

Summary of the dilemmas that arise at this point – in December 2021 – in relation to the Master Plan of Dec. 2001, referred to as Perspective 2025, in relation to the Auroville Foundation Act of 1988, and in relation to the current development disputes and violations.

According to Toine's statements about these things in a presentation on Dec. 9, the Master Plan of Dec. 2001, which was made in association with the TCPO and approved by the MHRD, is the same as the MP approved and gazetted ten years later in 2010, with the exception of architectural drawings that were added to the latter.

It is stipulated in that document that four Five Year Development Plans and Annual Plans along the way would be submitted to and approved by the Governing Board to ensure regulated and coherent progress. It is predicted in that document that this procedure would lead to a resident population of 15,000 by 2010. This program has obviously not been followed, with the resident population standing today at 3000 after 20 years. Whereas Auroville's development has proceeded under various social, economic, and environmental conditions during the intervening period and has achieved considerable success in these and other areas, it is very far from having achieved the continuous methodical development of buildings and infrastructure conceived by that Master Plan, for which many practical material reasons can be cited. In today's actual context it must be pointed out, therefore, that the point of view and priorities expressed in the recent GB Minutes, and the distressful and precipitate recent actions of the Secretary, appear to disregard and contradict the reality of Auroville. Instead, while attempting to act in Auroville's interests, and to open a pathway for a new and constructive relationship with the Government of India, they have fostered division and distress. It appears that this may have been inevitable on the basis of the assumptions made from the start. For example, the GB Minutes of Nov. 2nd, start like this:

6. The Working Committee must assist the Governing Board with the implementation of decisions taken by the Board...

This statement seems to assume a breadth of authority and power by the GB beyond what is stated and intended in the Auroville Foundation Act, which states for example in Article 17: Powers and functions of the Governing Board.—The powers and functions of the Governing Board shall be—(e) to prepare a master-plan of Auroville in consultation with the Residents' Assembly and to ensure development of Auroville as so planned. The GB has not ensured such a development, nor could it have realistically done so under the existing conditions of the past 20 years, anymore than it can do so today.

The Secretary referred to this item in her recent presentation on Dec. 12, and emphasized her own role in carrying out this plan of the GB as she sees it. However, the next Article of the Act states: 19. Functions of Residents' Assembly.—(1) The Residents' Assembly shall perform such functions as are required by this Act and shall advise the Governing Board in respect of all activities relating to the residents of Auroville, among which is mentioned: (c) formulate the master plan of Auroville and make necessary recommendations for the recognition of organisations engaged in activities relatable to Auroville for the approval of the Governing Board.

The fact is that the creation and implementation of the Master Plan, the development of Auroville, the realization of the ideals expressed in the Auroville Charter, all depend entirely on the residents of

Auroville who comprise the Residents' Assembly. None of these things can be achieved by the Governing Board and its decisions, whatever they may be. This is most evident with respect to the history of the Master Plan itself.

Considering that the procedures for implementing the MP have not been consistently followed over the past 20 years, and the current activities to clear land for the Crown road do not follow an Annual Plan or a Five Year Development Plan as should have been the case, the Resident's Assembly is entirely justified in declaring such activities to be arbitrary and intrusive under the current circumstances, not to mention destructive of actual developments on the land and in the "social fabric of the community" which have actually developed during these 'unplanned' decades by the efforts of the residents.

The GB Minutes are here treating the implementation of the Master Plan as if it were the primary purpose of Auroville, and disregarding its larger purpose, spirit, and actual needs, priorities, and values.

Concerning the current status of Auroville development, the GB Minutes point out such things as:

2. ...lack of cohesive social fabric
3. Master Plan right-of-ways (the Crown, radials, outer ring and international zone loop, etc.) have not been cleared,
4. ...lack of focus on the development of the township
5. ... low population dispersed over a vast land area

Each of these points is merely the opinion of external observers who could easily and understandably be ignoring altogether the actual conditions of life in Auroville, its actual social fabric, its actual focus on both the higher aims and purposes and the day to day realities of the Auroville experiment. The actual conditions that have impeded the development of a larger population, and an urban infrastructure, especially the economic conditions, are more a result of the socio-political-economic development of India than of the actions of Aurovilians.

Concerning actions that need to be taken to accelerate development, the GB Minutes list:

5. (incorrectly numbered in the minutes) The ATDC needs to complete the work of preparation of Detailed Development Plans (DDPs) based on the Auroville Master Plan.
8. All Master Plan deviations on the land earmarked for the Crown have to be cleared so that the circular Crown Road and related infrastructure can be built without further delay.

The preparation of five year Development Plans and annual Progress Plans, according to the purpose and methodology of the Master Plan technology, is to provide continuity and realistic development, and thereby actually avoid arbitrary, destructive, and unrealistic interventions. But these necessary precedents for such development do not exist, hence item 3.5. These two items in the GB Minutes in fact disregard the purpose of the Master Plan, as well as the purpose of Auroville, the social fabric of the community, and the requirement to make and implement decisions in consultation with the Residents' Assembly. To assume that an effort made to adopt the Master Plan methodology 20 years ago can stand today, just as it was under the exigencies of that long past period in the history of

Auroville's development, is an absurdity, as well as being a contradiction of the meaning and purpose of the Master Plan methodology.

The Master Plan provides general guidelines. It is not a blueprint and so cannot be implemented "as is". Even though the Secretary has said that that is what is being done by her. She has said that, once the MP was approved, Aurovilians no longer have a role to play in the physical manifestation of Auroville.

The 5-year development plans provide the detailed means for near-term development and, as an ongoing updating of the Master Plan, ensure that the MP continues to be progressive. As stated in the MP: "It will neither be traditional, nor static, nor rigid."

It is a statutory requirement that these development plans are reviewed and approved by both the RA and the GB with "the same process as followed in the preparation of the Perspective Plan."

Acceleration of the progress of Auroville depends more on the recognition of the actual conditions of Auroville and of the world, and on the cultivation of meaningful, caring, and creative relationships among all the parties involved in this difficult human experiment. It cannot be achieved by heavy handed, authoritarian methods, nor by unrealistic social, economic, and organizational models that are carried over from the past and carelessly imposed.

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