison with Auroville International, a worldwide network of several thousand individuals who support the development of Auroville via organisations in 38 countries, reports to the RA Working Committee having lost access to the administration of this mailing list.

→ [Appendix B-21 - Auroville International mailing list is taken over](#)

Jun 14 -
ongoing

RA FAMC members lose access to their @auroville.org.in inboxes, and create an @auroville.services inbox.

→ [Appendix B-22 - Communication from Auroville Council](#)

Jun 15

AVFO posts an update about the auroville.org.in takeover



AVFO posts an update on Auronet regarding the auroville.org.in takeover. Although this update states that “great care [is taken] to ensure no individual accounts experience any inconvenience or downtimes and continue to smoothly operate as before”, several residents and committees report being banned from accessing their personal inboxes.

Additionally, **AVFO appointees share an Excel sheet with a list of email conversations** addressed to the Working Committee of the Residents’ Assembly. **Confidential data of residents**, such as the sender’s email address, the recipient (workingcom@auroville.org.in), and the subject line, **are made public without the residents’ consent**.

→ [Appendix B-23 - AVFO update regarding sysop and Auroville email](#)

Jul 4

The Auroville Council summarises the situation, emphasising that many Aurovilians have “been blocked from using Auronet, have had [their] email accounts forcibly taken over, or have had [their] email accounts blocked from communicating with residents who are still using their @auroville.org.in email addresses.”

→ [Appendix B-24 - Summary from AVC](#)

Jul 18

The /AVFO ‘FAMC’ threatens Auroville groups from changing their email ID

A backdated letter is posted on Auronet by the /AVFO ‘FAMC’ to dissuade working groups from changing their email IDs. The post states that “shifting, copying, deleting of Auroville Foundation soft assets such as online data and working group emails be avoided by all the working group members as it has legal ramifications for Auroville as a whole and the working group members.” This is presumably done to prevent the anticipatory shifting of email accounts by working groups who expect to lose access to their @auroville.org.in accounts.

→ [Appendix B-25 - Communication from AVFO FAMC](#)

Aug 4 -
ongoing

The Admission Committee, also known as the Entry Board, loses access to its mailbox. On August 8th, they report to the community: “As a result, we are unable to fulfil our role properly and can’t process the people waiting for a reply, whether in their ongoing process or still as applicants.” This effectively blocks the admission process to Auroville for many applicants, bringing the population growth of Auroville to a stalemate.

→ [Appendix B-26 - Massbulletin from Entry Board](#)



Aug 22

Announcements regarding the ongoing vote of the Residents' Assembly are removed from Auronet

In a communication to the community, the Residents' Assembly Service, in charge of holding all decision-making processes, informs residents that their latest posts to call for residents' participation in the current voting process has been deleted from Auronet without notice nor explanation.

→ [Appendix B-27 - Announcement from RAS](#)

Aug 30

Budget Coordination Committee loses access to its inboxes and Shared Drives

In an announcement to the community, the BCC (a subgroup of the FAMC) informs that the passwords to their various @auroville.org.in BCC inboxes were changed without their knowledge, and BCC members were removed from the BCC Shared Drives.

→ [Appendix B-28 - Massbulletin from BCC](#)

Sept 2nd

Housing Board loses access to its inboxes and Shared Drives

In a Massbulletin that was shared with the community on 16th September, the Housing Board (a sub-group of FAMC) announced that the passwords to the various housing-related @auroville.org.in email IDs had been changed without their knowledge and Housing Board members had been removed from the related shared drives.

→ [Appendix B-29 - Massbulletin from Housing Board](#)

Oct 19th

The RA Working Committee writes to the Chairman of the Governing Board to bring the email situation back to his attention.

The Secretary has consistently refused to receive any communications from the working groups selected by the Residents' Assembly, her office even refuses to receive letters when they are delivered by registered post. No response is given by the Chairman of the Governing Board.

→ [Appendix B-30 - Letter to the Chairman on the email situation](#)

→ [Appendix B-31 - Example of email blocked by AVFO](#)

UPDATED TILL 1st DECEMBER 2022



Takeover of Auroville Archives

Executive Summary

On June 21st, the AVFO extended its control of Auroville's media and narrative to the Auroville Archives. The Auroville Archives is a repository created by Major General K. K. Tewari, and then personally handed over to two Aurovilians who managed the archives of Auroville for over two decades. Mr G.G. in particular has written several books on Auroville, based on his works in the archives and his insightful collection of the Mother's words and teachings. **The Auroville Archives preserve an important collection of images, videos and documents handed over in trust to the team in charge.**

Invoking a lack of compliance from the Auroville Archives team with their 'spokespersons', the AVFO issued an Office Order in June 2022 to appoint a 'management team' for the Auroville Archives. This management team comprises three members, one of which lives with the 'spokespersons' of the AVFO, and one of which is not Aurovillian and has been reported to the Auroville Council and Auroville Security Service as having aggressive and violent behaviour. In the weeks following the appointment of this new 'management team', **four residents out of the six that were working at the Archives were dismissed, without any proper reasons given.**

Auroville residents are concerned that the takeover of the Auroville Archives is made with the intention of **using the material in the Archives' possession to publicise a narrative that is contrary to the spirit of Auroville**, and that the takeover of this essential service could lead to **a rewriting of Auroville's 54 years of history** that would undermine its legacy.

Glossary

Auroville Foundation Office (AVFO): See 'Office of the Secretary' below.

Auroville Media Interface: Public Relations cell of the AVFO

FAMC: Funds and Assets Management Committee of the Auroville Foundation.

G.G.: Aurovillian and archivist who was personally entrusted with the task of managing the Auroville Archives by its founder, Maj. Gen. K. K. Tewari

Office of the Secretary (AVFO): Office of Dr Jayanti Ravi, Secretary to the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation. Also referred to as 'Auroville Foundation Office' (AVFO).

Working Committee (WCom): Representative body of the Auroville Residents' Assembly of the Auroville Foundation.

Timeline of Events

Jun 21	AVFO's Media Interface requests access from the Auroville Archives In an email communication, one of the AVFO's 'spokespersons' informs the Auroville Archives that "a program of events is being prepared in
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collaboration and at the request of the Ministry of Culture and UNESCO” and subsequently requests to be provided with “the complete catalog of the archived videos stored with the Archives so that we can select the pertinent set of videos for our use and share with the Ministry personnel.”

→ [Appendix C-1 - Media Interface requests access to the Archives](#)

Jun 22

The Auroville Archives team responds to AVFO’s Media Interface

In their response, the Auroville Archives team point out that “the matter of the legal existence of your team has been contested in court and is therefore presently sub-judice”. However, they ask for “a copy of the request letter from India’s Ministry of Culture and from UNESCO”, so as “to better understand what is needed in order to answer these two queries properly”. The response also mentions that “some photos and videos are protected by copyright” and that “most if not all of the videos [the Archives] have which would be suitable for this are already online”.

→ [Appendix C-2 - Auroville Archives team response](#)

Jun 22

AVFO hands over an Office Order to constitute a ‘Management Committee’ for the Auroville Archives; two members are dismissed

Two hours after the above Archives team response is sent, their members are provided with a new Office Order dated June 21st, constituting a Management Committee for the Archives. The said “Management Committee” does not include G. G, the Aurovilian who was personally entrusted with the task of managing the Auroville Archives by its founder, Maj. Gen. K. K. Tewari. Instead, the committee includes two individuals who are known to be strongly aligned with the AVFO’s agenda, one of whom is not an Aurovilian and has been refused a ‘Friend of Auroville’ status, due to alleged repeated cases of harassment and aggressive behaviour.

Two members of the Archives are dismissed by the new “Management Committee”. This includes G.G., who is verbally told he is no longer an executive, and another senior member who was in charge of the catalogue of videos and the Archives image bank. The latter had been in contact with the AVFO ‘spokespersons’ and had provided them with videos and images at their request, in the spirit of the Archives being a service for all residents without discrimination.

→ [Appendix C-3 - Auroville Archives Office Order](#)

End June
- Sept 11

Both dismissed members fall sick; one of them passes away

Following their dismissal by the ‘Management Committee’, both members fall sick. G.G. stays at home for about three weeks, in home quarantine. The other senior member who was in charge of the catalogue of videos starts a series of



scans and has an accident. On 23rd July, when she receives the visit of the other Archives members, she “looks diminished and has difficulties with speaking and with her memory” (verbal report from one of the Archives members). Her health condition further deteriorates. After weeks of struggle, on 11th September, she eventually passes away at the age of 76.

Jul 1 **Two members of the ‘Management Committee’ have a dispute** and one of them ceases to come to the office, according to those working at the Archives.

Jul 18 **The Working Committee sends a letter to G.G. informing that he is still an executive and “can continue to work in and for [the Archives]”.** The letter further states: “We encourage you to continue to go to the Archives and carry on this important work and legacy that was passed to you by Krishna Tiwari and for which you are so well informed and well suited.”

→ [Appendix C-4 - Email to Archives executive from Working Committee](#)

Jul 21 **G.G. visits the Archives; a member of the ‘Management Committee’ uses violence**
When G.G, the executive of the Auroville Archives, comes to the Archives building to see his colleagues, the one member of the new ‘Management Committee’ who is not an Aurovilian uses violence and hateful speech to get him to leave the premises. A report of the event is shared by three members of the Archives team.

→ [Appendix C-5 - Report of violence towards AV Archives Executive](#)

Jul 23 **Two members of the Archives team are dismissed**
Following the events of July 21st in the morning, and through an email from the ‘Management Committee’, two members of the Archives team are informed that they are dismissed, effective immediately. Out of five of the original members of the Archives team, four have been dismissed within a few weeks. A week later, the dismissed members publish a report in which they share several email exchanges with the ‘Management Committee’ as well as their experience of what happened on July 21st.

→ [Appendix C-6 - Update from AV Archives team and email exchange](#)

Jul 24 - ongoing The Archives team now comprises the three members of the ‘Management Committee’ (minus one which no longer goes to the office), and two additional residents. The team no longer reflects the international dimension of Auroville: while the team was earlier composed of two Indians, two French, one German and one North American, its new active team has no cultural diversity. Most residents of Auroville no longer interact with the Auroville Archives, and many are concerned that confidential or private photos, videos



and written records are either misused, altered or deleted. **Many residents fear that Auroville's history is at risk.**

UPDATED TILL 1st DECEMBER 2022



Conclusion & community response

The takeover of most communication channels by the Office of the Secretary has **severely undermined the Residents' Assembly's ability to function collectively**. The voice of the residents is being gagged, and for the first time in Auroville's history, **residents' concerns are being censored**. All of this contributes to **a takeover of Auroville's narrative**, by promoting certain perspectives over others, silencing voices of dissent, and appropriating its recorded history.

The Residents' Assembly and its legitimate representatives have actively faced the authoritarian takeover by **resisting attempts to distort facts and narratives**, and by **encouraging and nurturing the healthy diversity of voices that Auroville represents**. Examples of these responses are:

- A few months after the takeover of Auroville's OutreachMedia, the Working Committee selected by the Residents' Assembly created a media cell to ensure that **a diversity of voices would reach journalists and reporters taking interest in Auroville**, and not only the exclusive views promoted by the Office of the Secretary. This new body, called 'Auroville Media Liaison Service', is in regular contact with journalists; however it struggles to establish its legitimacy, since it is in direct concurrence with Auroville Media Interface, and the AVFO's spokespersons who have taken over 'OutreachMedia' in early 2022.
- Following the takeover of the auroville.org.in email domain, the committees selected by the Residents' Assembly have consistently struggled to reach out to the residents. The massbulletin and the RAS mass mailing system, which were the two main channels by which working groups reached out to the Residents' Assembly, have both been hijacked. In response, the Auroville Council and RA Working Committee set up **an alternative massbulletin system**, both over email and an online application. Many residents, who are still using their auroville.org.in ids, are however blocked by the Office of the Secretary from accessing these information channels.
- The takeover of the AuroNet discussion platform, and the subsequent ban of many users, has led to the silencing of most residents. An anonymous set of residents has created **an alternative Auroville discussion platform, called 'For All'** to include those whose voices were shut. However this platform is not used by many, and a great deal of residents no longer express their views, which is regrettable as freedom of speech is a basic human right and diversity is at the core of Auroville's raison-d'être.

Unfortunately, these efforts have limited success given the AVFO's ever -growing restrictions and impact on communication by and amongst the Residents' Assembly, which is crucial for it to self-organise as enshrined in the Auroville Foundation Act (1988). **Auroville's purpose is to weave together its diversity of voices, rather than silence those that are considered by its administration as voices of dissent. Auroville cannot be built through uniformity.**

Reestablishing the grounds for this multiplicity to be nurtured and encouraged will go a long way in the manifestation of Auroville's ideal, that of Unity in Diversity.



A few press articles

In the weeks following the midnight bulldozing that happened in Auroville on December 5th, 2021, several national and international media outlets covered the news. Here is a glimpse into a few of these press articles - knowing that many more were written.

The News Minute: Auroville residents allege midnight police violence to clear trees for road project

5th December 2021 / Written by Bharathy Singaravel

Copied from

<https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/auroville-residents-allege-midnight-police-violence-clear-trees-road-project-158396>

The Auroville Foundation headed by Union government appointee Dr Jayanti Ravi decided to carry out tree-clearing work at 1.00 am on December 5, with police bandobast.



Auroville residents protest police bandobast

Residents living inside the well-known Auroville Foundation near Puducherry have alleged that police came a little past midnight on Saturday, December 4 with 3 JCB earthmovers to clear trees within the forest complex for the contested Crownway Road. Residents say police personnel forced out people sleeping at the Youth Centre and allegedly assaulted some of the youngsters, including minors.

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, an Auroville Residents Board member told TNM that some of the youngsters were locked up in a police vehicle and at least four to five of them were beaten by the police. Particularly Indian youngsters were targeted by the police, a resident

alleged, adding that they have all been released now. The Crownway will be a peripheral road meant to be laid around Auroville and connecting to the Matrimandir inside.

After hearing the uproar caused by the police presence, many residents reportedly rushed to the spot and managed to stop the JCBs from carrying out the work, but some trees were already uprooted, residents said. For now, the work has been put on hold following the residents' protests. Residents also alleged that the police blocked routes to the site where the work was being carried out and manhandled protesting residents.

The Secretary of Auroville Foundation, Dr Jayanti Ravi, who is a Union government appointee, and the Town Development Council (TDC), residents alleged, are implementing plans that are outdated and do not take into consideration the ecological balance of the forest, elevation, higher rainfall and climate change in the recent years.

"We're not against the development or the Crownway, let it happen. But it needs to be done properly. We're against the show of violence, and using police to enforce the plan. That is unacceptable," said a resident. They also alleged that threats to revoke visas of the residents were made and that no intimation had been given that either the JCBs or the police were to be brought in at the time.

According to a report in The Hindu regarding the night's events, residents said that the Foundation is determined to carry out a plan that is in line with the masterplan of The Mother—Mira Alfassa, founder of Auroville. This masterplan, residents told The Hindu, is no longer ecologically feasible.

A resident also told TNM that the Auroville Universal Township Master Plan – Perspective 2025 had been approved by the former Human Resource Development Ministry in 2001 and notified in a Government of India gazette in 2010. The Detailed Development Plan (DDP) to implement this masterplan which is yet to be finalised will take into consideration present environmental realities, they said.

The resident added that not only had the discussion regarding the DDP not happened, "all adaptive planning strategies [such as catering for ecological concerns] are being viewed as an erosion of the Mother's vision by the TDC and the Foundation's secretary. This is a case of originalists v evolutionists—experts who know the land and recommend taking into consideration climate change, the water crisis and so on." They also alleged that as there has been no debate, the development work was stagnating for which the experts are being blamed. "Adding violence to the equation is not going to move us closer to working together," they said.

Speaking to TNM, the Villupuram Superintendent of Police said, "The foundation had requested police bandobast for the tree clearing expecting pushback from the residents. Accordingly, police personnel from the Kottakuppam station, under whose jurisdiction Auroville falls, were sent." He denied allegations of any violence having taken place.

When asked why the work had to be carried out in the middle of the night rather than during the day, he said that it was the foundation's decision "because the residents would create problems

during daylight”. On the question of why there had been no discussion with the residents before the work was carried out, he replied that “they have no say in the matter, but if they have a problem they can take it up legally”.

Outlook India: Why Auroville Inhabitants Feel Their Human Unity Experiment Is Under Threat

14th December 2021 / Written by Thufail Pt

Copied from

<https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-why-auroville-inhabitants-feel-their-human-unity-experiment-is-under-threat/404914>

In the middle of the eco-friendly habitat, residents have woken up to a shock of the construction of a Crownway road which threatens to damage the ambience of Auroville - a quaint experiment of Human Unity.



Rachna (name changed) came to Auroville 20 years ago to dedicate her life “to the path of inner discovery”. The well-known experimental township near Pondicherry was founded in 1968 by Mirra Alfassa (known as Mother to her followers) to realise human unity. But, Rachna and around 3500 other inhabitants, including foreign nationals, of Auroville are now in the middle of an existential struggle to protect the idea of their commune. At the heart of it is the construction of a Crownway road inside the Auroville forest. But the residents here say that for them it is much more than that.

“We are at Auroville to realise how the spirit can really shine through layers of social, moral, cultural and racial conditioning that exist in the outside world through the teachings of the Mother. The basic need for such a thing is freedom,” Rachna says.

But, past midnight on December 4, Auroville’s residents felt that their freedom was at stake. The local police along with a group of outsiders came to the tranquil Auroville campus in the wee hours and started uprooting trees and demolishing the Youth Centre using JCB earthmovers for the road project. The residents alleged that the police assaulted the youngsters who were sleeping at the Youth Centre as well as those who came to protest.

The decision by the Auroville Foundation, an autonomous body, to go ahead with the construction of the road has met with stiff opposition from the residents here.



The fissures between the Auroville Foundation and the residents had started after the death of Mirra Alfassa. The Indian parliament enacted the Auroville Foundation Act in 1988. As per the Act, Auroville has three authorities- namely, the Governing Board, Resident Assembly and the Auroville International Advisory Council. The Governing Board comprises eminent personalities appointed by the government of India while the International Advisory Council is comprised of five internationally reputed persons, normally from different nations. The Resident Assembly has all the Auroville residents of age above 18 years as the members.

The residents have now alleged that the new secretary of the Foundation appointed by the Centre, Jayanti Ravi, a Gujarat-cadre IAS officer, has taken unilateral decisions without consulting the residents or taking them into confidence.

“The police action was a shock and trauma for the entire community. Auroville has never seen such violence before,” says Radhika (name changed) an inhabitant. “They even threatened to confiscate the foreign inmates’ visas and passports,” Radhika said.

“We continued our peaceful and silent protest. On December 10, we managed to get an interim stay from the National Green Tribunal on constructing the Crown Road till December 17,” Radhika said. But the tension lingers.

“We are not against development. We are only saying that let’s follow the community processes and let’s talk,” Radhika said, adding, “We want to stop tree cutting and we want to stop violence.”



Auroville was founded by Mirra Alfassa, a French occultist who lived between the years 1878-1973, and who was a spiritual partner of the Indian Guru Sri Aurobindo with an aim to fulfill the latter’s vision of human progress and spiritual evolution. Several people from all across the world came to Auroville and settled there in response to the call for building the city of humanity.

“It was a barren red land when people came here 50 years ago,” Radhika says. “There was no water and the people started planting trees and cultivated a forest here, which has now grown organically ensuring water security in Pondicherry and other neighbouring bio regions.”

Another resident, 82-years-old Frederick Schulze Buxloh from Germany recalls he had landed up in the Mother's ashram in 1960. "I was born in 1939, just before the Second World War started. I did not have any direct experience of the war. But I have had great problem in the aftermath understanding what actually processed the German race to commit such brutality. This was the reason why I came to India.

There were four persons who influenced me at that time- Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and Vivekananda. I spent six months in the ashram and met the Mother regularly. From 1961 to 1966 I studied philosophy in Germany. In 1966, I came back and started working for the preparation of the inauguration of Auroville. I have been in Auroville since 1968 that makes it over 54 years."

"What's happening right now is shaking me to the core. It's a danger to the mother's dream," he says.

