



22 December 2021

Vikalp Sangam Supports an Auroville Free to Continue its Experiments on Sustainability and Harmony

We are deeply disturbed by reports from the experimental township of [Auroville](#) (a living UNESCO world heritage site), that unique forests, water catchment areas, community spaces are being bulldozed, and most importantly of all, community processes being ignored and bypassed. All this is being done in the name of “development” and a narrative that those who have been speaking for the forests, waterways and community processes have been standing in its way. The website www.standforaurovilleunity.com documents the unfolding of events in Auroville, and the responses from within the community and outside.

As videos and photographs show, about two weeks back, bulldozers flanked by police started clearing a forest bypassing due consensus-building processes within the community, which is among the founding principles of Auroville. This included a night-time raid at Auroville’s Youth Centre by nearly 80 policemen, involving police aggression, followed days later by forceful demolition of the centre’s main structures by involving nearly 100 hired strangers and violence at the hands of some. Residents who have raised the alarms have been threatened with gagging orders, deportation, FIRs, and denied the freedom of speech and the freedom to protest.

This kind of aggression imposed in an international intentional community, known for its [innovations](#), is unacceptable and risks undoing much of what Auroville has offered and may continue to offer to India and the world. It jeopardises Auroville’s future relevance for our country and the world. People cannot innovate when they live in fear of violence and deportation.

We recognise the key role that Auroville has played in the research and design of systems of food production, ecological restoration, natural healthcare, education, architecture, and [watershed-sensitive town planning](#). It has been an inspiration for numerous ecological projects and practices across India and the world during the past 40 years. Two years ago, we, members of Vikalp Sangam, gathered in Auroville with leading pioneers in the sustainability movement to [re-imagine pathways for economy and governance](#) that fit today’s global challenges, such as rampant inequality and the ecological (including climate) crisis. We have since been continuing our collaboration in small ways and working towards deepening our relationship with the community in a spirit of mutual learning and offering.

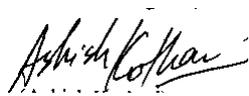
We understand that the present situation is the precipitate of a long-term unresolved conflict within the community regarding the development of a major circular road around the centre of Auroville called the Crown Way. We learn that while the administration, supported by a group of residents in positions of power, have been imposing the implementation of a plan that has been found to result in serious social and ecological damage, the community has made alternative proposals accommodating the ground realities, with minor adjustments to the road. We also learn

that these alternative proposals, backed by detailed studies and plans and led by well-accomplished and internationally renowned urban planners living in and associated with Auroville, have been repeatedly ignored.

It is apparent that for decades, Auroville's residents and government representatives have operated in a delicate balance of power, enshrined in the Auroville Foundation Act 1988. It appears now that this balance is being destroyed, with top-down decisions emanating from the central government, decisions that are oriented towards fast-track urban construction at the cost of community participation, consensus and ecological integrity. At a time when the world is asking questions about the currently dominant 'development' mindset because of its unsustainability and inequity, we fear that such imposition will undermine the role of Auroville as a site for innovation towards collective creativity and harmony.

As a civil society, we are inspired by the unique experiment in Auroville towards self-organisation and localised governance; an aspiration that has been growing across India and the world. Many aspects of it still need to be worked out, but that is to be expected in a situation where residents converge from many nationalities and cultures and have to work out the intricacies of genuine democracy. Instead of using its inadequacies and challenges as the rationale for such a top-down imposition, we urge all concerned to help strengthen the Auroville Residents Assembly, enable its empowerment to function to its full potential and become a true instrument of the collective labour towards the creation of the 'City of Dawn' that it aspires to be.

We support the residents' plea to drop plans and processes of the imposed land clearance, and to instead enable a process of true collaboration and co-creation for deciding on what is the best interest of people and the environment in Auroville. The Vikalp Sangam stands for a pluriverse of pathways towards well-being and development, and we need Auroville as an autonomous laboratory for evolving such pathways through collective living and work.



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On behalf of the Vikalp Sangam Core Group

Endorsed by members of Vikalp Sangam Core Group, listed below alphabetically. The Vikalp Sangam process is a platform to bring together movements, groups and individuals working on just, equitable and sustainable pathways to human and ecological well-being. It rejects the current model of development and the structures of inequality and injustice underlying it, and searches for alternatives in practice and vision. Over 80 movements & organisations around the country are involved. For more information:

<http://www.vikalpsangam.org/about/>

Members of Vikalp Sangam Core Group

1. ACCORD
2. Adivasi Live Matter
3. AGRAGAMEE
4. Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (ASHA)
5. Alternative Law Forum
6. Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)
7. BHASHA
8. Bhoomi College
9. Blue Ribbon Movement
10. Centre for Education and Documentation (CED)
11. Centre for Environment Education (CEE)
12. Centre for Equity Studies (CES)
13. Centre for Financial Accountability
14. CGNetSwara
15. Chalakudypuzha Samrakshana Samithi / River Research Centre
16. Deccan Development Society (DDS)
17. Deer Park
18. Development Alternatives (DA)
19. Desert Resource Centre
20. Dharamitra
21. Dinesh Abrol
22. Ekta Parishad
23. Ektha
24. EQUATIONS
25. Extinction Rebellion India
26. Gene Campaign
27. Goonj
28. Greenpeace India
29. Health Swaraj Samvaad
30. Ideosync
31. India and Bharat Together (IABT)
32. Jagori Rural
33. Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat
34. Kalpavriksh
35. Knowledge in Civil Society (KICS)
36. Kriti Team
37. Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (LAMO)
38. Let India Breathe
39. Local Futures
40. Maadhyaam
41. Maati
42. MAKAAAM
43. Mahalir Association for Literacy Awareness and Rights (MALAR)
44. Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan
45. National Alliance of Peoples' Movements (NAPM),
46. National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR)
47. National Coalition for Natural Farming
48. Nirangal
49. Non-timber Forest Produce Exchange
50. North East Slow Food and Agrobiodiversity Society (NESFAS)
51. Ovais Sultan Khan
52. People's Resource Centre
53. Peoples' Science Institute (PSI),
54. reStore
55. Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture Network
56. Sahjeevan
57. Sambhaavnaa
58. Samvedana
59. Sangama
60. Sangat
61. School for Democracy
62. School for Rural Development and Environment
63. Shikshantar
64. Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust (SLC-IT)
65. Sikkim Indigenous Lepcha Women's Association
66. Social Entrepreneurship Association
67. SOPPECOM
68. South Asian Dialogue on Ecological Democracy (SADED)
69. Students' Environmental and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL)
70. Sushma Iyengar
71. Thanal Trust
72. The Himalaya Collective
73. The Youth Collective (CYC)
74. Timbaktu Collective
75. Titli Trust
76. Travellers' University
77. Tribal Health Initiative
78. URMUL
79. Vrikshamitra
80. Watershed Support Services and Activities Network
81. Youth Alliance
82. Yugma Network