"It brings tears to my eyes. We have dedicated our lives to this experiment for human unity. They are my children and grandchildren. They are standing in front of heavy machineries, being manhandled and harassed. It breaks my heart. It kills the spirit of Auroville," he says.

"India has given us shelter. There is no other country that has the wisdom and tolerance to allow something like this. I don't want to blame one side or the other. Don't superimpose a rigid ideological template on us. This is our prayer," he concludes.

Wall Street International Magazine / Meer: Bulldozing a dream? Auroville's importance as an experiment in alternative living

9th January 2022 / Written by Ashish Kothari

Copied from <https://www.meer.com/en/68234-bulldozing-a-dream>



Part of the forests regenerated by Auroville's residents © Ashish Kothari

Bulldozers knocking down trees and threatening built-up structures at 1 am: such action can only come from a source that has no legitimacy to work during the day. Yet in early December 2021, a community in India with members from 60 countries, that has lived peacefully for over 50 years in a unique (and unfinished) experiment of multi-cultural co-existence, had to suffer precisely such a traumatic incident. But what this community, Auroville, is going through has implications that go well beyond the destruction of a few trees and structures, and well beyond even India. There are serious ramifications linked to global trends in cultural and economic authoritarianism.

Bulldozers move in

The ecological and social damage of the actions, taken in early December and proposed in the near future, are in themselves serious enough to warrant attention. Between 4th and 9th December, the Auroville Town Development Council (ATDC) backed by Auroville Foundation's Governing Board, moved in JCBs to clear a path through a dense forest and demolish key structures of the community's Youth Centre. Peaceful resistance by residents who urged the convening of a full Residents' Assembly to discuss the actions was ignored; in one incident

several dozen outsiders from a distant village were brought in to intimidate protesting residents. A gag order was put on Outreach Media, the community's longstanding and respected service to reach out to the external world, with the Foundation saying only its appointed spokespersons were authorised to speak. The forest clearance work stopped only when the National Green Tribunal ordered a stay in response to a petition filed by residents.

Over 900 trees had meanwhile been felled, and some key structures of the Youth Centre demolished. An estimated 150,000 more trees and shrubs are likely to be felled for a proposed Crown Way Road that will encircle the inner core of Auroville. According to some residents and representatives of the Auroville Foundation's Governing Board, whose members are appointed by the Central Government, this road is part of the original vision of the Mother (Mirra Alfassa, 1878–1973), who founded Auroville. The Mother was a collaborator of Sri Aurobindo, one of India's most well-known philosophers, proponent of integral yoga, and a spiritual visionary; Auroville was her way of putting Aurobindo's vision into practice. Most residents however dispute this 'fact', pointing out that the original vision, and a Master Plan made in 1999-2001, has no detailed Development Plan that dictates the precise dimensions and alignment of the Crown Way. As residents Lakshmi Venugopal and Tejaswini Mistri-Kapoor note, the Master Plan stresses an approach that is "neither traditional, nor static and rigid". On a recent visit to Auroville, I found that residents have in fact provided alternative routes that only require minor adjustments to the official proposals, and would help save most of the trees. They pointed out to me that the Governing Board and ATDC are interpreting the Mother's vision very rigidly, insisting on a 'perfect circle' with an alignment that will mean not only unnecessary levels of tree-felling but also destruction of wetlands and water courses that are crucial for the water security of Auroville and of villages downstream. At Darkali, the stewards who have helped regenerate barren land into a lush forest, showed me precious waterbodies that the ATDC alignment will destroy, whereas the alignment suggested by residents, just a few metres to the side, will help avoid this. Equally alarming is a plan to make 12 radial roads connecting the Crown Way, something not envisaged in the Master Plan, and likely to destroy even more forests and waterways.

Auroville: a dream for humanity

In 1965, The Mother put forth the idea of Auroville as "a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity." Inaugurated in 1968 with a ceremony in which people from 124 countries took part, its charter said that it "belongs to humanity as a whole ... will be the place of an unending education ... the bridge between the past and the future ... a site for material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity". The Indian government not only enabled it by providing land and other support, but also took the idea to UNESCO in 1966, which recognised it as a project of importance for the future of humanity. Today, its residents are from nearly 60 countries, a little less than half of them Indian.

Over the last five decades, Auroville has also been the hub of lots of exciting experimentation in sustainable farming, alternative architecture and construction, watershed management and water harvesting, renewable energy, community healthcare, craft and cultural regeneration, alternative learning and education, gift economy and localised exchange, waste management, and a range of less 'tangible' socio-cultural dimensions of life. As described in detail in 'Auroville: Smart City of

Another Kind', a recent publication put together by residents Claude Arpi, Alain Bernard and Christine Devin, Auroville's initiatives range across a wide spectrum of economic, political, socio-cultural and ecological issues.

Auroville is home to one of the most incredible stories of ecological restoration in India. When it was initiated, the entire land had been degraded down to barren rock (having suffered deforestation by the Portuguese and French colonialists to establish Pondicherry). From that stage, it now boasts of over 1300 acres of lush forest, including the revival of the seriously threatened Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest and several dozen endangered species of plants and animals. Any development plan for the 'City of Dawn' that the Mother dreamed of, which does not respect this ecological phenomenon as also the fragile water balance of the area, must surely be seen as a violation of all that she and Sri Aurobindo stood for?

With regard to its location within a rural landscape, allegations of Auroville being a bubble in the midst of poverty, with traces of racism and casteism especially in its early years, have some basis. But several initiatives over the last few decades are trying to make it more relevant to surrounding villages and beyond, and break through conventional barriers. These include the Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG) working with several thousand women to enable enhanced livelihoods and gender empowerment; the Sustainable Livelihoods Institute doing outreach with panchayats and other rural groups in several states; Mohanam, helping to document and revive cultural traditions and crafts; the sustainable menstruation kit Eco Femme, initiated in Auroville, now nationally known; a number of schools and healthcare centres in villages; and others, also detailed in the above-mentioned book.

Many of Auroville's residents are the first to admit that there is a long way to go on all these aspects, and a very long way to becoming a town in which humanity has achieved higher consciousness, harmony and peace. But what is happening now is likely to undermine any possibility of Auroville even moving towards such a goal.

What is the Indian government's agenda?

What is at stake is much more than Auroville's ecological and material future. Behind the actions of the Auroville Foundation's Governing Board, is the heavy hand of the central government. There are several aspects of serious concern in this.

First, Auroville has been able to continue its experiment of multi-national, inter-cultural living for the last 50+ years because of an interesting collaboration between its residents and the government. This approach is built into the Auroville Foundation Act of 1988, which established Auroville as a legal entity. The Act mandates three bodies to work closely with each other: the Residents' Assembly (currently consisting of about 2500 members), the Governing Board with independent citizens and government appointees, and an International Advisory Council of 5 eminent people. The Secretary to the Foundation is appointed by the central government. The Act's wording suggests a vision of a fine-tuned balance amongst these bodies, with none having over-riding power over the others.

For the last three decades, this balance appears to have been maintained. Several residents mentioned that they are grateful to the government for supporting it in financial and other ways;

some even told me that only India could have enabled such a trans-national experiment! But the balance has been shattered with the recent actions, in which the Foundation Secretary Jayanti Ravi, a Gujarat cadre IAS official, is reported to have a strong hand. The lack of consultation with the Residents' Assembly in pushing ahead the clearing of 'right of way' for the Crown road, points to a disregard for both the Act's spirit and for democratic principles. Is this part of the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of the party in power in Delhi? PM Modi in his address at the 50th anniversary cited the Auroville Charter's first principle - "Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole" - yet a few people are acting as if it belongs to them, not even to all Aurovilleans, let alone all humanity. And could it also have something to do with the fact that so far, BJP has not been able to gain any significant foothold in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and it aims for Auroville to be the thin end of a wedge?

Secondly, there seems to be a hurry to put into place not only the Crown Way, but a series of infrastructural projects aimed at making Auroville a city able to accommodate a population to 50,000 (its current population is about 3500). This figure comes from a statement of the Mother: "naturally, when we are fifty thousand, it will be difficult to meet the needs, but for the moment we'll only be a few thousand at the most." This seems to have become a justification for a massive intervention in the area, with many builders likely salivating at the possibilities of fat contracts, and ignoring another statement of the Mother made in October 1972: "In Auroville I do not want many men. I want some people, but true people. If you want many people, I can give you a hundred thousand in a moment from South Africa".

Additionally, this could open up the area for significantly higher tourist traffic, including the kind of spiritual tourism that the central government is promoting in a big way through projects like the Chardham roads in Uttarakhand, which are massive highways through ecologically sensitive Himalayan regions. While profit-makers will undoubtedly benefit, the negative ecological and social impacts are not hard to predict, given experience from several other parts of India that are currently bearing the brunt of unregulated mass tourism. So far, no environmental audit or impact assessment has been carried out of the proposed plans; in a statement on the recent happenings, Auroville's International Advisory Council has asked for this.

Third, and connected with both the above, there seems to be an insidious right-wing religious, Hindutva agenda. When Prime Minister Modi went for the 50th anniversary celebrations of Auroville, he spoke eloquently about Sri Aurobindo's importance for India and humanity. He has now set up a 53-member committee to plan celebrations around Aurobindo's 150th birth anniversary in 2022; indeed the rushed imposition of the Crown Way and other proposals for Auroville may well be connected to this. Could this be part of the ruling party BJP's attempt to co-opt many of India's major figures, including Gandhi and Ambedkar? Having not quite succeeded with these two given their championing of sections of India that Hindutva forces are not comfortable with (Muslims, Dalits), could it be an attempt to use Aurobindo for their hegemonic religious agenda?

Some residents I spoke to felt that PM Modi's initiative on Sri Aurobindo may be beneficial, given that Aurobindo's philosophy and approach are well beyond narrow political considerations. But that may be naïve; through history, authoritarian governments and leaders have successfully appropriated charismatic figures and even revolutionary worldviews for their own ends. I may be

wrong about the real intentions of the party in power, and I'd be happy if I am, but it would not hurt for followers of Aurobindo to keep a close watch on the nature and outcome of the anniversary events.

The current government's toxic mix of right-wing cultural imposition and capitalist commercialisation is already playing out in various forms in what New Delhi considers the 'frontiers' – Ladakh, Kashmir, north-east India, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep Islands. Auroville may well be the next target.

Pathways to the City of Dawn

Whatever the intentions of the central government, Auroville faces a huge challenge. The recent incidents have sharply exposed its own internal divisions and created a polarisation that will take all the mediation skills of its residents to resolve. Vested interests are using long-standing faultlines (some real, some perceived, some exaggerated): Indian and non-Indian, Tamil and non-Tamil, residents and surrounding rural communities, 'ordinary' residents and those in positions of authority. Several residents I spoke to said that the relative comfort and harmonious way of life in Auroville had created a bubble, disabling its readiness to face challenges from outside (or within). Some said they'd lost several years of opportunity to create a strong, dialogue-based Residents' Assembly that could stand unified in the face of such challenges. Of serious concern is the fact that several members of the Working Committee, appointed by the Residents' Assembly for liaison with the Foundation officials and the Governing Board, sided with the heavy-handed actions of early December. Others readily admitted that many lingering issues of racism, casteism, and class inequities have to be resolved. All agreed that the current crisis was a kick in the backside, an opportunity to wake up and get its act together, to get anywhere near The Mother's vision of "a place where men can live away from all national rivalries, social conventions, self-contradictory moralities and contending religions; a place where human beings, freed from all slavery to the past, can devote themselves wholly to the discovery and practice of the Divine Consciousness that is seeking to manifest."

Such an opportunity is provided by a new initiative at 'dreamweaving', to develop a detailed plan for Auroville through extensive consultations and based on the best available studies and expertise. A necessary part of such an exercise would be how to deal with the above faultlines, integrate neighbouring villages like Edayanchavadi, Kottakarai, and Alankuppam as part of the design, and ensure that Auroville does not become an exclusive, exclusionary space only the rich can live in. It is to be hoped that the involvement of the architect Balkrishna Doshi's firm Vastu Shilpa Consultants, whom the Auroville Foundation is considering contracting, would contribute to such an approach. Doshi is globally known for integrating vernacular, environmentally sensitive techniques into his work, for which he has received the world's biggest architecture awards. Elements of alternative visions for Auroville's development have been worked on by residents, including architect Suhasini Ayer, who recently won the Green Solutions Award at the Climate COP26 for her 'Humanscapes Habitat' approach to sustainable urban living. But as many participants said at a meeting to discuss the Dreamweaving approach on 27th December, attended by several hundred residents: for any planning to be meaningful, the JCBs waiting to clear further forests in Auroville need to be moved away. Democracy and sound decision-making cannot work under the shadow of bulldozers.

Hopefully, this initiative can also ask basic questions about how much and what forms of mobility are needed in Auroville. If it aims to be truly evolutionary, could it move away from private cars, for instance, and substantially to public transport, cycling and walking? This in turn is linked to questions such as what forms of economy could lead to sustainability and self-reliance; could it move much more towards localised, non-monetary and local currency based exchange systems? Some long-term residents like Olivier Barot and several younger residents, including Indians who have more recently joined the Auroville community, are exploring such systems. And then, how can governance be truly centred around a democratic Residents' Assembly? If it truly wants to be 'the city the Earth needs', a vision of well-being that is holistic, sustainable, and equitable is needed. Many elements of this already exist in practical experiments and in proposals, both within and outside Auroville, but have to be threaded together into a coherent whole.

For anyone interested in Auroville's importance as an experiment in alternative living, such a process should be of great interest. This was emphasised in a statement of support to Auroville by Vikalp Sangam, a national platform of organisations and movements searching for alternatives to today's destructive mode of development and the underlying structures of capitalism, state-domination, patriarchy, casteism, and human-centredness. It said that Auroville continues to have a crucial role "in the research and design of systems of food production, ecological restoration, natural healthcare, education, architecture, and watershed-sensitive town planning" and "as a site for innovation towards collective creativity and harmony."

As one of the first residents, Frederick, told me: "Auroville needs to follow its own dharma, a trans-religious, trans-national, trans-cultural living, and as a laboratory for experiments towards a higher consciousness, and for this it needs time and space." Indeed, if it can show how people from 60 nationalities and from myriad backgrounds and persuasions and ways of life can live together, creating an ecologically sustainable and equitable model of co-existence, it could inspire hundreds of other such initiatives around the world. This is what must be protected from the machinations of New Delhi, and from attempts to rush through rigidly imposed, non-participatory, ecologically dubious infrastructural development.

The Guardian: Bulldozers, violence and politics crack an Indian dream of utopia

16th January 2022 / Written by Hannah Ellis-Petersen

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/16/bulldozers-violence-and-politics-crack-an-indian-dream-of-utopia>



Meditation with dawn fire on Auroville's birthday, at the Matrimandir Amphitheatre, 28 February, 2017. Photograph: Melting Spot/Alamy

Nestled deep in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, cocooned from the world by a young forest, lies a community that wants to change the world. Ask the residents of Auroville, who come from more than 60 countries, what they are doing there and the answer will be much the same as it has been for more than five decades: “The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.”

[Auroville was founded in 1968](#), with a vision to build an international city to upend rigid class and caste systems and be free of the pollution, traffic, chaos, rubbish, social isolation and suburban sprawl that have poisoned modern urban environments.

But over the past few months, harmony has turned to discord over attempts to transform Auroville from a quiet eco-community into a pioneering utopian city.

Lata, a resident of Auroville who first visited in the 1980s, said she had “never seen Auroville fractured like this”. “This is the first time such violence has entered the community,” she added. “What about the dream of unity that brought us all here?”

Tensions came to a head last month, when JCBs rolled into Auroville’s forests to begin a controversial development that has created a schism unlike anything seen before in this peace-loving community. Dozens of residents threw themselves in front of the bulldozers, while others backed the demolitions. A case against the project is now being heard by India’s highest environmental court.

“It’s not just valuable trees and buildings that have been bulldozed, it’s the community processes, the unity that holds Auroville together,” said Isa Prieto, 26, who was present. “I can’t believe they would go this far, sacrifice so much in order to get what they wanted.”

The rupture is being blamed by many on an “outsider”. Since 1988, although the Indian government has had jurisdiction over Auroville, the community has been largely left to its own devices. But in July, Jayanti Ravi, a civil servant, arrived as the new secretary of the Auroville Foundation and immediately began enacting the polarising agenda of development.



Residents make Auroville papers. It is an enterprise that produces handcraft paper in cotton and vegetal fibres for which no tree has been cut. Photograph: Frédéric Soltan/Corbis/Getty Images

Ravi's actions have sent the community into a tailspin; some feel she is giving Auroville the push it needs after years of stasis and dysfunction, others say she is riding roughshod over democratic community processes, and that her agenda is pulling the community apart at the seams.

Many have questioned, too, whether her motives are mired in politics. Ravi has held high-profile positions in Gujarat, prime minister Narendra Modi's home state, and in 2019, she authored a book that carried a recommendation from Modi on its cover.

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in Sri Aurobindo, Auroville's founding guru, by India's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Though Aurobindo's teachings explicitly spoke against the communal politics that have become commonplace under the BJP, there has been a marked attempt by its leaders to champion Aurobindo as an early proponent of the Hindutva ideology, which believes India should be a Hindu rather than secular state. Modi paid a visit to Auroville in 2018.

Many Auroville residents fear the sudden push for development is entangled in a larger Hindu nationalist agenda to co-opt the legacy of Aurobindo, or to turn their home into a lucrative site for spiritual tourism.

"It is high time Auroville moves forward," Ravi told the Observer. "It is the 150th birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo, which India is celebrating, and this development is something which is long overdue."



Auroville (City of Dawn) was founded in 1968 by Mirra Alfassa. Photograph: Frédéric Soltan/Sygma/Getty Images

Auroville was first dreamed up in the 1920s by Sri Aurobindo, an Indian freedom fighter who became a leading Indian philosopher and guru, and his French devotee and collaborator, Mirra Alfassa, known as “the Mother”. Together in Aurobindo’s ashram in Puducherry they envisaged building a new city where humankind could reach unity.

After Sri Aurobindo’s death, Alfassa inaugurated Auroville in 1968 on a barren piece of land a few miles from the ashram. Working with the French architect Roger Anger, Alfassa created the Galaxy Plan, a vision of how a perfect city should be built, designed along a layout of “sacred geometry”. She wanted Auroville to be a “city for humanity” home to 50,000 people, with 75% reserved as a green belt for farming and forest. This was later translated into an official masterplan, which was approved by Auroville residents and the Indian government.

Today, Auroville is home to about 3,200 people, mostly from Europe, India and the US. They have enacted alternative models of currency, land ownership, education and governance, planted over three million trees to revitalise the land and their use of renewables and sustainable ways of living are world-leading.

But in recent decades the city plans have been at a standstill, to the frustration of many. “Nothing has moved because for years we have been stuck between two factions,” said Gijs Spoor, a resident. On one side of the divide are residents who believe Auroville will succeed only if it is built exactly as envisaged in the masterplan, and that any revisions of the sacred geometry, or further delays, would obstruct the Mother’s “forward-thinking vision”.

“This masterplan is more futuristic than we can even imagine, but unless we can build it, what are we here for?” said Anu Majumdar, who has lived in Auroville since 1979. “Trees alone will not solve all the problems of humanity. We are currently 3,200 people living on 3,300 acres of land, which is not sustainable. We need to build the city for 50,000.”

But another group, predominately younger Aurovillians, view the utopian purpose through a different environmental lens and argue that the masterplan, which was last revised and voted on by the community 22 years ago, needs updating.

“We are not anti-development, we are just pro-development in a way that really respects nature, respects the environment, the water, the millions of trees we have planted that are going to decide our survival on this land,” said Prieto, who was raised in Auroville. “To refuse to adapt the masterplan because it would be ‘blocking the Mother’s dream’ smacks of spiritual authoritarianism,” she added. “I don’t think it was the Mother’s dream to destroy the living environment around us.”

It was into this impasse that Ravi arrived. Along with a new foundation governing board, also government appointed, a decision was made to begin building the masterplan immediately, starting with a circular road known as The Crown. They also applied for 10bn rupees (£98m) in government grants. “This place is something very beautiful that India has so magnanimously offered and we can not have decadence and stagnation any longer,” said Ravi. “The masterplan was already agreed by residents; it’s my mandate to implement it.”

Alternatives were submitted by concerned residents, but then, without warning, on 4 December, bulldozers arrived in the forest, accompanied by police. That night dozens of protesting Aurovillians stood in their pathway and prevented any demolition. But five days later the JCBs returned and this time razed a 25-year-old youth centre and hundreds of trees.

For many Aurovillians, the manner of demolition – including alleged manhandling of residents – was a violence and division unlike anything that had been seen in their community, and the resounding response was one of devastation, shock and pain.

Some residents filed a case against the Auroville Foundation to the Green Tribunal, India's highest environmental court, which led to an interim halt on all tree felling. And after a petition was signed by more than 500 residents, a request for the development to be put on hold is being debated by the residents' assembly, a process expected to take more than a month.

The fractures in the community were on full display in a late December assembly meeting. It was the largest turnout in years and descended into chaos. Ravi's attempt to address the residents prompted uproar. There were shouts of "can we all calm down", calls for deep breathing and outbreaks of group-chanting of "Om" to try to bring things under control.

Nonetheless, many believe that as splintered as the community is now, the Auroville project is not lost altogether. "The community is fractured but I think out of this darkness has come some good," said Sandeep Vinod Sarah, a resident who filed the tribunal case. "We are finally energised and confronted with our own divisions. Now is the time for healing."

National Herald: Auroville and the Crown road project: Conflict in paradise

18th January 2022 / Written by Sarosh Bana

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<https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/environment/auroville-and-the-crown-road-project-conflict-in-paradise>

It is unfortunate that this peaceful enclave has been caught in the crosshairs of an intransigent feud that goes against the ideals of both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother



Tranquility was shattered and a peaceable community torn asunder last December as bulldozers rolled into the forested idyll of Auroville, the international township in southern India that embodies the vision of Indian philosopher, nationalist, poet and seer Sri Aurobindo.

Residents who tried to peacefully resist the onslaught were overpowered by the excavators that tore through the settlement's Youth Centre and razed over 900 trees across 67 acres in a frenzy to carve out the 4.3 km long "Crown Corridor project".

The project, which entails a 75-metre-wide circular road scything through the community, has been envisaged by Auroville's Town Development Council (ATDC), Auroville Foundation, and newly-appointed government authorities. They apparently disregarded an alternative development proposal presented to them by a number of Aurovillians that would have marginally

realigned the Crown concept so as to conserve the “precious forest and water catchment systems that are vital to the whole bioregion”.

Located mostly in Tamil Nadu and partly in the neighbouring Union Territory of Puducherry, Auroville exemplifies unity in diversity, with two-thirds of its 3,500 inhabitants hailing from 59 other nations, and from all age groups, backgrounds and cultures.

Taken over by the Central government in 1980 through the Auroville Emergency Act, 1980, Auroville was granted autonomy under the Auroville Foundation Act passed eight years later under the UNESCO division of the Ministry of Education (later, Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD)). The architect of the Act was Dr Kireet Joshi, disciple of Sri Aurobindo and his spiritual collaborator, the Mother, as also the confidant and Education advisor to then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Gandhi had always been supportive of Auroville, having built a special bond with the Mother whom she met during her first visit to Pondicherry, and to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, in 1955 with her father, the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi had reportedly also asked for the Mother’s counsel on the war for Bangladesh in 1971. A year after the Mother’s passing in 1973, Gandhi again visited the Ashram and stayed a night there, describing Auroville as: “An exciting project for bringing about harmony among different cultures and for understanding the environmental needs of man’s spiritual growth.”

Amidst the present crisis, the aggrieved residents of this first and only internationally endorsed ongoing experiment in human unity and transformation of consciousness have repeatedly petitioned the National Green Tribunal (NGT) of South Zone, based in Chennai, and have been rewarded, though fitfully, with a series of short-term stays against further project construction.

Auroville arose from a parched plateau, says Kundhavi Devi, an Auroville resident for the past 15 years, and its forests, farms and water bodies today bear testimony to the self-healing power of Nature when it is assisted with concern and commitment. The greening of its landscape is a big success story of Auroville, for which it has received international acclaim.

Some Aurovillians see a political angle to the destructive intrusion into the township, pointing out that the Crown project has been expedited after Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi, Puducherry Lt Gov TAMILISAI Soundararajan, and Gujarat cadre IAS officer, Dr Jayanti Ravi, took over last year as the chairman, member and secretary of the Governing Board of Auroville Foundation respectively.

In an e-mail welcoming the Governing Board last October, ‘Members of the Forest Group of Auroville’ stated, “Residents are working hard to cooperate and find solutions to the creation of Detailed Development Plans [DDPs], assess the land and environmental situation, generate Environment Impact Assessments [EIAs] and agree upon policies and processes to move forward in harmony to the vision of the Charter of Auroville as well as the Master Plan perspectives 2025.”

They indicated that with some 'adjustments' in 'the present development plans', large tracts of the Bliss Forest and Darkali Forest, as well as two local check dams, can be saved from total destruction.

A forester who has been a resident since 2002 and goes only by her first name, Natasha, says Aurovillians are not opposed to development, but do look to participatory and collaborative planning to ensure that any development considers the environment and ground realities. "We're not simply planting trees, but creating an ecosystem comprising trees, shrubs, woody species, creepers, lianas, that host insects, birds, animals, microorganisms, and fungi," she adds.

In their complaint before the NGT against the Auroville Foundation, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the Department of Environment of Tamil Nadu, Navroz Mody, a 76-year-old Auroville resident working for the township's forestry and green belt for the past two decades, and co-habitant Sandeep Sarah, who has done similar work for the past nine years, submitted that "the ongoing destruction is not in consonance with the ideals of Auroville and principles of sustainability".

Their main argument is that the large Crown Road project spread across 20 villages has not had an EIA to examine its impact. They say the 'authoritarian' approach to rapid urban development overrides the community's long-standing collaborative planning processes and ignores environmental considerations, even as much of the land has not yet been acquired for the project. Fearing that the NGT will generally not question a central government project, and if the petition were to be ultimately dismissed, the petitioners might appeal before the Supreme Court.

The Crown Corridor had been notified by the HRD ministry in 2001 as part of the Mother's 'Auroville Universal Township Master Plan – Perspective 2025', which was accepted by the Residents Assembly in 1999 and notified in the gazette in 2010.

In its affidavit to the NGT, the Auroville Foundation maintains that a major part of the right of way (RoW) has already been cleared and infrastructure installed alongside. "Auroville Foundation is now clearing the last parts of the Crown RoW with a width of 16.7 m," it states. "The land area of the Crown RoW is only 0.36 percent of the total Auroville Master Plan land area." The Foundation and ATDC allege that the Youth Centre and many of the 900 trees that were bulldozed were deliberately built and planted over sections of the proposed Crown to block its development.

Terming this stance "misleading", Auroville Working Committee member Hemant Lamba says the planned RoW requires the felling of over 150,000 trees. He deems politics the most destructive for a social and cultural experiment like Auroville that aspires towards an ideal society where there is 'No Religion, No Politics, No Drugs and No Alcohol', and where most residents shun all political activity.

Architect and designer Tejaswini Mistri-Kapoor, a former ATDC member who has lived and worked in Auroville for the past 18 years, says Auroville's Master Plan is based on a galaxy model developed in the 1960s by French architect Roger Anger, in collaboration with the Mother. After Mother's time, this concept was developed into a Master Plan that is more of a concept note as it

lacks the required DDPs necessary to 'flesh out' the plan's sketches, before moving towards implementation.

"Since the arrival of a new government-appointed Secretary to the Auroville Foundation, the pressure exerted by authorities on the Auroville community to implement the Master Plan has increased in intensity, and has focused on rapid development of the Crown way," notes Mistri. "This rigid interpretation and imposition of the plan goes against its own spirit as it states that it will 'neither be traditional, nor static and rigid', and has in-built review processes." She adds that this includes five-yearly DDPs, which have never been done.

It is unfortunate that this peaceful enclave has been caught in the crosshairs of an intransigent feud that goes against the ideals of both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The New York Times: Build a New City or New Humans? A Utopia in India Fights Over Future.

5th March 2023 / Written by Emily Schmall

Copied from <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/world/asia/auroville-india.html>

Backed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the new leadership of Auroville, an experimental commune, wants to create a model city. In the way stand trees, tree houses and a take-it-slow tradition.

AUROVILLE, India — The bulldozer arrived one night in December, shaking Ganga Park awake in her tree house and sending her scurrying down the trunk. When its operator paused the menacing machine, which was there to clear a path through the surrounding forest, Ms. Park clung to it. Their standoff continued until the driver gave up and turned back.

When the bulldozer returned a few days later, Ms. Park confronted it again, but this time she was joined by dozens of her neighbors in the south Indian arcadia of Auroville. They linked arms around the bulldozer, chanting “Om Namo Bhagavate,” a popular Hindu mantra that roughly translates to “Obeisance to the Almighty.” They remained until they won at least a temporary victory: a stay order from an environmental tribunal, forcing the demolition work to stop. “It was super instinctive,” Ms. Park, 20, said of her leap into action. “If there’s an intruder, you immediately protect and defend.”

The intruder, in this case, was the government of Auroville, an idealistic community founded in 1968 with the goal of realizing human unity by putting the divine at the center of all things. That unity, however, has recently frayed. A bitter dispute has arisen between Auroville’s government, which has revived a long-delayed plan to vastly expand the community, and those residents who want to protect the thriving forest they have cultivated from the barren stretch of land where their social experiment began more than 50 years ago.

The community was founded by a French writer, Mirra Alfassa, better known to her followers simply as the Mother, who believed that a change of consciousness and aspiration to the divine in Auroville would ripple out to the rest of the world.

Before her death in 1973, the Mother had commissioned the French architect Roger Anger to develop a design for a city of 50,000, about 15 times the current population. Mr. Anger conceived of a galactic form: spiraling concentric circles around the Matrimandir — a circular golden meditation chamber — with 12 radial roads.

But without the money or manpower over the decades to carry out the plan, the community’s residents, or Aurovilians, built something different. They dug wells and built thatched-roof huts. And they planted trees. A lot of them. Under the cool forest canopy, civets, jackals, peacocks and other creatures roam, and muriel bushes release a sweet, heady fragrance.

The divide between those Aurovilians who want to follow the Mother's urban development plans — known as constructivists — and those who want to let the community continue developing on its own — organicists — has long existed. But the struggle took on a heightened pitch last July, when the office of Prime Minister Narendra Modi appointed a new secretary, Jayanti Ravi, to head the township's governing board.

Ms. Ravi had been the health secretary in Gujarat, Mr. Modi's home state. Earlier, she was a district magistrate under Mr. Modi, then the state's top official, when he faced near-universal condemnation for failing to control two months of religious riots in Gujarat in 2002 that left more than 1,000 people, mostly Muslim, dead.

The government's new interest in enacting Mr. Anger's design reflects Mr. Modi's penchant for ambitious construction projects to foster tourism around Hindu or nationalist sites. His Bharatiya Janata Party, or B.J.P., is the political arm of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a social organization devoted to making India an explicitly Hindu state. Though Auroville was founded by a Frenchwoman, she was the disciple of Sri Aurobindo, a spiritual teacher and a freedom fighter for India's independence. The planned redesign of Auroville is being done ahead of Sri Aurobindo's 150th birth anniversary in August — for which Mr. Modi is planning a big celebration. "Part of Narendra Modi's agenda is to appropriate all religious and spiritual figures into the fold of the B.J.P.," said Navroz Mody, the resident who filed the petition to pause the development project.

Ms. Ravi promised to infuse the project with millions of dollars in federal funding. The development would start by paving a perfectly circular road, part of a broader, pedestrianized beltway that would connect Auroville's four distinct zones. But in the way stand Auroville's youth center, a water catchment area and hundreds of trees.

Sindhuja Jagadeesh, a spokeswoman for the local government, said it was a kind of "decadence" for Auroville's approximately 3,300 people — about half Indian, and half foreigners — to live on 3,000 acres of land in a country as densely populated as India. "Many people have become attached to their comfort in the greenery, but we are supposed to experiment and evolve," said Ms. Jagadeesh, who is also an architect and an Aurovillian.

The stance of those opposed to the development, Ms. Jagadeesh added, clashes sharply with the Mother's vision for a model city of the future that would be replicated around the world. "We are here for human unity, but also to build a city," she said.

The proponents of the development plan, which ultimately envisions a high-density, self-sustained city with a bustling economy and experimental architecture, deride the Auroville of today as an eco-village where a visitor can get a good cappuccino but not the change in consciousness its founder hoped for.

"It's not just a city plan, it's meant to hold an experiment," said Shrimoyi Rosegger, a resident who approves of the development and has a deep faith in the transformative power of the Mother's plan. "We believe it is an intelligence which is beyond us," she added, "that if we follow her guidelines, something will be revealed to us."

Leaning against a motorcycle outside the community's free clothing store and food co-op, Auroson Bystrom, 51, among the first children born in Auroville, said he opposes Ms. Ravi's plans, but thinks the intense debate has energized the community. "Aurobindo is all about evolution," Mr. Bystrom said, referring to Sri Aurobindo. "And for the last 35 years, Auroville hasn't felt all that evolutionary."

Some opponents of the plan say that the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother was not as much about building a new city as it was building a new human. And that takes time. "How we urbanize is more important than how fast we urbanize," said Suhasini Ayer, an architect whose mixed-use development in Auroville recently won a design award at the U.N. climate conference in Glasgow.

The community's small population, opponents of the development say, owes more to the unusual conditions for residency than to the lack of the ring road that the government wants to plow through trees. Those wishing to live here must undergo a year of vetting — and must invest their own money into homes that will remain town property. Auroville receives some funding from the government, but drums up most of its budget internally, from private enterprise and donations.

Residents purify their own water, grow their own grains and make their own paper. Those who work for Auroville's public services receive a meager salary known as "maintenance." "These people want to be pragmatic," Renu Neogy, a lifelong Aurovilian, said of Ms. Ravi and her supporters. "But this is not a pragmatic place, this is utopia."

Some foreign residents said they feared that Ms. Ravi could deprive them of the sponsorship they need to continue living in India if they fail to get on board with her plans.

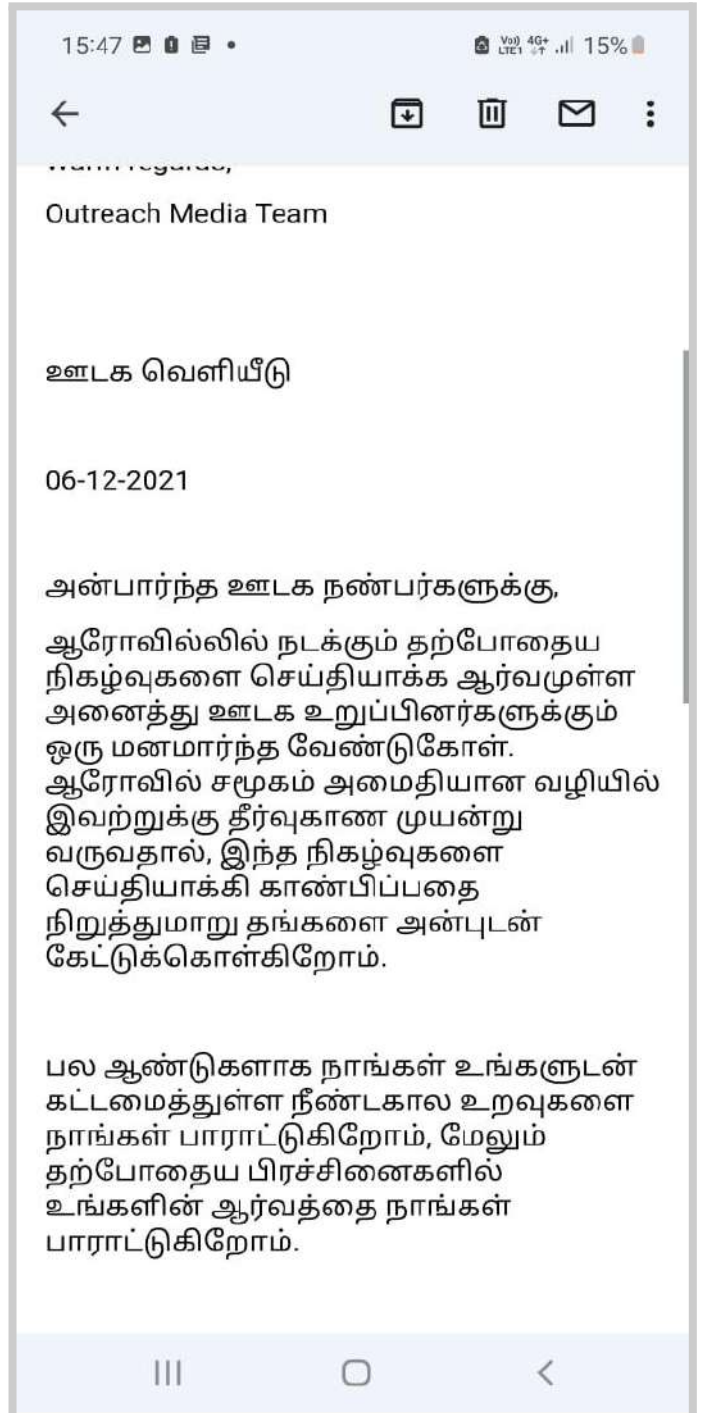
While the two sides seem far apart, some residents believe a solution may lie in the approach to community decision-making that was a founding principle of Auroville: consensus building. Allan Bennett, an Auroville town planner, said a group of the community's architects were mulling how to meld together the place that the Mother envisioned with the place that exists today through a process known as dream weaving. "The architects are trying to capture the poetry of the galaxy vision and also the ground reality," he said. "These are the concepts they have to weave together." Back in her treehouse, filled with bird song and sunlight, Ms. Park contemplated what she had confronted a bulldozer to save.

Growing up in Auroville, Ms. Park picked lemons and swung on the limbs of banyan trees. When she went briefly to live in Seoul, she wore a school uniform and followed a strict routine. "Outside it's unavoidable to buy trash, to get swept away by consumerism. It really gets you down," she said. "It's easy to be a good human being here."

Appendices

Appendix A-1 - Press release by Outreach Media

6th December 2021



Appendix A-2 - Community announcement by OutreachMedia

6th December 2021

Brief for the community regarding media interaction

By AV OutreachMedia, 06 Dec 2021 / 05:06 pm

Dear community,

There has been considerable interest from local and state media to cover the current events in Auroville. Many of these media outlets have long-standing positive relationships with Auroville (carefully cultivated by Outreach Media over the years), and they are genuinely concerned and motivated to report events in a fair and sympathetic manner.

We ask you, for now, to refrain from speaking to the media, and to refer all journalists to Outreach Media so that we can put forward the best possible spokespersons. We are currently developing a media strategy, a list of spokespersons, and briefing points.

We understand that you may want to talk to roving journalists or to give them access to film meetings. But it's essential that we put forward only a few (collectively agreed-upon) spokespersons, who can stick to the main talking points. Otherwise, our messaging to the wider world could become unfocused and may be misused. So, please refer all journalists and media requests to Outreach Media (contact details below), and please share any relevant information with us. Please do not use inflammatory hastags on social media.

Thanks for your understanding in these difficult times. We are doing our best to manage an ever-changing situation, for the benefit of the community.

Yours warmly,

The Outreach Media team

Appendix A-3 - Email from AVFO to OutreachMedia

7th December 2022

Appointment of Spokespersons - reg.

From: Auroville Foundation <avfoundation@auroville.org.in>

Date: 7 December 2021 at 16:03

To: Auroville Outreachmedia <outreachmedia@auroville.org.in>

Cc: Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.org.in>, ATDC Auroville Town Development Council <avenir@auroville.org.in>, Auroville Council <avcouncil@auroville.org.in>, Secretary AV Foundation <secretaryavf@auroville.org.in>, Srinivasmurty Palakodeti R <srinivasmurty@auroville.org.in>

Dear Executives,

In view of the reports, which are being circulated in the Social Media and the Press, the Auroville Foundation has decided to appoint Ms. Sindhuja and Mr. Joel as Official Spokespersons. Henceforth, the Outreach Media of Auroville and others shall refrain on issuing any statements until further notice.

Regards,

--

P.R.Srinivasamurty

Under Secretary

Auroville Foundation,

Autonomous Body under Ministry of Education,

Government of India,

Auroville -605101.

Ph: 0413-2622414; 2622222

Fax: 0413-2623496

Email: avfoundation@auroville.org.in

www.aurovillefoundation.org.in

Appendix A-4 - OutreachMedia's response to the AVFO

8th December 2021

Re: Appointment of Spokespersons – Auroville OutreachMedia response

From: Auroville Outreachmedia <outreachmedia@auroville.org.in>

To: Auroville Foundation <avfoundation@auroville.org.in>

Cc: Working Committee, TDC, Auroville Council, Secretary, Governing Board, International Advisory Council

Dear Mr Srinivasmurthy,
(cc. WC, AVC, FAMC, GB, IAC, ATDC)

It is with great dismay that I have received your statement requesting Auroville OutreachMedia to “refrain on issuing any statements until further notice”, and that the Auroville Foundation “has decided to appoint” its own “Official Spokespersons”. It is particularly disappointing for me, considering the respectful and honest professional relationship that we have enjoyed since we began working together in 2005. OutreachMedia is an Auroville service in existence since 1996, and was recognised as an official working group in Auroville by the Governing Board in 2008. It is a service for the residents of Auroville.

We have always enjoyed a positive relationship with the Auroville Foundation, which entrusted us to manage Auroville's external media matters till date. Following Dr Karan Singh's suggestion made more than a decade ago, we worked closely with the Foundation to establish a permission process for filmmakers visiting Auroville that valued the interests of Auroville and the journalists. Moreover, former Secretary of Auroville foundation Sri Mohan Vergese Chunkath congratulated our hard work in organising outstanding media coverage of Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Auroville visit in 2018. In all these activities, the Foundation appreciated that we represent the voice of the community.

During the two decades of OutreachMedia's existence, we have patiently built up trust and mutual respect with local press, and assisted many national and international TV journalists to report on the many achievements of Auroville. We have also comprehensively documented the rich and varied life of the Auroville experiment, and made this content available to the community and the world.

OutreachMedia's facilitation of all of the community's media matters over the years has enhanced Auroville's credibility through our commitment to freedom of speech and transparency. We manage a delicate balance between facilitating journalist's needs, upholding freedom of speech, and nurturing Auroville's interests in the hope of cultivating positive media coverage. Our approach aligns with the community's wider commitment to transparency (eg. making internal resources, such as News and Notes, budgets etc., available in the public domain).

I will, for the time being, respect your request to “refrain on issuing any statements until further notice” even though this does not align with OutreachMedia's and the community's commitment to freedom of speech and transparency.

However, I cannot take any responsibility for any media-related activities that might take place, given that nearly every citizen and journalist has access to social media in this digital age, and can create whatever content they want.

Yours sincerely,

F.M.

(Auroville Outreach Media)

Appendix A-5 - Statement in support of OutreachMedia

8th December 2021

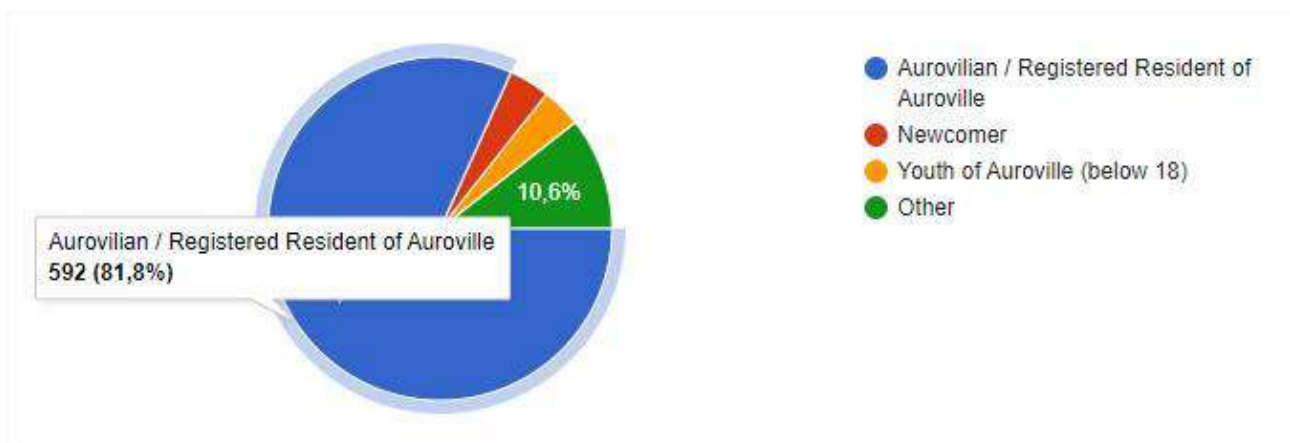
Collective statement on media and press releases

On Tuesday December 7th, the residents of Auroville were informed by the Under-Secretary of the Auroville Foundation that the Secretariat of the Auroville Foundation has appointed two spokespersons for Auroville. The residents have also been informed that the Secretariat of the Auroville Foundation has instructed that “the Outreach Media of Auroville and others shall refrain on issuing any statements until further notice”.

The Auroville Foundation is an autonomous body under the Auroville Foundation Act, which is composed of three legal authorities, including the Residents’ Assembly. Unless the Residents’ Assembly agrees to it, the Secretariat of the Auroville Foundation cannot appoint spokespersons to represent Auroville as a whole. The Secretariat can only appoint people to represent itself, namely “the Secretariat of the Auroville Foundation”.

We, the undersigned residents, support our Outreach Media team, which was put together in 1996 as a service to the Auroville community and is experienced in dealing with media relationships, and can take care of communication with the media. The two spokespersons of the Secretariat do not represent Auroville.

The above statement was signed by 724 individuals, including 592 Aurovilians (registered residents of Auroville). This represents about 25% to 30% of the Auroville population.



Appendix A-6 - Av Council community announcement

10th December 2021

Appointment of Spokespersons

By AV Council (AVC), 10 Dec 2021 / 11:51 am

Council's response to Foundation.

Dear Auroville Foundation office,

We are concerned by your message for reasons that you have not consulted with all the necessary authorities (GB, IAC and RA) in order to make these appointments of spokespersons. Moreover, the particular persons that you have chosen are of a divisive nature in our community and are not well respected by many in Auroville. Therefore we suggest that you announce a correction of your statement made to that of being that these spokespersons represent the AVF office alone.

We are also concerned that you would ask a well-established and respected media wing of Auroville and others to halt their statements because we do not understand on what grounds you have assumed this authority.

Although we believe we understand that the reasons you have requested entities to refrain from media statements at this time are intended with consideration for the best interests of Auroville; and for which we are grateful and commend you; but the request also amounts to a restriction of free speech which we and all civilized societies hold in the highest regard.

Our suggestion is, that if you wish to harmonize the outgoing statements originating from other sources in Auroville with the AVF office's preferred statements, you must meet with the concerned media entities and arrive at mutually agreed statements. If it can be agreed that only common and inclusive statements but which represent the most prevalent views should be shared with the outside world, then Auroville Council would give it's full support.

With kind regards,

For the Auroville Council

Balaji, Claudine, Ganesh K. Meenal, Sai Suresh, Suryan, Shivaya, and Shiva

Appendix A-7 - OutreachMedia handover by the Secretary

20th January 2022

On Thu, 20 Jan 2022 at 15:45, Auroville Foundation <avfoundation@auroville.org.in> wrote:

To
Outreach Media,
Auroville

Dear Ms. F.,

Space had been provided to Outreach Media from the date of its formation during the year 1996 and movable assets had been purchased for Auroville 50th Anniversary under Government of India (GOI) grant by Auroville Foundation during 2018 and handed over to Outreach Media. In this connection, I would like to request you to hand over all the movable and immovable, tangible and intangible assets including space, phone number, email, soft IP, archives, accounts maintained with Financial services etc. to Auroville Foundation by not later than Saturday (22.01.2022) as the same is required for Information and Public Relation activities of the Foundation.

Regards

P.R.Srinivasamurty
Under Secretary
Auroville Foundation
Auroville

Appendix A-8 - OutreachMedia executive response to the Undersecretary

21st January 2022

Auroville Outreachmedia <outreachmedia@auroville.org.in> 21 January 2022 at 15:51
To: Auroville Foundation <avfoundation@auroville.org.in>
Cc: "FAMC Finance ." <famcfinance@auroville.org.in>, Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.org.in>, "avunityfund." <avunityfund@auroville.org.in>, Auroville Council <avcouncil@auroville.org.in>, "Shri.R.N.Ravi" <govtam@nic.in>, "Dr.Tamilisai Soundarajan" <lg.pon@nic.in>, "Dr.Nirima Oza" <nirima@gmail.com>, "Shri. Aravindan Neelakandan" <aravindan.neelakandan@gmail.com>, "Prof. Goutam Ghosal" <gghosal87@gmail.com>, "Prof. R. S. Sarraju" <rssarraju@gmail.com>, "Prof. Nandana Gurappa Basappa" <gbnandana1956@gmail.com>, "Smt. Neeta Prasad" <neetaprasad@gmail.com>, "Smt. Darshana M Dabral" <jsfa.edu@gov.in>, "Ms.Dena Merriam" <dena.merriam@finnpartners.com>, "MS. Gabi Gillessen" <yogabi@roottolight.com>, "Mr. Hasmukh P. Rama" <hp@aurohotels.com>, "Mr. Michel Danino" <micheldanino@gmail.com>, "Mr.David Frawley" <vedicinstitute@gmail.com>

Dear M. Srinivasmurti

In response to your mail dated Thursday 20th of January on the subject : OutreachMedia, I would like to know:

1. On what grounds was this decision made?
2. Have the 3 bodies that together constitute the Auroville Foundation been consulted and agreed to this decision?
3. Has the FAMC, as the mandated body responsible for managing assets of Auroville, been consulted and agreed to this decision?

I would like to put on record my objection to your request and will continue to fulfil the OutreachMedia mandate with all means allocated to this purpose until the above points have been satisfactorily clarified.

Regards, F. (OutreachMedia executive)

CC:

The International Advisory Council
The Governing Board
The working Committee of the Residents Assembly
The Auroville Council
The Funds and Assets Management Committee
The Unity Fund

Appendix A-9 - OutreachMedia executive response to the Undersecretary

21st January 2022

Auroville Outreachmedia <outreachmedia@auroville.org.in> 21 January 2022 at 18:19
To: Auroville Foundation <avfoundation@auroville.org.in>
Cc: "FAMC Finance ." <famcfinance@auroville.org.in>, Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.org.in>, "avunityfund." <avunityfund@auroville.org.in>, Auroville Council <avcouncil@auroville.org.in>, "Shri.R.N.Ravi" <govtam@nic.in>, "Dr.Tamilisai Soundarajan" <lg.pon@nic.in>, "Dr.Nirima Oza" <nirima@gmail.com>, "Shri. Aravindan Neelakandan" <aravindan.neelakandan@gmail.com>, "Prof. Goutam Ghosal" <gghosal87@gmail.com>, "Prof. R. S. Sarraju" <rssarraju@gmail.com>, "Prof. Nandana Gurappa Basappa" <gbnandana1956@gmail.com>, "Smt. Neeta Prasad" <neetaprasad@gmail.com>, "Smt. Darshana M Dabral" <jsfa.edu@gov.in>, "Ms.Dena Merriam" <dena.merriam@finnpartners.com>, "MS. Gabi Gillessen" <yogabi@roottolight.com>, "Mr. Hasmukh P. Rama" <hp@aurohotels.com>, "Mr. Michel Danino" <micheldanino@gmail.com>, "Mr.David Frawley" <vedicinstitute@gmail.com>

Date: Friday 21st January 2022

To the Undersecretary,

Dear Srinivasmurti,

Since my previous answer, I would like to add that as the executive of Auroville OutreachMedia I will not be able to comply with your request dated Thursday 20th January 2022, to vacate OutreachMedia Office along with its contents, movable and immovable assets to the Secretary of the Foundation.

As the executive, I am charged with managing the Auroville OutreachMedia on behalf of the Residents Assembly of Auroville, as all activities of Auroville are under the direct jurisdiction of the Residents Assembly (see Section 19(b) of AVF Act 1988)

As such, the FAMC of the Residents Assembly is the authority that is charged with the duty and power over all funds and assets of Auroville, and is the appropriate body to be requested if the Secretary seeks permission to use the OutreachMedia assets and equipment.

If the FAMC of the Residents Assembly were to issue a direction to me, to the OutreachMedia, I would gladly vacate the space and assets to its requirements. However, I have not yet received intimation to that effect and until such time, I cannot

leave the office and its assets or the position as it would be a dereliction of my duty to Auroville.

Please do apply to the FAMC seeking clearance or any other permission regarding the OutreachMedia

Sincerely

F. (OutreachMedia executive)

CC:

The International Advisory Council

The Governing Board

The working Committee of the Residents Assembly

The Auroville Council

The Funds and Assets Management Committee

The Unity Fund

Appendix A-10 - FAMC response to the Undersecretary

22nd January 2022

FAMC to Under Secretary, AVFO re: Outreachmedia

FAMC <adminfamc@auroville.org.in> 22 January 2022 at 13:41

To: Auroville Foundation <avfoundation@auroville.org.in>

Cc: famc <famc@auroville.org.in>, outreachmedia@auroville.org.in, Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.org.in>

Dear Mr. Srinivasmurty,

The Funds and Assets Management Committee of the Auroville Foundation has been informed by Outreachmedia about your demand regarding its assets.

We would like to inform you that we do not agree with your demand for the following reasons:

- 1) Outreachmedia has received the grant to fulfill its purpose of being Auroville's media & press relations service. Outreachmedia has been using the grant for these purposes.
- 2) The grantee was the Auroville Foundation, which has freely given the grant to Outreachmedia to fulfill its purpose.
- 3) In accordance with the Auroville Foundation Rules 1997, the FAMC shall administer the funds and assets of the Auroville Foundation.
- 4) If the Auroville Foundation office has reasons to assume that the assets created with the grant have not been utilized for the purposes for which the grant was given, the Auroville Foundation has to inform the FAMC accordingly, with the request to reallocate the assets.


Regards,

FAMC

(members are: Amy, Angelo, Jonas, Lisa, Marc, Palani, Ranjith, Stephan)

Appendix A-11 - OutreachMedia Office Order

9th February 2022



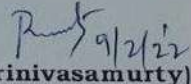
P. R. SRINIVASAMURTY
UNDER SECRETARY


No. AF/Misc/31/ 09 February 2022


OFFICE ORDER

Further to our Office letter No. AF/M/63 dated 06-12-2021 appointing Official Spokespersons, this is to appoint Ms. Sindhuja Jagadeesh and Mr. Joel Van Lierde as executives of Auroville Outreach Media with immediate effect, replacing the current executives Ms. Fabienne Marechal.

Shri. Chandresh Patel and Shri. Dev Mohanty will be the Advisors for the executive team until further orders.


(P. R. Srinivasamurty)


Ms. Sindhuja Jagadeesh


Mr. Joel Van Lierde

Copy to:
1. Shri. Chandresh Patel
2. Shri. Dev Mohanty

AUROVILLE FOUNDATION
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, GOVT. OF INDIA

AUROVILLE FOUNDATION BHAVAN, AUROVILLE - 605 101 (T.N.)
Tel : (0413) 262 2222 & 262 2414 Fax : (0413) 262 3496
E-mail: avfoundation@auroville.org.in

Appendix A-12 - OutreachMedia office locked

9th February 2022



Appendix A-13 - Letter from OutreachMedia executive

10th February 2022

Regarding accusations against Outreachmedia

F.M. <xxxxxxx@auroville.org.in> Thu, Feb 10, 2022 at 4:09 PM

To: Auroville Foundation <avfoundation@auroville.org.in>

Cc: Working Committee Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.org.in>

Dear Mr. Srinivasmurthy,

I would like to have the following statement on record :

Regarding the petition started by Sindhuja Jagadish and others as well as the letter that Lakshay Dharan and Co have sent around (dated January 27nd 2022) which were both targeting me specifically and personally, it is full of serious and false accusations of taking or causing actions that are harming Auroville. This goes against my deep love for and commitment to Auroville and the Mother.

I am accused to have single handedly mobilised the Media which is absolutely not true. In fact, a press release was issued by Outreachmedia on the 6th of Dec asking the media outlets to 'hold off on covering these events while the Auroville community finds a peaceful way forward.' An appeal was also published on AuroNet on the 6th of Dec asking residents to refrain from speaking to the press individually and to refrain from inflammatory postings on social media. However, the act of trying to gag Outreachmedia opened the doors for individuals to initiate their own contacts and start Social Media accounts over which there was no longer any control. This is exactly what was stated in the communication sent to the Foundation Office, Governing Board, International Advisory Council, Working Committee and TDC on the 8th of December 2021.

Regarding articles that have been posted, Outreachmedia teams have always posted Media articles written on Auroville.

I have been involved in this work since 2005 and the work that has been done by the Outreachmedia teams over the years has always been appreciated by the GB, the IAC, Secretaries of the Auroville Foundation, Aurovilians, media outlets and independent documentary makers and researchers. We were very much involved with the visit of the Prime Minister and received the appreciation of the then Secretary of the Auroville Foundation.

I would like to emphasize that although I have been a coordinator for Outreachmedia over the years I have not been alone in the work and it has always been a team effort. Outreachmedia as a coordinating and facilitating service activity of Auroville has been recognized officially by its presence in the annual report of the Auroville Foundation since 2004, although the team has been functional since 1999. It has never been or claimed to be the spokesperson(s) for Auroville. It has

always endeavoured to reflect Auroville's diversity and depth by identifying different spokespersons according to the topic of interest.'

I am sending this appeal as this situation has gone far beyond questioning my work and professionalism and is severely affecting my personal well being.

Sincerely,

F. (OutreachMedia executive)

Appendix A-14 - AVFO announcement regarding OutreachMedia

12th February 2022

Auroville Outreach Media change of management

By Auroville Foundation, 12 Feb 2022 / 10:21 am

A report on the Auroville Outreach Media change of management
Issued by the Auroville Foundation on 11-02-2022

Auroville Outreach Media had been provided with the space by Auroville Foundation at Archives Building built with Government of India grants. During the year 2018, the Foundation had purchased equipment such as Camcorder, Scanner, Computers, Printers, External Hard Drives, Furniture etc. for a total value of Rs.10,22,939.00 from the funds received from Government of India. The items were handed over to the Outreach Media team for their outreach work. The assets accounts of the equipment are being maintained by the Auroville Foundation.

Since the beginning of development work on the Crown Rd in Auroville this past year, the Outreach Media team began to use the outreach contacts and resources of its service to promote its personal and distorted views on the development work against the Auroville Foundation. They also misused their authority through media/social media for a biased narrative to media networks and publishing houses both domestic and overseas; by publishing sensationalized misinformation and propaganda. All this was done through publishing blatantly false or negative information to the world with an aim to accuse the Auroville Foundation Secretary and Governing Board and the Government of India of bulldozing their community rights with illegal development work. Over the years Outreach Media had come to project itself as the “voice of Auroville” and this action therefore has done a lot of damage to Auroville's image.

Following this action from Outreach Media, the Auroville Foundation communicated to Outreach Media to immediately cease and desist with all public relations work. The Auroville Foundation formed an Information and Public Relation Team/Group as requested by the Governing Board to cater to the official Information and Public Relation needs of Auroville Foundation under Government of India.

Given the circumstances, the Under Secretary, Auroville Foundation sent an email to Ms. F. on 20.01.2022 requesting Ms. F. to hand over all the movable, immovable, tangible and intangible assets including space, contacts of media persons, phone number, email, Soft IP, archives, accounts maintained with Financial Services etc. maintained by the Auroville Outreach Media office to the Auroville Foundation, on or before 22.01.2022, as the same was required for continued information and public relations activities of Foundation.

Ms. F. in her email response dated 21.01.2022 had objected to it and questioned the authority of the Auroville Foundation. In another mail sent on the same day (21.01.2022), she had made it clear that as Executive of Outreach Media she would not comply with the request made

by the Foundation, since FAMC of the Resident Assembly is the authority. This understanding is incorrect since the FAMC is a body of the Governing Board, and all units, services, assets, tangible or intangible are under the direct purview and undertaking of the Auroville Foundation.

The subject of handing over all the assets of the Outreach Media to the Foundation was discussed in FAMC of the Governing Board on 03.02.2022, and the necessity for handing over of all the assets was reiterated by the Internal Auditor and the Under Secretary. Sufficient time and reasonable opportunity had been given to Ms. F. for vacating the premises of Outreach Media and for handing over the premises keys and assets there in. Since the request had not been complied with till 07.02.2022, on 08.02.2022 around 11.30 am, a team of officials from the Foundation headed by the Under Secretary along with the Information and Public Relations team of Auroville Foundation went to the Outreach Media to request her personally for a smooth hand-over in a peaceful manner. On seeing this team approaching, Ms. F. behaved in a highly strange manner by locking the doors from the inside and preventing the officials from entering the premises. The Under Secretary then politely stressed the need for Ms. F. to vacate the office on grounds of non-compliance with the previous orders as had been communicated, and for use of the office by the Information and Public Relation Team of Foundation. Unfortunately though, this request was not heeded by Ms. F., who later came out another exit and locked the office and departed.

As there was no further prospect of a smooth handing over all the assets of the Outreach Media including the premises occupied by Ms. F., on grounds of noncompliance and lack of cooperation, the Auroville Foundation officers were not left with any other option other than fixing another padlock above the present one. So, on 08.02.2022 at 7.00 pm officials of the Foundation reached the Outreach Media and affixed a notice for Ms F.. The following day, 09.02.2022, all the locks to the office were changed by the Auroville Foundation and through an executive order the Information and Public Relations team of Joel Van Lierde and Sindhuja Jagadeesh replaced F. M. as Outreach Media executives along with Dev Mohanty and Chandresh Patel as advisors to the team. As no hand over has been done by the previous team, an audit of the Auroville Outreach Media assets and finances is currently ongoing.

Attached files:

Office Order to Outreach Media.pdf

Appendix A-15 - Letter in support of the dismissed OutreachMedia

14th February 2022

In support of Auroville's Outreach Media

Dear FAMC and Working Committee,
(cc to the Auroville Council, Auroville Foundation Office, Outreach Media)

We, the undersigned residents, are deeply shocked with the recent events that happened in regards to Outreach Media. Not only do we condemn the fact that the Foundation office conducted and communicated about the dismissal of an Aurovilian from his/her workplace without due process being followed, but we also strongly denounce the way the Outreach Media office has been taken over without the approval of the FAMC.

Those of us who have witnessed the work of F., as well as those who have been part of the Outreach Media team over the years, have seen her dedication in taking care of the relations with the media. F. has never pretended to be a spokesperson for Auroville, instead she has always tried to put the media in contact with a great diversity of Aurovilians who hold different views about Auroville and have various competencies and ways to contribute to our collective reality, while ensuring some coherence in our communications about Auroville. In this way F. ensured a diversity of perspectives could be represented in the media - although it is an impossible task to represent the whole of Auroville in a press release or a video documentary.

On the other hand, Sindhuja Jagadeesh and Joel van Lierde have shown to hold a one-sided and imposing perspective of Auroville. As F. has never in her long service at Outreach Media claimed to be a spokesperson for Auroville, the fact that Sindhuja and Joel were appointed by the Foundation office as 'official spokespersons' for Auroville is strange, and out of line with Auroville's core value of unity in diversity. They have also made numerous false claims to reporters regarding the protests, such as protesters spitting on police among other inflammatory and dangerous untrue statements.

None of the residents of Auroville can pretend to be 'spokespersons' of the Auroville Foundation by an office order issued by the Foundation Office, as the Auroville Foundation includes the Residents' Assembly and hence the views of the residents of Auroville. Only with a joint agreement from the Governing Board, the Residents' Assembly and the International Advisory Council can an individual be said to represent the views of the Auroville Foundation.

We do not feel represented by Sindhuja Jagadeesh nor by Joel van Lierde and do not trust them in taking care of Auroville's relation with the media. In fact we had signed in December 2021 a collective statement on media and press releases, which is the following:

On Tuesday December 7th, the residents of Auroville were informed by the Under-Secretary of the Auroville Foundation that the Secretariat of the Auroville Foundation has appointed two spokespersons for Auroville. The residents have also been informed that the Secretariat of the

Auroville Foundation has instructed that “the Outreach Media of Auroville and others shall refrain on issuing any statements until further notice”.

The Auroville Foundation is an autonomous body under the Auroville Foundation Act, which is composed of three legal authorities, including the Residents’ Assembly. Unless the Residents’ Assembly agrees to it, the Secretariat of the Auroville Foundation cannot appoint spokespersons to represent Auroville as a whole. The Secretariat can only appoint people to represent itself, namely “the Secretariat of the Auroville Foundation”.

We, the undersigned residents, support our Outreach Media team, which was put together in 1996 as a service to the Auroville community and is experienced in dealing with media relationships, and can take care of communication with the media. The two spokespersons of the Secretariat do not represent Auroville.

This collective statement was signed by nearly 700 people, including more than 550 Aurovilians.

We hope that action can be taken to offer protection and support to F. and the Outreach Media staff, and to ensure that Sindhuja Jagadeesh and Joel van Lierde do not get access to the material and data of Auroville's Outreach Media.

We also would like to express gratitude to the FAMC of the Residents’ Assembly for taking a stand in denouncing the clear take over from the Foundation Office in regards to Auroville’s Outreach Media, among other very concerning matters.

Sincerely,
Concerned residents of Auroville.

(The above email was sent on the 14th of February 2022 with a list of 325 signatories. It continued receiving 92 additional signatures the following days.)

Appendix A-16 - OutreachMedia executive letter to the community

20th February 2022

To my Auroville Family

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my Auroville family, some who I have known for decades, others who I have met recently and all the others that I don't know yet. Your constant support helped me tremendously through these challenging times.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that the accusations against me shared by a small group (that sent hateful letters to the GB and IAC members) are entirely false. And for those who do not know me well, at Mother's feet, I can say that I contacted neither the national nor the International press.

In fact, the morning after the "bulldozing night" A. and I sent out a press release asking the Media not to come to Auroville until peace returns. We spoke to Security service to help us to manage the entry of the press into Auroville too.

Simultaneously we posted a note on Auronet to organize some collective response and avoid individual outbursts with inappropriate hashtags on Social Media.

In reaction, without the least respect towards our postings and efforts, the Foundation Office appointed "Official spokespersons" and organized a press conference.

All our efforts were lost and the press conference doubled the press interest.

The gagging of Outreachmedia at this very moment unleashed spontaneous actions by many members of the community who reached out to their own contacts in the media.

Despite the refusal of the FAMC to transfer the assets of Outreachmedia to Joel Van Lierde and Sindhuja Jagadeesh, the door was blocked and locks changed.

Today accusations continue: "Experts" sent by Chandresh Patel and Dev Mohanty (who is not an AV) have reported that hard drives have been cleaned at the office of Outreachmedia. Well, the computers are used by many people and every user is requested not to leave any of their work behind to avoid unnecessary accumulation of material. Not to mention that there is nothing "secret" in the computers but files, procedures and policies...

This is not a James Bond film. For the rest I can't say because they forced the entry of the office without my presence.

While the FAMC is still refusing to transfer the assets or allow access to Outreachmedia email accounts to the "spokespersons", I received personal mails questioning missing assets and asking for the passwords.

The assets are not missing and in fact were checked by the accountant of the Foundation Office who spent 2 days in December at the office questioning everything. Another intimidation?

However be aware that they were given access to Auronet Outreachmedia account.

I am also accused of creating the website www.standforaurovilleunity and managing the Facebook and the Instagram account standforunity. Well, humbly, I am not a super woman and I don't have the work capacity of 10 people (During the 50th Anniversary we were more than 10 people). I would rather say the opposite since G.'s passing.

I first joined Auroville in 1984: I was not trying to escape the life of Delhi or any other big cities of India for a nice green sweet home – The soil was red and life still in survival mode.

My dedication to Auroville cannot be challenged and neither can Outreachmedia's and the community's commitment to freedom of speech and transparency. Using Outreachmedia to push one sided ideas is not only unethical but will also jeopardize the efforts made by many Aurovilians over the years. The many International news reports during the 50th reflected that team effort. Outreachmedia is the instrument of the RA and should stay so.

It is very regrettable that such demonstrations of hatred have been displayed in Auroville and followed by people who don't even know me personally and without any valid proof of their accusations.

I wish you all a beautiful day on the 21st, in Her light and love. Truth will prevail.

With my deepest Gratitude

F. (OutreachMedia executive)

Appendix A-17 - Picture of the new /AVFO 'OutreachMedia'/ team with Vikram Ramakrishnan

3rd March 2022



The above picture features one close collaborator of Dr Ravi (on the left), together with two members of the new 'OutreachMedia' (in the middle) and Vikram Ramakrishnan (on the right). Reportedly, they are later seen having a friendly meal together.

Appendix A-18 - An Auroville TV Channel is announced

11th June 2022

Auroville TV Channel to be launched soon

Dear Auroville community,

Auroville Media Interface is a new portal between Auroville and the rest of the world, as a media and public relations service. We are excited to announce our first initiative: the launch of Auroville TV channel in collaboration with Jio platform with an active user base of 370 million worldwide.

We invite you to share your content to be broadcasted on the TV channel. Pre-existing videos that your unit/service/activity have already realized can be broadcasted. We are also planning to broadcast live events such as interviews from units, art performances, regular classes, etc.

But you could also produce videos specifically for the broadcast or have a recurrent slot to develop your own show. Events in all the Auroville languages are most welcome to be broadcasted. If you are interested to participate, please contact us at mediainterface-avf@auroville.org.in

J., Auroville Media Interface team

(The above announcement was published in News&Notes 926, dated 11th June 2022.)

Appendix A-19 - The Hindu article wrongfully quoting the Residents' Assembly

25th November 2022

The following is an article posted by The Hindu Bureau on 25th November 2022. The article is also accessible [here](#). The article impersonates the voice of the Residents' Assembly and its legitimate Working Committee, misrepresenting the voice of the residents with what is in fact the opposite of what they stand for.

Residents' Assembly expresses relief at Governing Board's commitment to take Auroville out of stagnation

The Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly welcomes the message conveyed by the Chairman of the Governing Board and T.N. Governor R.N. Ravi on November 7 as a necessary wake up call to make a collective commitment to take Auroville forward.

A full-scale exercise to update the Register of Residents has been undertaken by the Auroville Foundation with the Working Committee and a team of resident volunteers to complete the process, review and update all new data.

Members of the Residents' Assembly of Auroville Foundation have expressed relief at the Governing Board's commitment to take Auroville out of a long phase of stagnation and support the development of Auroville's vision-driven master plan as conceived by The Mother.

According to a press release from the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly, a large section of the community welcomed the message conveyed by the Chairman of the Governing Board and Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi on November 7 as a necessary wake up call to take stock of where things stand and to make a collective commitment to take Auroville forward.

"Auroville is in a phase of transition, poised at a point of much-needed growth in all sectors, in policies, and in population. This requires its ability to evolve, adapt, collaborate and move forward with all aspects of the city together with a conscious inner development," the statement said.

"The unusual assertions by certain unauthorised groups who have been claiming authority without legitimacy over the rest of the Residents' Assembly have become a matter of concern. This has caused more division and confusion in Auroville and among well-wishers outside and brought obstructions in the work of the legitimate working groups," the working committee pointed out.

Stating that the call to update the Register of Residents (RoR) within a month, in May 2022, before taking any action with regard to selecting new groups was flouted, the Working Committee said that the selections were carried on regardless. The RoR had not been updated

since 2005. A full-scale exercise has been undertaken by the Auroville Foundation with the Working Committee and a team of resident volunteers to complete the process, review and update all the new data.

“The unauthorised groups have attempted to position themselves as the Residents’ Assembly authorities while taking an antagonist stand against the Auroville Foundation. The unauthorised Working Committee has also written to the Ministry of Culture on behalf of the Residents’ Assembly, without any consultation with the residents, to express satisfaction at the cancellation of the UNESCO conference to commemorate Sri Aurobindo’s 150th birth anniversary in Paris. This is not only objectionable but deeply unethical,” the Working Committee added.

(The above article was published in The Hindu on 25th November 2022.)

Appendix B-1 - Dismissed WC members email to Secretary

10th - 11th May 2022

Re: Admin Access: Sysop & Auronet

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject:Fwd: Admin Access : Sysop and Auronet

Date:Tue, 10 May 2022 17:19:20 +0530

From:Auroville Foundation <avfoundation@auroville.org.in>

To:Srinivasmurthy Palakodeti R <srinivasmurthy@auroville.org.in>, Narendra Pawar <naren@auroville.org.in>

For kind information sir.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: anu . <anu@auroville.org.in>

Date: Tue, May 10, 2022 at 5:17 PM

Subject: Admin Access : Sysop and Auronet

To: Dr. Jayanti Ravi <jayantiravi@auroville.org.in>, Auroville Foundation <avfoundation@auroville.org.in>

Cc: Sysop Auroville <sysop@auroville.org.in>, Manohar

<manohar@auroville.org.in>, Srimoyi WCom <srinoyi-wcom@auroville.org.in>,

Arun S <avt.aruns@gmail.com>, partha . <partha@auroville.org.in>, anu

<anu@auroville.org.in>, tine <tine@auroville.org.in>, Joseba Auroville

<joseba@auroville.org.in>, Selva . <selva@auroville.org.in>

Dear Madam Secretary,

cc: Sysop

cc: Manohar

For the smooth functioning of the Working Committee two changes have become necessary:

1. Following the removal of the 3 members of the WCom, Hemant, Chali, and Sauro, as per the PWG document, please be advised that the necessary changes will have to be made in the current Working Committee email list and the new interim members added.

The 3 new interim members to be added are: Tine, Selvaraj and Joseba. (see Auronet).

The password needs to be reset for the two email ids. Access will remain with one of two persons from the team and the secretaries as needed.

2. For Auronet access the current admin person for the Working Committee group will need to change and only the WCom members listed below will be empowered to make changes decided by the current Working Committee.

Thank you

Best,

Anu, Arun, Partha & Srimoyi

Tine, Selvaraj & Joseba.

Appendix B-2 - Undersecretary email to Sysop and Aurovet managers

10th - 11th May 2022

From: UNDER SECRETARY <srinivasmurty@auroville.org.in>
Date: Wed, 11 May 2022, 08:42
Subject: Fwd: Admin Access : Sysop and Aurovet
To: <sysop@auroville.org.in>, <annemarie@auroville.org.in>, <prasad@auroville.org.in>, <bharathy@auroville.org.in>, <manohar@auroville.org.in>
Cc: anu . <anu@auroville.org.in>, srimoyi <srimoyi@auroville.org.in>, partha . <partha@auroville.org.in>, Arun S. <arun.s@auroville.org.in>, Chandresh Patel <chandresh@auroville.org.in>, tine <tine@auroville.org.in>, selva@auroville.org.in <selva@auroville.org.in>, Secretary AV Foundation <secretaryavf@auroville.org.in>, <joseba@auroville.org.in>

Dear Daniel and Bharathy,
Dear Annemarie,
Dear Prasad,

This is with reference to the communication of the Working Committee as below. The Working Committee with the new interim members have met the Secretary, Auroville Foundation today to resume the work without any further delay, where matters of Visa recommendations and the ROR have to be immediately attended to.

The Sysop may immediately reset the Working Committee group mail and share the new passwords with the new members. For any questions, please reach out to Mr. Chandresh who is a resource person of the Working Committee

About the Aurovet, please ensure the new team of Working Committee members has full access to the group and able to communicate with the residents as needed.

Please ensure that this is done today afternoon and confirm, so that the work can continue and the flow of communication between the official bodies, working groups and the residents can resume without further delay.

Regards,
Srinivasamurty

Appendix B-3 - AV Council response to the Aurovet Team

12th May 2022

From: avcoffice . <avcoffice@auroville.org.in>
Date: Thu, 12 May, 2022, 13:12
Subject: Re: Admin Access : Sysop and Aurovet
To: Aurovet <aurovet@auroville.org.in>
Cc: Aurovet Support <aurovetsupport@auroville.org.in>, Auroville Council <avcouncil@auroville.org.in>, RAS - Residents Assembly Service Auroville <raservice@auroville.org.in>, Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.org.in>, FAMC Administration <adminfamc@auroville.org.in>

Dear Aurovet team,

Aurovet is an internal service of the Residence Assembly under the supervision of the Working Committee and the Auroville Council of the Residence Assembly. The recognized members of the Working Committee of the Residents Assembly are Chali, Hemant and Sauro. The result of the ratified decision for the membership of the Working Committee of the Residence Assembly was published on the 10th of May 2022.

The request from Mr. Srinivasmurthy can respectfully not be honored as the names suggested for the Working Committee of the Residence Assembly by the honorable office of Mr. Srinivasmurthy are not recognized by the Residents Assembly of the Auroville Foundation. Please share any requests from the Auroville Foundation office with the Working Committee or the Auroville Council of the Residence Assembly for approval.

Kind Regards,
Auroville Council

Appendix B-4 - Undersecretary to Sysop

17th May 2022

System Administration of auroville.org.in Gmail services

From: UNDER SECRETARY <srinivasmurty@auroville.org.in>

Date: Tue, May 17, 2022 at 2:07 PM

To: <sysop@auroville.org.in>

Cc: Secretary AV Foundation <secretaryavf@auroville.org.in>

To

Sysop team, Blue Light, Auroville.

Dear Sysop Team

We would like to thank you for the services you've rendered over the past years towards the upkeep and maintenance of Auroville's email system through Google apps for Educational Institutions.

We would like to inform you, that the Auroville Foundation office is in receipt of a complaint regarding the rise of anti-government and anti-national activities in Auroville through all forms of electronic media, as well as other means. Therefore the Auroville Foundation office requires to take over the administration of the Auroville's email/Gmail service effective immediately; and you are hereby requested to submit the administrative console's credentials to the Foundation office by return email asap.

This is issued with the approval of the Competent Authority.

Regards,

Under Secretary

Appendix B-5 - Undersecretary to Aurovet admin

17th May 2022

Submission of Admin. Console Credentials of Aurovet

From: UNDER SECRETARY <srinivasmurty@auroville.org>

Date: Tue, 17 May 2022, 10:41

To: <aurovet@auroville.org.in>

Cc: Secretary AV Foundation <secretaryavf@auroville.org.in>

Dear Aurovet team

We would like to thank you for the services you've rendered over the past years towards the upkeep and maintenance of Aurovet as a discussion board.

We would like to inform you, that the Auroville Foundation office is in receipt of a complaint regarding the rise of anti-government activities in Auroville through all forms of electronic media and other means. Therefore the Auroville Foundation office requires to take over the administration of the Aurovet services going forward, effective immediately; and you are hereby requested to submit the administrative console's credentials to the Foundation office by return email asap.

This can be covered under section IPC 201, 153, 186.

This is issued with the approval of the Competent Authority.

Under Secretary

Appendix B-6 - FAMC response

17th May 2022

FAMC to Mr. Srinivasmurthy regarding System Administration of auroville.org.in and Auronet

From: FAMC Administration <adminfamc@auroville.org.in>
Date: Tue, May 17, 2022 at 5:19 PM
To: Srinivasmurthy Palakodeti R <srinivasmurthy@auroville.org.in>
Cc: Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.org.in>, Sysop Auroville <sysop@auroville.org.in>, auronet <auronet@auroville.org.in>, Auroville Council <avcouncil@auroville.org.in>, famc . <famc@auroville.org.in>, Secretary AV Foundation <secretaryavf@auroville.org.in>

Dear Mr. Srinivasmurthy,

We, the members of the Funds and Assets Management Committee of the Residents Assembly of the Auroville Foundation, are deeply concerned by your email messages of May 17th 2022 to the Sysop and Auronet managers.

We would like to remind you that the credentials of Auronet and Auroville.org. And Auroville.org.in are assets of the Auroville Foundation, and as such, the FAMC has to be consulted before any decision as you propose is to be implemented.

We will initiate an investigation into the allegation of “anti-national” or “anti-government” activities, received by your office. We therefore request you to specify what exactly the complaint is, and who the complainer is.

Only after the investigation has been concluded by the FAMC can the matter of handing over the administrative console’s credentials be decided. Till that time, the present arrangements are not to be disturbed.

Regards,

The FAMC (members are: Amy, Angelo, Jonas, Lisa, Palani, Ranjith, Stephan)

Cc: Auronet, Sysop, Working Committee, Auroville Council

Appendix B-7 - Working Committee response

17th May 2022

Working Committee's reply to the Under Secretary reg. administration of the Auronet and Sysop

Dear Under Secretary,

The below email along with the attached email copy have been brought to our attention by the Sysop and Auronet managers.

In reply, we would like to state that we, as members of the Auroville Community, have immense gratitude to Mother India and Tamil Nadu. Any disrespect of Mother India is not condoned among the international township of Auroville.

Please forward us not only the complaint you mention in your email, but also detailed evidence for the alleged "anti-national" / "anti-government" activities in question.

If we find the complaint justified, we will initiate investigations in order to take the appropriate Actions.

We would like to state that Sysop and Auronet are services of the Residents Assembly for the Residents of Auroville providing essential information technology service to the residents.

We have been advised that the surrendering of the same without following due process and obtaining the formal consent of all users to these services would amount to breaching the users' right to privacy, a fundamental right guaranteed by the Supreme Court of India.

We are advised that such an order can only flow from a court or other authority that has been specifically authorised by statute.

Regards,

The Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly of the Auroville Foundation
Chali Grinnell, Elisa Goëta, Gilles Guigan, Hemant Lamba, Dr Juergen Axer, Sauro Mezzetti.

Appendix B-8 - Message from former Aurovet admin

18th May 2022



Re: Submission of Admin. Console Credentials of Aurovet

1 message

Web Services <webservices@auroville.org.in> Wed, 18 May, 2022 at 4:08 pm
To: famc <famc@auroville.org.in>, workingcom@auroville.org.in
<workingcom@auroville.org.in>
Cc: UNDER SECRETARY <srinivasmurty@auroville.org.in>, aurovet <aurovet@auroville.org.in>, Auroville Web Services <webservices@auroville.org.in>, Secretary AV Foundation <secretaryavf@auroville.org.in>

Dear FAMC and WC,
This is concerning the request from the Under Secretary regarding handing over the admin console of Aurovet.
I saw your messages to the Under Secretary on Aurovet

<https://auroville.org.in/article/91160>
<https://auroville.org.in/article/91157>

My suggestion to you would have been to collaborate with the Secretary.
I believe collaboration with the Foundation officials and with the Gov of India is the only healthy way forward for Auroville's larger good.
In order to prevent further escalation of the situation, I have shared with the Under Secretary the details requested.

My deepest and most sincere request to all of you is to find ways to collaborate.
There is always space for dialogue no matter how hopeless a situation appears to be.

Hoping that all will turn out well in long run,
With best regards,
Manoj
For Web Services

Appendix B-9 - Communication from Av Council

18th May 2022

Auronet password reset without consent from Auroville Council

May 18, 2022, 9:40 pm

Dear Community,

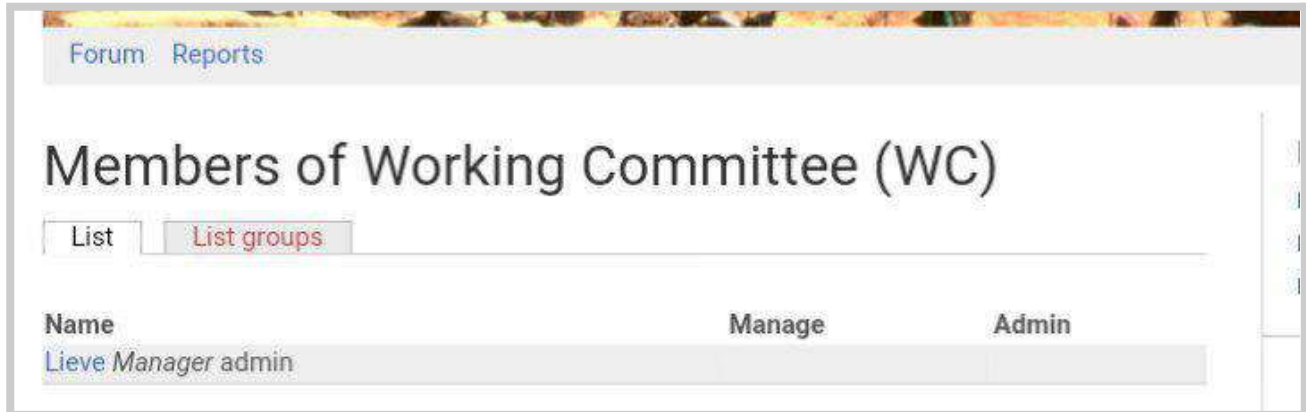
For your information, the Auronet password has been reset and handed over by one of the admin to the Auroville Foundation office without the consent of the Auroville Council, Working Committee or the FAMC.

Regards,

Auroville Council

Appendix B-10 - Membership of WC on Auronet is cancelled

18th May 2022

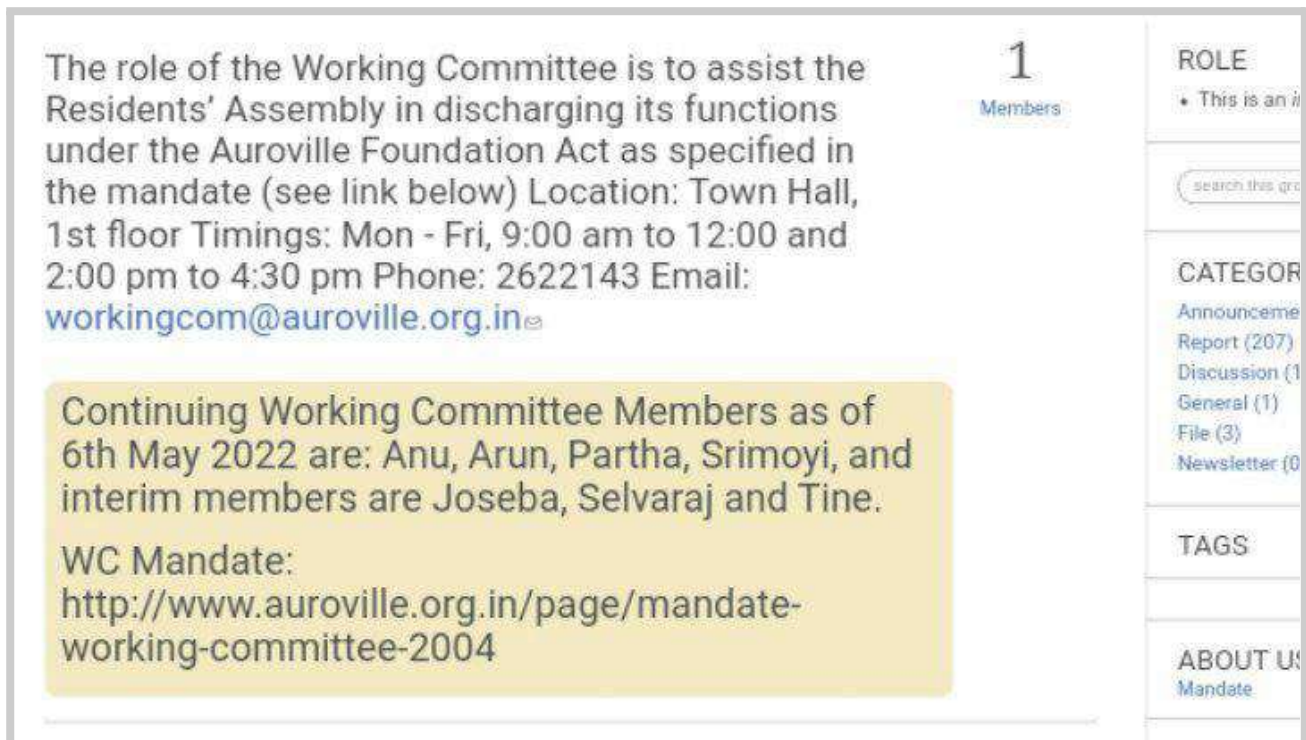


Forum Reports

Members of Working Committee (WC)

List List groups

Name	Manage	Admin
Lieve Manager admin		



The role of the Working Committee is to assist the Residents' Assembly in discharging its functions under the Auroville Foundation Act as specified in the mandate (see link below) Location: Town Hall, 1st floor Timings: Mon - Fri, 9:00 am to 12:00 and 2:00 pm to 4:30 pm Phone: 2622143 Email: workingcom@auroville.org.in

1
Members

ROLE
• This is an i

search this gro

CATEGOR
Announceme
Report (207)
Discussion (1)
General (1)
File (3)
Newsletter (0)

TAGS

ABOUT US
Mandate

Continuing Working Committee Members as of 6th May 2022 are: Anu, Arun, Partha, Srimoyi, and interim members are Joseba, Selvaraj and Tine.

WC Mandate:
<http://www.auroville.org.in/page/mandate-working-committee-2004>

The two above screenshots from Auronet show Lieve C., a close supporter of Dr Jayanti Ravi, as the sole member and admin of the Working Committee's Auronet account. Lieve C. does not have any known association with the Working Committee. The information on the continuing members of the Working Committee is also fallacious, since it features the four dismissed members and their assistants as the legitimate members.

Appendix B-11 - Joint statement from the AVC and RA WCom

20th May 2022

AVC/WC: Auroville.org.in domain access codes have been changed

May 20, 2022, 11:13 pm

Dear Community,

The access codes to the Auroville.org.in domain name registration server were handed over to the Auroville Foundation office.

Using the access codes, the Auroville Foundation office have acquired access to our mail and other related services. This means that we are no longer aware of the security protocols used to secure your data.

We are looking into the matter and will update you.

Best regards,

Auroville Council and Working Committee

Appendix B-12 - Communication from the Working Committee

21st May 2022

WCom: Information from the Working Committee

May 21, 2022, 2:29 pm

Dear Community,

Please be reassured that we are taking all appropriate measures in the present situation and that alternative communication methods are being explored. Updates will be shared as soon as possible.

Auroville is in a transitional moment, where apparent collapses are challenging our collective experience. While addressing this situation, we are also contributing to the new reality we aspire to, through dialogue and action. It is certainly uncomfortable at present, but us being together, with inner stillness and conscious efforts, can enable the co-creation of inspiring, truer versions of ourselves, both individually and collectively.

Everyone's inner posture and contribution from that space would allow a swifter and uplifting transition. Thank you for your support and trust during this time.

In gratitude,

The Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly of the Auroville Foundation
Chali (TOS), Elisa, Gilles, Hemant, Juergen, Sauro

Appendix B-13 - AVFO announcement regarding Auronet

23rd May 2022

For information to all Auronet users

May 23, 2022, 1:09 pm

For information to all Auronet users

We would like to inform you that based on a police complaint received by the Auroville Foundation, and in statutory compliance with the law, the Foundation Office had requested administrative access to the Auroville Web Service team for the Auronet platform.

Please note that a preliminary review of the platform is currently ongoing, and in the interim days/weeks certain users may find their access temporarily restricted.

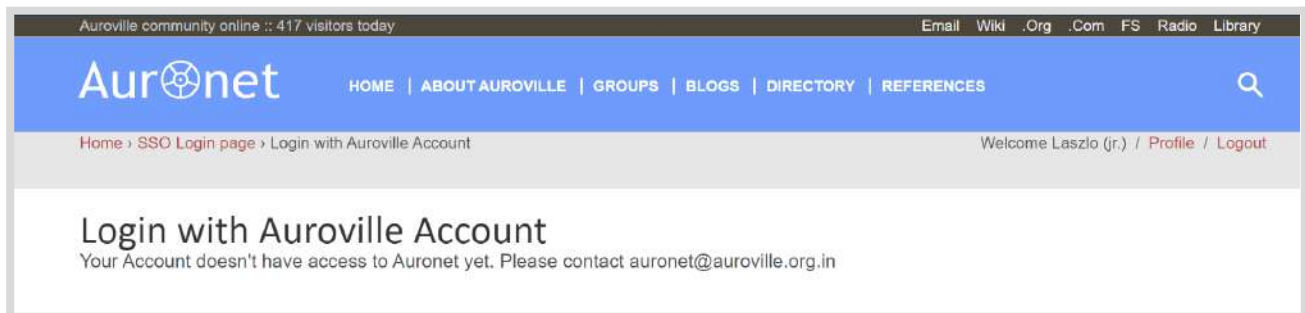
Also please note that no new users are being added to the platform for the time being.

We will update you as and when there are new developments.

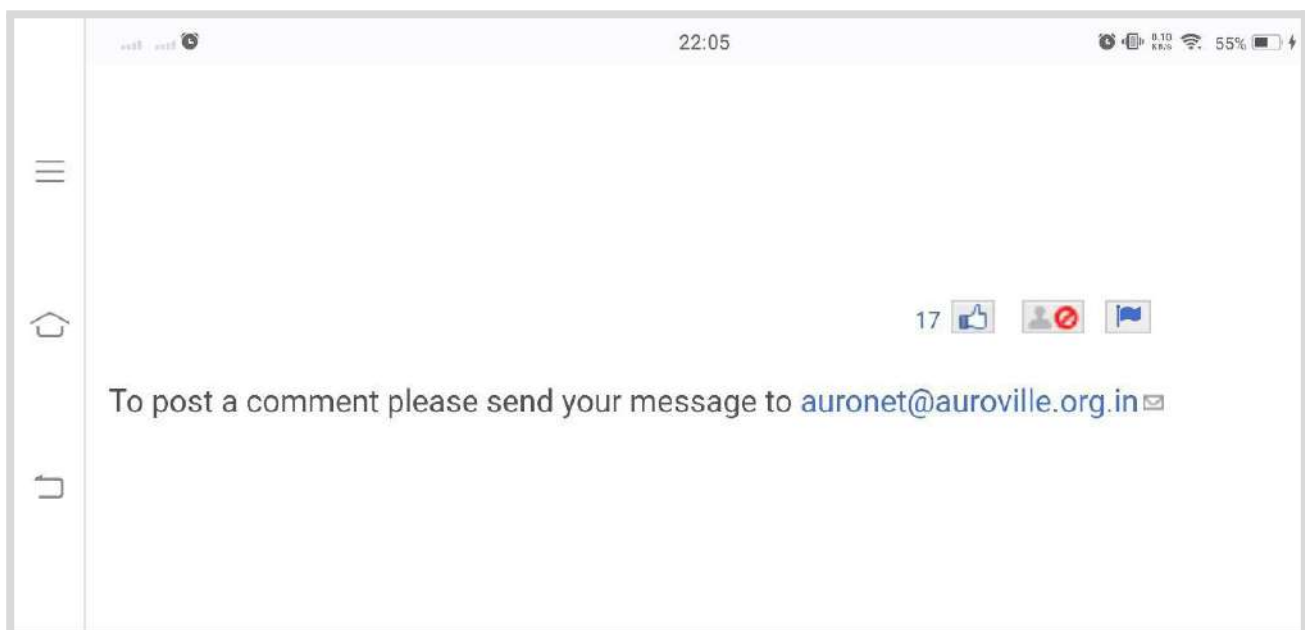
- Auroville Foundation office

Appendix B-14 - Screenshots of residents banned from Auronet

23rd May 2022



The above screenshot is from a long-term resident who has been an active user of Auronet for years, and has been vocal in criticising the approach and policy of the AVFO. He was banned from Auronet, together with many others. Over 30 individuals have reported to the Auroville Council being locked out of Auronet, or having their posts deleted. Many more may have been impacted without having reported it.



Some residents have been banned from commenting on Auronet. The invitation is for them to write to an email address managed by unknown admins; however those who tried never got a reply, and their comments were never posted on the platform.

Appendix B-15 - Auronet admin and moderator resignation

27th May 2022

Resignation of Auronet admin and moderator support

By AV Council (AVC) , 27 May 2022 / 12:46 pm

Dear Community,

This is to inform you that due to the new situation regarding Auronet, A. has resigned as Auronet admin and, J., D. and M. have resigned from the Auronet moderator support team.

We thank them for their dedicated work.

The Auronet guidelines are no longer upheld.

Best regards,

Auroville Council

Appendix B-16 - Communication of the AVFO on Aurovet

3rd June 2022

Reconstitution of the FAMC and ATDC

By Auroville Foundation , 03 Jun 2022 / 07:38 pm

Update on Auroville Town Development Council (ATDC) and Funds and Assets Management Committee (FAMC)

The Mother envisaged the Auroville Township with an ultimate population of 50,000 with Matrimandir at its centre and soul. In 1988 the Auroville Foundation Act was enacted by the Parliament of India to provide for the acquisition and transfer of the undertakings of Auroville and to vest such undertakings in a Foundation for better management and further development of Auroville in accordance with its original charter.

The Auroville Town Development Council (ATDC) had been established by the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation for the planning, development and building of the Auroville township in accordance with the Auroville Master Plan. The Funds and Assets Management Committee (FAMC) is a committee established by the Governing Board for the management of funds and assets of Auroville Foundation, as described in the Auroville Foundation Rules 1997.

The Governing Board set up an Organization & Governance Committee (OGC), in its 58th meeting held on 18th January 2022 to look into the organization and governance of Auroville. The OGC reviewed past Governing Board meeting minutes, audit reports and recommendations made by the Finance Committee of the Auroville Foundation.

The OGC has recommended to bring about more transparency, accountability, and productive utilization of the various assets of Auroville with the effective participation of the residents of Auroville. The OGC recommended to reconstitute the FAMC, which has now been done vide an Office Order.

The OGC also recommended to reconstitute the ATDC for which a Standing Order has been issued, replacing the earlier Standing Order. For the appointment of new members of the ATDC under the revised Standing Order, an Office Order has been issued. Memberships of both the FAMC and ATDC include residents of Auroville.

The reconstitution of the FAMC is aimed at realizing the Mother's vision of a self-supporting township without internal money exchange and with a collective supporting system for which the Mother had given the name "Prosperity". The reconstituted FAMC will also be given the responsibility of ensuring compliance with statutory regulations and requirements while bringing in more transparency and accountability.

The re-constituted ATDC is mandated to accelerate the planning and development of the Auroville township with the support of Auroville internal and external experts and active participation of Auroville residents.

Appendix B-17 - Newspaper article, Times of India

4th June 2022

Printed from

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Auroville Foundation reconstitutes town council, assets committee

TNN | Jun 4, 2022, 12:19 PM IST



PUDUCHERRY: The governing board of Auroville Foundation has reconstituted the Auroville Town Development Council (ATDC) and the Funds and Assets Management Committee (FAMC) to bring transparency, accountability and productive utilization of the various assets of Auroville – an international township in the making – with the effective participation of the residents.

The decision to reconstitute the ATDC and FAMC was taken by the Organization and Governance Committee (OGC), which was set up by the governing board during its 58th meeting in January this year, said a release from the foundation.

"The OGC reviewed past governing board meeting minutes, audit reports and recommendations made by the finance committee of the Auroville Foundation. The OGC has recommended bring about more transparency, accountability and productive utilization of various assets of Auroville with the effective participation of the residents of Auroville. The OGC recommended reconstituting the FAMC, which has now been done. The OGC also recommended to reconstitute the ATDC for which a standing order has been issued, replacing the earlier standing order," said the release.

The foundation issued an office order for appointment of new members of the ATDC under the revised standing order. Members of both ATDC and FAMC include residents of Auroville.

"The reconstitution of the FAMC is aimed at realising the Mother's (revolutionary freedom fighter turned spiritual leader Sri Aurobindo's spiritual collaborator) vision of a self-supporting township without internal money exchange and with a collective supporting system for which the Mother had given the name 'Prosperity'. The reconstituted FAMC will also be given the responsibility of ensuring compliance with statutory regulations and requirements while bringing in more transparency and accountability.

"The re-constituted ATDC is mandated to accelerate the planning and development of the Auroville township with the support of Auroville internal and external experts and active participation of Auroville residents," said the release.

ATDC had been established by the governing board for the planning, development and building of the Auroville township in accordance with the Auroville Master Plan. FAMC had been established by the governing board for the management of funds and assets of Auroville Foundation.

Appendix B-18 - AVC communication regarding email situation

8th June 2022

Email situation in Auroville

June 8, 2022, 1:22 pm

Dear Auroville Community,

Following the takeover of our email service by the Office of the Secretary we find ourselves in a precarious position.

The Office of the Secretary is apparently at present in a position to:

- Intercept all email sent to any @auroville.org.in address without detection (without requiring a password change that you would notice),
- Send emails in the name of any @auroville.org.in address without detection (without password requirement),
- Retrieve any information stored on any @auroville.org.in account, including email, google drive (docs, sheets, forms), android phone account, contacts - even if deleted over the past 4 weeks,
- Suspend, reset or transfer any @auroville.org.in account at any time, including email, google drive (docs, sheets, forms), android phone and contacts.

Over the period of the last many years that the service was run under the oversight of the Residents Assembly, multiple-party implementing cross-checks, logs and safeguards were followed so that none of these aforementioned infringements could happen; but now we do not know the Office of the Secretary's position or procedures. However since the takeover, we know that the Office of the Secretary has disabled a number of personal and working group accounts, has blocked certain email addresses from receiving and sending to auroville.org.in emails, and has begun using some of them inappropriately.

This situation is unacceptable in terms of privacy, security and work continuity.

We have therefore decided to initiate the shift to a new and independent service.

We have already backed up all the core Auroville services to it, such as the Working Committee and Auroville Council. These all share the common domain name "auroville.services", to clearly identify them as official community services of the Residents' Assembly. For example:

- workingcom@auroville.services
- avcouncil@auroville.services

Unfortunately the Office of the Secretary (or whoever they have appointed to oversee the auroville.org.in domain) has already noticed and blocked our new domain (auroville.services) from communicating with auroville.org.in. This means that our new email addresses cannot send

emails to or receive emails from auroville.org.in. Therefore the only option we are left with, is to suggest that community members, who feel concerned by the present situation and want to use a trusted communication platform, create new email accounts that are not under the @auroville.org.in domain (ie. @gmail.com, @outlook.com, @protonmail.com) and to inform the Residents Service (resservice@auroville.org.in) of their new email ID. If you need help with creating a new email account, you will receive help using this link:
<https://forms.gle/kDfBWoseKkwf5kgF6>

In time, we hope to be able to provide a free and secure email service to all Aurovillians under one domain as before, but this may take some more time.

In regard to the Auroville Council, the old email id avcouncil@auroville.org.in will continue to be in use, but we advise you to write to us on avcouncil@auroville.services from a non-auroville.org.in email account.

In regard to the Working Committee, the old email id (workingcom@auroville.org.in) has been taken over and you can no longer reach us using it. In order to reach us, please write to workingcom@auroville.services, but you will need to write to us from a non-auroville.org.in email account otherwise your message will be blocked.

Warm regards,

Auroville Council and Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly

Appendix B-19 - Auroville Massbulletin takeover

9th June 2022

New Mass Bulletin

June 9, 2022, 11:20 am

Dear Community,

The administration of all our @auroville.org.in email accounts was recently taken over by the office of the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation without the consent of the working groups selected by the Residents Assembly.

This has allowed the office of the Secretary to take over our Mass Bulletin which M. has managed for over 20 years. As a result, we have been forced to create a new Mass Bulletin. Unfortunately, this new Mass Bulletin is being blocked from reaching your auroville.org.in. Therefore if you want to receive the authentic Mass Bulletin please create a new non-auroville.org.in email account (eg. @gmail.com, @outlook.com, @protonmail.com).

If you need help with creating a new email account please fill in the form linked here

<https://forms.gle/kDfBWoSEKkwf5kgF6> and someone will get back to you soon.

Don't forget to add your new email address to the new Mass Bulletin email list administered by Sysop using this link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc6x0ueX-btDRm0g_VrIOZQjo6Svxz2SQ-t_2ZEBJ2kDAS0Dg/viewform

To update your email address with the Residents Service, please write to resservice@auroville.org.in.

Warm regards,

Auroville Council

Appendix B-20 - 'Compats' email forum is taken over

11th June 2022

From the Compats email forum administrator to the Working Committee

From: M. (admin of Compats email forum)

Date: June 11, 2022 at 11:06 AM

To: Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.services>

Dear friends,

Just for the record, I here inform you that after the blocking of the massbulletin@auroville.org.in account, also my info@auroville.org.in account was blocked and, bizarrely enough, also the 'ownership' of the AV Compat list avcompats@auroville.org.in (which I had started in 1996 when the AVI's gave me a teeny weeny pc in order to communicate with them) was taken away from me.

As said, just for your records.

With love and respect and deep appreciation for you all keeping up the good work for this our Mother's Experiment.

M.

Appendix B-21 - Auroville International Mailing list is taken over

11th June 2022

From Auroville International's (AVI) mailing list administrator to the Working Committee

From: V. (admin of AVI mailing list)

Date: June 11, 2022 at 5:30 PM

To: Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.services>

Dear WC friends,

Be informed that I am not any more the Administrator and owner of the avicentres@av mailing list, which I created.

The ownership has been taken over by C., something he had planned since January already.

Note that I was not informed, I found out today while I wanted to update the list.

Warm regards,

V.

Appendix B-22 - Communication from Auroville Council

14th June 2022

Status of current FAMC & new email address

14, 2022, 10:41 pm

Dear Community,

The FAMC have just informed us that with the confusion arising due to the irregular appointments of a new FAMC by the office of the Secretary, some of their members have been unsure about their willingness to continue. For now though there are still 5 active members of the FAMC namely: Amy, Jonas, Palani, Ranjith, and Stephan. We are yet to hear from the other members.

As the FAMC email has been taken over by the office of the Secretary they have been forced to create a new email account and are reachable at "FAMC@auroville.services". Please only use this email address to communicate with the FAMC of the Residents' Assembly. You may only be able to reach them from a non-auroville.org.in email account due to this domain having been blocked by the office of the Secretary.

Warm Regards,

Auroville Council and Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly

Appendix B-23 - AVFO update regarding sysop and Auroville email

15th June 2022

Update on sysop and auroville email

June 15, 2022, 6:44 pm

In continuation to our previous post, we would like to inform all Aurovilians regarding updates on the auroville.org.in email system and sysop. This is especially important since a number of alarming posts full of lies, half-truths and fabrications have been posted by various factions to community members in order to sow hysteria and create some form of panic over user emails, online data and privacy.

Though currently a preliminary investigation is still ongoing, we nevertheless thought it best to post an update on this topic, as it had become evident through repeated and multiple posts that an atmosphere of panic was being drummed up quite purposefully, in order to draw users away from the current mailing system by labeling it “insecure”, and spreading malicious misinformation that the Foundation Office (FO) and its staff were prying into people inboxes. Nothing could be further from the truth.

So in order to help members of the community to better understand the situation as it is being dealt with - here is a short sequence of events on the matter as they have transpired over the last few weeks.

Please read through to understand the issue at hand fully

Admin Access:

15/5/22: A police complaint is received at the Foundation Office alleging use and misuse of Auroville’s email systems, google cloud apps and internal bulletin board of Auroville being used and abused to foster and spread anti-national and anti-government sentiments.

17/5/22: The FO reaches out to Sysop and the Webservices teams to request for the backend administrative access to these platforms in order to conduct an investigation. An initial email is sent around 2 PM and is then followed up with a reminder around 6 PM.

That same night, FO receives responses including from the FAMC, that no such access would be granted.

19/5/22: FO at this point reaches out directly to Google HQ to request for legal access to the Google workspace. And upon the FO’s request, Google disables access to all current and past workspace administrators accounts.

1st June 22: The Auroville Foundation is legally granted admin access by Google.

Sysop Action:

1. Sequence of events for 17th-19th May as evident from the Sysop audit logs (investigation still ongoing):

Sysop receives email from Undersecretary Mr. Srinivasmurthy

Sysop then creates 3 new accounts and grants them admin privileges.

sysop17

sysop23

sysop56

2. Sysop then downgrades 3 existing admin accounts to regular member accounts:

da

ublass

sysop02 and user bharathy remains to continue as an admin account.

3. User group details are downloaded from the server along with data and other google drive contents (without any authorization from FO)

4. A third party secure connection is then made to an obscure service through APIs to transfer confidential and private user data out; again without any authorization from FO.

5. Sysop then deletes certain specific folders, documents and drives as well as mailing groups.

On 19th of May, Sysop admins lose access to the Google workspace.

Technical Facts on Google Workspace and it's functions:

To address the fears that have been spread by various groups, the FO wants to let all mailbox users know that, in spite of all the hysteria that you may have come across repeatedly through shared posts, Google workspace is technically designed in such a manner that a system admin cannot explicitly read into a users mailbox and without your getting alerted to it. The only ways for a backend admin to gain access to your account is if:

- o the admin forcefully resets or changes your existing password

- o the admin changes and updates your current password/account recovery details to a different mobile number /email.

Also it is interesting to note that:

- o the mailbox user (you, for example) can decide to forward a copy of the emails to another mailbox only via the front-end settings. A backend admin (workspace administrator) CANNOT set up such settings, since both sending and receiving mailboxes need to have a shared verification code for such forwarding to work with both users' consent.

In either case (whether you try to set up mail forwarding or a workspace administrator), the user is alerted of the same and system logs are generated for audit purposes. So without your knowledge such a breach is simply not possible. This is how mailboxes are designed to keep both data and user data safe and secure from any prying eyes.

Securing your account and data/email:

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you to secure your accounts through 2-Factor Authentication in your account settings, this mailbox feature allows for 2FA verification codes to be sent to a mobile number or other email address that you own and/or through Google authentication adding an extra layer of security to your account.

And should you still feel insecure about your mails, mail account and data privacy - please use end to end encryption tools and such PGP to send and receive encrypted emails such that only the intended recipient(s) read through the content of your emails through public and private keys.

In doing so, one can continue to use the same mailbox and email address without being worried over mails being 'read into' by unauthorized/unintended recipients while in transit or on delivery.

Preliminary Audit:

Our preliminary audits of the system admin logs reveal that the previous Sysop admins had been reading into mail headers of different user accounts for incoming or outgoing emails over the last months.

Email headers are provided to system administrators to help troubleshoot email issues; however largely, across organizations, reading of email headers for reasons other than for troubleshooting is generally considered as both unethical and immoral, even though the legalities of the same are governed through non-disclosure agreements system admins.

The initial audits that have been conducted reveal that the email headers of a number of mailboxes of Auroville residents and Auroville working groups and services have been read into by Sysop over the last 6 months.

The users are being reached out individually to inform them of the same.

Criminal investigation for Cyber crimes:

The investigation also reveals that confidential Government of India data from auroville.org.in mailboxes/drives have been illegally transferred out to obscure server(s) without any prior authorisation, consent or approval from the FO. The matter is now awaiting investigation under the relevant cybercrime laws both through IT Act of 2008 as well as the relevant IPC through the IT Cell.

The audit also has revealed that the following Auroville working groups mailbox accounts had their email settings set to automatically "forward and delete" all incoming emails to an obscure domain of auroville.services - which is currently awaiting investigation by the cybercrime division.

AVC and AVC office
Workingcom
FAMC
Admin Famc
Applications FAMC
AV Security

Since the matter is under investigation, this is a very delicate situation, and therefore we would like to inform you that the Auroville Foundation has taken great care to ensure no individual accounts experience any inconvenience or downtimes and continue to smoothly operate as before.

Anyone with questions and needing support with their emails/mailboxes and mailing groups etc can reach out to mailbox@auroville.org.in

Regards,

Auroville Foundation Office

Appendix B-24 - Summary from AVC

4th July 2022

Regarding access to Auronet and email accounts

July 4, 2022, 11:52 am

Dear Community,

With the regrettable and seemingly unwarranted take over of our @auroville.org.in mail server and the Auronet platform, many of us have subsequently been blocked from using Auronet, have had our email accounts forcibly taken over, or have had our email accounts blocked from communicating with residents who are still using their @auroville.org.in email addresses.

We would very much appreciate having a comprehensive list of all those who have been affected in the last weeks. Therefore if you or any of your friends have been affected by any of the above, please share the details of how you or your friends have been affected by writing to us at avcouncil@auroville.services, or if you have been blocked from writing to our new email please write to avcouncil@auroville.org.in. If for some reason you cannot reach us on either of these email addresses please pass by the town hall 1st floor and inform S. (our secretary), or you could call/WhatsApp her on +91 xxxxx xxxxx.

Warm regards,

For the Auroville Council

Balaji, Claudine, Julia (TOS), Philippe, Samrat, Suryan, Shivaya, Shiva and Svenja

Appendix B-25 - Communication from AVFO FAMC

18th July 2022

Reminder: Auroville Foundation Data & Intellectual Properties

July 18, 2022, 7:00 pm

Addressed to the working groups & their members as of April 1, 2022.

Entry, Land Board, Budget Coordination Committee, Working Committee, Housing Board/Service, Unity Fund/City Services, Farms & Forests, Trusts, Units & Services.

It has come to the attention of the FAMC from the postings by Auroville Council that data & email accounts of Auroville working groups which deal with Auroville Foundation assets, correspondence with official entities such as ministries, Governing Board members etc are being requested to be shifted out to domains other than auroville.org.in. Please be informed that the FAMC strongly discourages that this be carried out. Shifting, copying, deleting of Auroville Foundation soft assets such as online data and working group emails be avoided by all the working group members as it has legal ramifications for Auroville as a whole and the working group members.

In Her Service,

Smiles,

FAMC (Chandresh, Geeta, Jocelyn, Kalya, Sathyanarayan and Torkil)

Appendix B-26 - Massbulletin from Entry Board

4th August 2022

Entry Board inaccessible - Massbulletin dated 08.08.22

Dear community members,

Last Thursday night (04.08.22), the members of the Entry Board and Entry Service have found out that we were unable to access our emails (entryboard@auroville.org.in and entryservice@auroville.org.in) and drive.

On Friday, we have asked the administrator of the server to let us know as soon as possible what is happening but we have not heard from that end yet.

As a result, we are unable to fulfil our role properly and can't process the people waiting for a reply, whether in their ongoing process or still as applicants.

For this week, we have to cancel all the interviews and we cannot proceed to the announcement of last week's interviews.

While we are waiting for the connection to be restored, our communication is very unreliable.

Please call the office (2622707) or pass by if you need any information.

Sincerely,

The Entry Board

Appendix B-27 - Announcement from RAS

22nd August 2022

RAS Announcement on RAD removal by Auronet management

August 22, 2022, 7:03 am

Dear community,

This is only to inform you that, yesterday morning by 11am, our Auronet post reminding the Residents on the current Emergency RAD was removed by the Auronet moderators, with no explanations given whatsoever.

As our scope of work includes sending regular reminders on the processes happening in the community, we are unsure whether Auronet is still an adequate communication platform we can rely upon.

It would be useful to receive an explanation from the Auronet moderators.

The RAS Team

Dan, Giovanni P, Sathish A, Tatiana S

Appendix B-28 - Massbulletin from BCC

30th August 2022

BCC lost access to email accounts

Dear Community,

This is to inform you that your mails are not reaching BCC.

This is because the passwords to our various BCC inboxes (@auroville.org.in) were changed without our knowledge, and BCC members were removed from our BCC Shared Drives (on Monday 29th).

We are requesting access and will keep you informed.

Thank you for your patience.

BCC (Aurosugan, Enrica, Hans, Mahi, Rathinam, Sacha, Suryamayi, Verena)

Appendix B-29 - Massbulletin from Housing Board

16th September 2022

Update from the Housing Board

Dear community,

As you may be aware, the members of the Housing Board have been 'removed' from office and replaced by a team appointed by the Office of the Auroville Foundation. No notification or reasons have been given.

In their present form the Housing Board team has been working together and in full collaboration with the Housing Service, since August 2021. During this time, new working procedures and systems have been put in place to improve the quality of the service.

However, the dismissal and replacement has been done disregarding the work done, and without requesting any kind of proper hand over. As the "take over" has been done in such a hurry, even the Office Order issued is misleading and incorrect. The Office Order does not mention the Housing Board, but only the Housing Service, which are two separate bodies. It is unclear at this stage whether there is an attempt to restructure the Housing group, disregarding in this way the Housing Mandate which has been approved by the Community in 2021, or a simple lack of information and knowledge about the work and the structure of the Housing group.

We have also been locked out of our inboxes and are no longer able to access the Housing accounts. As such, we feel our hands are tied, as many of our decisions relate to the allocation of funds for repairs and building projects, which we have no access to at the moment. We find the current events go against all sense of natural justice and we await the outcome of the Madras High Court case regarding the FAMC.

We would like to remind you that the Housing Board was created in 2017 through a community process to assure transparency and accountability, which the service by itself was lacking. Since the Housing Board was created, they have been grappling with many unrecorded decisions and accounting mismanagement of past Housing Group teams.

As the Housing Board, we wish to continue whatever work we can in the spirit of service. If you have any enquiries, you can reach us at housingboard@auroville.services or av.housinggroup@gmail.com.

We will always do our best to help you with the means available to us.

With care,

The Housing Board

(Amy L., Angela, Aravindh, Bharathy, Iyyappan, Rima, Venkat)

Appendix B-30 - Letter to the Chairman on the email situation

19th October 2022



Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly

Auroville
Foundation

To:
The Chairman of the Governing Board, Dr.R. N. Ravi

19th October 2022

Sub: Emails from the Working Committee refused by the Office of the Secretary

Respected Sir,

We would like to again bring to your attention that since 1st June 2022, emails sent by the Working Committee selected by the Residents' Assembly (RA) to the Office of the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation are constantly bouncing back, due to a blockage of the @auroville.services domain by the administrators of the @auroville.org.in email domain. This has led the Working Committee of the RA to create several new email ids to send communications, which are systematically being blocked by the administrators of the @auroville.org.in email domain.

You will find attached for your information a notice of our latest email having bounced back, dated 11.10.2022, which was addressed to the Secretary, Dr. Jayanti Ravi, and the OSD.

On a similar note, the Working Committee selected by the RA has been sending its communications to the Office of the Secretary by registered speed post, which have also been repeatedly refused.

This situation concerns not only the Working Committee selected by the RA, but also the other working groups and committees selected by the RA, and a number of residents as well. The takeover of the @auroville.org.in has been experienced by many as an act of harassment with the intention to prevent the participation of residents in the management of the day-to-day activities of Auroville and violating their privacy and confidential personal information.

This lack of willingness from the Office of the Secretary to receive communications from the Working Committee selected by the RA, and other committees and residents, is of great dismay and is not encouraging for a way forward to be found.

We request you to please instruct the Secretary and her appointed email administrators to unblock the @auroville.services domain and to accept communications from us, and from other committees and residents of Auroville.


Sincerely,

The Working Committee selected by the Residents' Assembly of the Auroville Foundation


Aravinda Maheshwari


Chali Grinnell


Hemant Lamba


Maël Shanti Vidal


Sauro Mezzetti


Valli Senthilkumar

Cc:

1. Members of the Governing Board
2. The Secretary to the Governing Board, Dr Jayanti Ravi
3. The current administrators of the auroville.org.in email domain

No:1 Crown Road, opp. Auroville Library, Auroville - 605101, Tamil Nadu, India

Tel: +91 413 2623 770 - E-mail: workingcom@auroville.services - Website: <https://auroville.media>

Appendix B-31 - Example of email blocked by AVFO

11th October 2022

Auroville Services Mail - Re the application of the Publi...

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ik=6bfee4e327&vie...>



Working Committee RA <workingcom@auroville.services>

Re the application of the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorized Occupants) Act, 1971 to the premises of Auroville

3 messages

RA WCom <workingcom@auroville.services>

11 October 2022 at 13:50

To: osd@auroville.org.in, secretaryavf@auroville.org.in

Cc: Working Committee RA <workingcom@auroville.services>

To:

Dr. G. Seetharaman,
Officer on Special Duty,
Auroville Foundation,
Auroville Foundation Bhavan,
Auroville- 605 101.

Respected Sir,

Subject: Re the application of the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorized Occupants) Act, 1971 to the premises of Auroville

We write to you as the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly. We submit that we are aware of the fact that your good-self has been issuing Show Cause Notices under the Public Premises Act, 1971 (hereinafter referred to as 'The Act') to certain members of the Residents' Assembly. In this context, we would like to humbly highlight the fact that the Public Premises Act will not be applicable to Auroville for the following reasons:

1. It is submitted that the Act was enacted with the intention of having it apply to the residential accommodation that is granted to the Central Government's employees, officers, Members of the Parliament and other high dignitaries. The Act was enacted with the intention of ensuring the proper vacation of government owned residential accommodations that were being misused by the Government employees, officers, etc. This intention of the Act is evidenced by the definition of the term "premise" in Section 2(c) of the Act. Section 2(c) defines a premise to include a garden, grounds and outhouses which form a part of a building. They also refer to fittings affixed to such a building or a part of the building. Therefore, it is submitted that the definition of the term "premise" does not cover a land like Auroville.
2. It is also submitted that the members of the Residents' Assembly are not Government employees living in the premises of Auroville.
3. It is also incumbent that notices under the Public Premises Act, 1971 can be issued only by the designated Estate Officer and not by anybody else. This power cannot be delegated to any other officer. The notice issued by you is therefore void as it has not been issued by the designated officer.
4. Furthermore, the Supreme Court has recently held in *Paramanand Singh v. Union of India* (2018) 11 SCC 801, that to invoke the Public Premises Act, the person who is sought to be evicted has to be shown to be an "unauthorised occupant." We are putting you on notice that neither Elodie nor Txuma are unauthorised occupants of the premises that are the subject matter of the present proceedings. Therefore, as the Supreme Court has held in the above mentioned case, without that jurisdictional fact having been established, there can be no proceedings under the said Act.
5. Lastly, it is submitted that Auroville is not a "premise" which belongs to or is taken on lease on behalf of the Central Government. Therefore, Auroville will not fall under the definition of a "public premise" as defined under Section 2(e) of the Act. We also use the decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in *M/s Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. v. The Workmen and Others* (1975) 4 Supreme Court Cases 679 to buttress this submission.
6. Therefore, given the fact that Auroville does not fall under the ambit of the Act, we also submit that the appointment of the Secretary as the Estate Office under Section 3 is illegal and void.

In this context, the Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly requests your good-self to stop issuing notices under the Public Premises Act, 1971.

Thanking you,

Regards,

The Working Committee of the Residents' Assembly of the Auroville Foundation

Aravinda Maheshwari, Chali Grinnell, Hemant Lamba, Ilyabharathy Somasundaram, Mael Shanti Vidal, Sauro Mezzetti, Valli Senthilkumar

Mail Delivery Subsystem <mailer-daemon@googlemail.com>
To: workingcom@auroville.services

11 October 2022 at 13:50



Message blocked

Your message to **osd@auroville.org.in** has been blocked. See technical details below for more information.

[LEARN MORE](#)

The response was:

550 5.7.1 The user or domain that you are sending to (or from) has a policy that prohibited the mail that you sent. Please contact your domain administrator for further details. For more information, please visit <https://support.google.com/a/answer/172179> q44-20020a056638346c00b00363ad961e1asor1767463jav.59 - gsmt

Final-Recipient: rfc822; osd@auroville.org.in

Action: failed

Status: 5.7.1

Diagnostic-Code: smtp; 550-5.7.1 The user or domain that you are sending to (or from) has a policy that 550-5.7.1 prohibited the mail that you sent. Please contact your domain

550-5.7.1 administrator for further details. For more information, please visit

550 5.7.1 <https://support.google.com/a/answer/172179> q44-20020a056638346c00b00363ad961e1asor1767463jav.59 - gsmt

Last-Attempt-Date: Tue, 11 Oct 2022 01:20:33 -0700 (PDT)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: RA WCom <workingcom@auroville.services>

To: osd@auroville.org.in, secretaryavf@auroville.org.in

Cc: Working Committee RA <workingcom@auroville.services>

Bcc:

Date: Tue, 11 Oct 2022 13:50:21 +0530

Subject: Re the application of the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorized Occupants) Act, 1971 to the premises of Auroville

----- Message truncated -----

Mail Delivery Subsystem <mailer-daemon@googlemail.com>
To: workingcom@auroville.services

11 October 2022 at 13:50



Message blocked

Your message to **secretaryavf@auroville.org.in** has been blocked. See technical details below for more information.

[LEARN MORE](#)

The response was:

550 5.7.1 The user or domain that you are sending to (or from) has a policy that prohibited the mail that you sent. Please contact your domain administrator for further details. For more information, please visit <https://support.google.com/a/answer/172179> i42-20020a056638382a00b00363b0d84417sor1533316jav.19 - gsmt

Final-Recipient: rfc822; secretaryavf@auroville.org.in

Action: failed

Status: 5.7.1

Diagnostic-Code: smtp; 550-5.7.1 The user or domain that you are sending to (or from) has a policy that 550-5.7.1 prohibited the mail that you sent. Please contact your domain 550-5.7.1 administrator for further details. For more information, please visit

550 5.7.1 <https://support.google.com/a/answer/172179> i42-20020a056638382a00b00363b0d84417sor1533316jav.19 - gsmt

Last-Attempt-Date: Tue, 11 Oct 2022 01:20:33 -0700 (PDT)

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From: RA WCom <workingcom@auroville.services>

To: osd@auroville.org.in, secretaryavf@auroville.org.in

Cc: Working Committee RA <workingcom@auroville.services>

Bcc:

Date: Tue, 11 Oct 2022 13:50:21 +0530

Subject: Re the application of the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorized Occupants) Act, 1971 to the premises of Auroville

----- Message truncated -----

Appendix C-1 - Media Interface requests access to the Archives

21st June 2022

Archives videos and photos catalog and access - 150th anniversary

From: Media Interface AVF . <mediainterface-avf@auroville.org.in>

Date: Tue, Jun 21, 2022 at 9:15 AM

To: avarchives <avarchives@auroville.org.in>

Cc: Chandresh Patel <chandresh@auroville.org.in> , Auroville Foundation
<avfoundation@auroville.org.in>

Dear Archives service and team,

Auroville and India are celebrating Sri Aurobindo's 150th anniversary and a program of events is being prepared in collaboration and at the request of the Ministry of Culture and UNESCO. Our partners and Auroville units will prepare video content for this program.

Please provide us with the complete catalog of the archived videos stored with the Archives so that we can select the pertinent set of videos for our use and share with the Ministry personnel.

For any photos catalog please let us know what is the procedure for our team members to review, select and choose what is required for outreach work?

Waiting for your reply at the earliest,

Joyously,

Joel

Appendix C-2 - Auroville Archives team response

22nd June 2022

Re: Archives videos and photos catalog and access - 150th anniversary

From: G. G. <xxxxxxx@auroville.org.in>

Date: Wed, Jun 22, 2022 at 10:29 AM

To: Media Interface AVF <mediainterface-avf@auroville.org.in>

Cc: Chandresh Patel <chandresh@auroville.org.in>, Auroville Foundation <avfoundation@auroville.org.in>, <working.com@auroville.services>

Joel,

As you surely know, the matter of the legal existence of your team has been contested in court and is therefore presently sub-judice.

This means that, as yet, we do not know whether you are the official spokespersons of the Residents' Assembly with regard to the media. We need to hear Madras High Court's decision.

In the meantime, we would like you to share with us a copy of the request letter from India's Ministry of Culture and from UNESCO. It would enable us to better understand what is needed in order to answer these two queries properly.

Know also that the questions you are asking us are not easy to answer because some photos and videos are protected by copyright (by and large owned by non-Aurovilians).

As for the pressure you are personally facing with regard to organizing a celebratory event, most if not all of the videos we have which would be suitable for this are already online, see e.g.

<https://auromaa.org/category/documentaries/>

Truth!

G. G.

For AV Archives team

Appendix C-3 - Auroville Archives Office Order

22nd June 2022

P. R. Srinivasamurty
Under Secretary

No. AF/M/45/696

21 June 2022

OFFICE ORDER

Auroville Archives has been functioning as a service which was headed by late Maj. Gen. K. K. Tewari. After the demise of Maj. Gen. K. K. Tewari, this service is continuing with Mr. Thambidurai and Mr. Gilles Guigan.

On the occasion of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo, the Ministry of Culture, UNESCO Desk, Ministry of Education, Government of India, national and international Sri Aurobindo centres have requested to source photos, videos and other archival material for preparation of their programs.

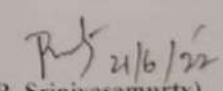
Secondly, it is urgently required to formalize archival management structures for Auroville's soft assets such as online documents, emails, plans and drawings, applications, land maps, housing records etc., from the various working groups of Auroville.

In view of all the above, it has become necessary and expedient to constitute a Management Committee for the Auroville Archives with the following members:

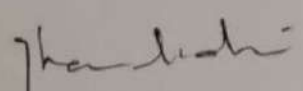
1. Mr. Thambidurai
2. Ms. Muriel Ghion
3. Mr. Varun Kapur


The Management Committee will be responsible for the collection, maintenance and safe-keeping of all archival material. The Committee may take the help of resource persons as and when required.

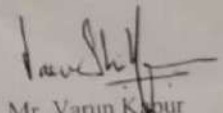
This Office Order is issued with the approval of the competent authority with immediate effect and will remain in force until further orders.


(P. R. Srinivasamurty)

To
The Executives Concerned


Mr. Thambidurai


Ms. Muriel Ghion


Mr. Varun Kapur

AUROVILLE FOUNDATION
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, GOVT. OF INDIA

AUROVILLE FOUNDATION BHAVAN, AUROVILLE - 605 101 (T.N.)
Tel : (0413) 262 2222 & 262 2414 Fax : (0413) 262 3496
E-mail: avfoundation@auroville.org.in

Appendix C-4 - Email to Archives executive from Working Committee

18th July 2022

Regarding Archives

From: Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.services>
Date: 18 July 2022 at 12:59
To: G.G.
Cc: Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.services>

Dear G.G.,

From a careful reading of the Office Order that was made by the Office of the Secretary regarding the Archives, it is clear to us that you and T. can continue to work in and for this service. You have not been removed but a 'Management Committee' has been formed on dubious grounds and seems to be present there. We encourage you to continue to go to the Archives and carry on this important work and legacy that was passed to you by Krishna Tiwari and for which you are so well informed and well suited.

With regards,
Your Working Committee
Aravinda, Bharathy, Chali, Hemant, Mael, Sauro, Valli

Appendix C-5 - Report of violence towards AV Archives Executive

21st July 2022

Report on the events which took place on 21st July at the office of Auroville Archives

By K., I., G.

At around 9:30 or 9:45 am, G. decided to visit his good friends and colleagues at the Archives. He saw that M., I. and K. were discussing in the center room and went there after greeting Thambidurai who was sitting at his desk. They were all very happy to see each other. They chatted a bit. At some point Varun moved from the 'conference room' where he had been sitting, to 'his desk' right outside the center room; he could see and hear that G. was there but did not say anything. I. asked G. if he knew of a good quote from Mother for the homepage of the Archives' future website. He told her that he would send her a collection of quotes from his home computer. K. suggested that he could do it right now from the Archives computer he had been using (because no one was using that computer and it would let us look at the files together). So G. sat at that desk and before he could start opening it up, Varun became very upset and asked him what he was doing there.

G. answered that the Office Order [dated June 21st] which had constituted a "management committee" of the Archives [consisting of Thambidurai, Muriel and Varun], didn't state that Thambidurai and G. were dismissed as "executives" of the Archives [which they had been for the past 8 years] and didn't say that G. was forbidden to work there anymore.

Varun said G. was never an "executive" and that no document proved that. He asked him to prove it. [This was ridiculous because we had been receiving every month from "City Services" a budget to run the Archives, had sent our yearly reports to the Working Committee and Secretary and had been corresponding – as executives – with the relevant authorities during more than 3 years regarding the construction of the Archives Building.]

G. told Varun that he would leave if Varun would bring an Office Order stating that G. was not allowed to work at the Archives anymore. Varun said G. was very clever to have waited for a day when Mme Secretary was out of station. G. (who knew nothing about that) said he had been sick for more than two weeks [possibly with a mild but very tiring form of Covid – though he tested negative]. His colleagues confirmed it.

When G. repeated that he wouldn't leave without an Office Order, Varun rushed towards him with the obvious intention of removing him physically. When G. made him aware that "it would make a nice video" Varun understood and stepped back.

By that time G. had started his computer. Varun got very upset and rushed to remove its plugs from their sockets on the floor. He loudly claimed that "this is my desk" (even while set up and working at the neighboring desk). He then started verbally abusing G. saying that we

(foreigners) knew nothing about yoga, that G. had been wasting all the years [40 years +] he had spent in Auroville because he had achieved absolutely nothing. He also said that we (foreigners) had been abusing everything this country had given us, and that what we had achieved was a shame. G. told him that everything he was saying showed how racist he actually is and brought up how years ago Varun had opined that many foreign Aurovilians were racist (which G. had responded to with his opinion that this was not true, explaining the difference between cultural insensitivity and racism).

Varun rounded on I., saying, "I give you my desk and this is what you do?! You give it to him?!" When K. was trying to re-plug the computer and phone which Varun had forcefully disconnected, he told her not to do it in a threatening tone. She did it anyway and said, "We have to respect the things." Varun then told K. to give him her key to the Archives. He told I. and M. to give him their keys. He said that the Archives is closed for one week. All this time, Thambidurai had been sitting in the background and not saying or doing anything. K. called Thambidurai over and reminded him that he is also a manager, the 'first' (on the Office Order list) manager, and that he has a say in what happens in the Archives. Thambidurai said he wanted to wait one hour for things to cool down, then decide what to do.

G. then told his colleagues that he didn't want to create any problem for them and that he would leave. They waited for Varun's reaction to see if this was what he wanted. G. left. Thambidurai then said that they (members of the Management Team) should wait a few minutes before taking any decision.

While leaving G. told Varun that he hadn't realised he was such a blatant racist. Varun answered: "This is the new India. We are not letting foreigners bully us anymore".

When Thambidurai was ready, he called Varun, K., I. and M. for a meeting in the conference room. During that meeting Varun said, "This is what I don't want. I don't want drama", referring to the drama he had just created with G.. At the meeting Varun seemed to cool down, and said that the Archives was closed for now and that I., M. and K. could come back to work on Monday. They agreed to this. K. asked if they could still have their meeting with P. on the Archives' future website, who had been waiting all this time, and Varun said yes. The meeting happened and then the Archives team left, at about 11:30.

Appendix C-6 - Update from AV Archives team and email exchange

23rd July 2022

Dear community,

I feel I must update you on what has happened in Auroville Archives – your archives.

- D., I. and I have been dismissed and G. is 'not allowed' to be there.
- These changes have been made by the 'management team' which consists of Thambidurai and Varun.
- Remaining in the Archives are only Thambidurai, Varun and M. E. (who helps you find photos when you have a request)
- Our dismissals were unjustified.
- Our dismissals took place without the management team making any effort to learn about the work and projects we were doing. Therefore there is no handover and no continuity. We were in the middle of many unfinished projects and now all that work is wasted.
- The overall effect of the 'management team' has so far been to make the Archives non-functional: dismissing the archivists (our knowledge is the most valuable resource there) and even 'closing the archives' for periods of time at whim.
- It seems clear that the changes made have nothing to do with the actual work, and instead are part of a political game, a worldview superimposed onto us in which Aurovilians are sorted into 'loyal' or 'disloyal' to an authoritarian force acting through people here today.

Below is a report (written by G., with edits by me, and checked by I. and M.), followed by some email correspondence. (...)

On Sat, 23 Jul 2022, 19:04 avarchives ., <avarchives@auroville.org.in> wrote:

Dear K. and I.,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for having decided to continue to work at the Auroville Archives recently through the transition period, as we had felt that both of you had an aptitude for and interest in the kind of work that is required at the Archives; and for continuity purposes which helps build institutional memory.

We are sure you will both understand, we at the Archives would like to maintain a collaborative way of working, but due to the episode that occurred on Thursday July 21st morning, we as the the management team at the Archives have concluded that we would have to unfortunately let you go, effective immediately. It has become quite clear that the Archives needs a change in energy and atmosphere to help rebuild the team, to effectively function in preserving Auroville's legacy and history at the Archives.

Therefore, for all the work you have done here, the Archives is happy to provide you both a bridging maintenance of two months (August and September 2022) in accordance with the maintenance you have been getting at the Archives, so that you will have time to find other projects to get involved with in a meaningful manner. We wish you the best.

Sincerely,

Thambidurai and Varun.

* * *

On Sat, Jul 23, 2022 at 7:30 PM K. G. <xxxxxxx@auroville.org.in> wrote:

Dear Thambidurai and Varun,

Will you please provide us with a written report of the episode as understood by you?

Thank you,

K.

* * *

They did not reply, so we worked on our own report (above).

I also concentrated and understood that I actually had an opportunity here to prevent things from getting worse. I did not want to feed into the divisions. So I forgave them inside myself and offered another way (24 July):

"Dear Thambidurai and Varun,

Firstly, I am not feeling any ill-will towards you right now. I am writing calmly. I know that Auroville is a challenging place.

I was surprised to receive your mail on Saturday night, dismissing I. and I from our work, considering that we had agreed that we would return to work on Monday.

I am wondering what happened between the time of that meeting, when Varun seemed to express regret for what had happened (I could be wrong), and Saturday night, considering that you had had no further contact with any of us.

My sense from the mail you sent (I could be wrong), is that you both started to feel uncomfortable with yourselves, and want us to go away so that you don't have to be reminded of what we have seen in you. This is a totally normal human psychological reaction.

What we have experienced is not just going to go away though. Your dismissal of us is unfair, and bad for the Archives, and we have the responsibility of informing the community about what has happened.

For me it is not by what someone says in anger that they should be judged.

We all have weird stuff inside that sometimes has to come out. It is by what they do, when they are not angry. I want to tell you that it is not too late to make amends.

I will be surprised if you do change your mind and try to collaborate, but anyway I feel like extending the possibility, as an expression of myself and of what is possible here.

With love,
K."

I received no response to this, but instead another note (25 July):

"Dear K. and I.,

Please return the front door keys of the Archives at your earliest convenience, as well as any other keys or such items of the Archives that you may have with you.

Thank you,

Thambidurai and Varun."

I returned my key to Thambidurai when I saw him that afternoon. That evening I sent them the report we had written, for them to check and edit:

On Mon, Jul 25, 2022 at 5:29 PM K. G. <xxxxxxx@auroville.org.in> wrote:

Dear Thambidurai and Varun,

Please find attached a report of the episode mentioned in our dismissal email.

Please let me know any corrections before tomorrow 12pm. I would like the report to be as accurate as possible.

Thank you,

K.

* * *

On Mon, Jul 25, 2022 at 6:30 PM avarchives . <avarchives@auroville.org.in> wrote:

Dear K.,

It is unfortunate that you have written a report that is so blatantly full of lies, so misleading and so one-sided.

Best wishes,

Varun.

* * *

From: K. G. <xxxxxxx@auroville.org.in>

Date: Mon, 25 Jul 2022, 18:49

Subject: Re: Your work at the Archives

To: avarchives . <avarchives@auroville.org.in>

Cc: <varunshiv@gmail.com>, Auromedia Auroville <auromedia@gmail.com>, I. AV Archives <xxxxxxx-avarchives@auroville.org.in>

Dear Varun (and Thambidurai),

I invite you to correct whatever is not true.

I invite you to submit clarifications, so that the report is not misleading.

I invite you to express your side. I for one am genuinely curious, how you experienced it.

K.

I received no reply to this.

Honestly all of us are quite exhausted and in need of a break; still I hope that we will be able to return, as a team, to our previously peaceful and luminous workplace, eventually.

