

# Active Resident Assembly & Inspiring Auroville Administration

Referring to the descent of the supramental consciousness in the earth atmosphere in 1956, the Mother once said: "...we are in a very special situation, extremely special, without precedent." On another occasion she said, "...we have this immense good fortune, this marvellous opportunity, this invaluable privilege to being present at the wonderful turning point in earth's history and witnessing the birth of a new world."

The above words of the Mother apply to Auroville as well because we in Auroville, too, have this special, exceptional, wonderful opportunity and privilege to find a way for ourselves individually and collectively and, in the process, show the way to India and the world how it can be done in every aspect of human life.

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In recent times, the idea of taking decision by community wide voting has gathered momentum and several issues, including process of selecting new WC and AVC, are sought to be addressed in this way.

I find this bit unreasonable. The underlying idea is that members of the community have skills, qualities, talent and time to study a given topic and give their view. What the majority chooses on a given issue become a collective decision and comes into effect. However, in the real world what works is delegation. Everywhere, in every fields of life, tasks are delegated to those who have skills, qualities, talent and time to carry out those tasks.

In times of Socrates, in Athens, there was a collective decision making system, a public hearing where citizens can give final word on a case. Majority, after listening Socrates' speech of self defense, decided that he deserved capital punishment! Well, they took this decision based on their limited understanding of Socrates, his life, his philosophy, his views, his ideas, his relevance. Similar kinds of gruesome mistakes could happen when people as a whole are asked to judge things and take decision.

The democratic system has evolved its own solution. People's representatives govern, manage and take decisions for people, for society, for country.

During one of the Resident Assembly meetings some 5 or 6 years ago, Carel spoke of the need for constituting Active Resident Assembly, which can be carved out from the existing Resident Assembly constituting all the residents of Auroville. At the end of the meeting, I told Carel that his proposal made sense and was worth attempting. He replied, "I have been saying this since years."

I am reminded of this in context of the present situation where we are looking for ways and means to constitute next WC and AVC and to resolve a host of community issues by community-wide voting.

Instead of asking entire community to decide things, why not to delegate them to people's representatives who would then form an 'Active Resident Assembly' – ARA.

How to choose people's representative for constituting an ideal ARA?

In Auroville we have this wonderful opportunity to make new and bold experiments in the light of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Nobody would argue that people's representatives should be honest, sincere, intelligent, with a great vision of things and a strong sense of commitment and creativity and exceptional leadership qualities. The question is how to ensure only such people get elected or chosen and, secondly, how to develop a collective environment where these qualities and capacities have a greater chance to grow and to manifest and become a reality of the community life.

It is here that we in Auroville can make difference and show the way to the world.

I am proposing to RAS (Resident Assembly Service), to Auroville Vision group and to the community as a whole a new concept which has, in my view, a great possibility to open up a new future of Auroville and eventually for India and the world.

According to this proposal, for choosing people's representatives, which would constitute Active Resident Assembly, all residents of Auroville are asked to answer four questions:

1. Who in Auroville has most developed consciousness?
2. Who in Auroville has ability to see things from the perspective of the semi-golden rule? (please see the appendix)
3. Who in Auroville has a highly educated / developed mind and personality as a whole?
4. Who in Auroville has will and vision, commitment and creativity to realise the Mother's vision of a unique universal township?

All members of Resident Assembly are asked to answer these questions on a piece of paper or by any other means (emails) that does not reveal their identity.

In order to help people prepare their answer to these four questions, one or more collective gatherings can be organised. Here, RAS invite people to be interviewed, to speak publicly about their vision of Auroville and various issues before the community in a very calm, peaceful and harmonious atmosphere. Who will speak or be interviewed depends upon wishes of names submitted by residents. (For

example, I can write to RAS that I want to hear or ask questions to this or that Aurovilian. Please invite him or her to the gathering.) These interviews, question-answers and speeches should then be posted on the intranet and kept at various locations in Auroville, or each community receive one printed copy. It can also be sent to individual Aurovilians on request. It can also be sent by email to all residents. In this way, the community will be familiar with the views, visions, personalities of other Aurovilians from which to choose 25 representatives.

Once this is done, all residents of Auroville submit their names by way of answer to 4 questions. Each resident can submit up to 25 names. These will then be compiled, arranged and the first 200 (or whatever less numbers) who receive highest recommendations will be eligible to constitute an Active Residents Assembly.

I say eligible. It does not mean that they will automatically agree to serve on the ARA. So, the next step is to ask these two hundred (or less) people following questions.

1. Are you prepared to attend a weekly 90-minute meetings of ARA, study the community issues and participate in the decision making process, preferably by consensus failing which by voting. (see the appendix 2)
2. Annually, 40 weekly meetings of ARA will take place in which you are expected to attend at least 25. Could you manage that?

Many people from the list of 200 will express their inability to join ARA. Those who agree will constitute Active Resident Assembly.

Once ARA is in place, it will choose from within itself the WC and AVC and possibly some other working groups either by way of consensus or by following the same process of asking four questions amongst themselves.

Personally, I would even wish that WC and AVC and other working groups go one step further and, following the same process of 4 questions, decide their leader.

The benefit of choosing our representatives for ARA, for WC, AVC and working groups and the leaders of Auroville based on these 4 questions are many:

1. Things will not degenerate into lowest common denominator and into ugly politics while at the same time helping community to choose its representatives and leaders
2. It will constantly serve to remind the community what our standards are, what our aspirations and ideals are, what the goals are. People and newcomers will be motivated to get familiar with ideas and concepts of life in Auroville and to imbibe them. It will impact people's thinking and behaviour in a very positive way.
3. It could prevent a particular group of residents to dominate since there will be four phase to the process (i) Organising collective gathering for people to know potential representatives and leaders (ii) Each Auroville resident will be

able to submit up to 25 names by way of answering the 4 questions (iii) Then, RAS asking the top 200 people their willingness to join the ARA in a responsible way (iv) Final ARA then selecting WC and AVC by consensus or following the same process followed earlier

4. The whole experiment will be very innovative, typical to Auroville spirit and ideas
5. The proposal will meet the twine need of allowing people to express their will and, at the same time, of increasing the possibility of finding honest, skillful, sincere, committed and creative people to administer Auroville.
6. Most importantly, it will contribute to developing a collective environment wherein the growth of consciousness, of qualities and capacities articulated by the Mother in her article "A Dream" will get a chance to flower, to materialise.

I hope that this proposal will be given a chance in Auroville. It sounds very simple but as said earlier, I believe, it could provide a new perspective, a new orientation and start a new bright chapter in the life of our community and might show the way to India and the world. For example, if it works for Auroville, people from outside world will take note of it sooner or later and try to choose their candidates, representatives and leaders following the same process. In this way, Auroville can also live up to the Mother's vision: "And the clear vision: the same thing which in the history of the universe made the earth the symbolic representation of the universe so as to concentrate the work on one point, the same phenomenon is now taking place: India is the representation of all human difficulties on earth, and it is in India that the ... cure will be found. And then, that is why - THAT IS WHY I was made to start Auroville." (Mother's Agenda Vol.9, Date 3rd February 1968)

Aryadeep

Appendix – 1: Semi-Golden Rule refers to Mother's following words.

"Those who wish to help the Light of Truth to prevail over the forces of darkness and falsehood can do so by carefully observing the initiating impulses of their movements and actions, and discriminate between those that come from the truth and those that come from the falsehood, in order to obey the first and to refuse or reject the others.

This power of discrimination is one of the first effects of the advent of the Truth's light in the earth's atmosphere.

Indeed it is very difficult to discriminate the impulses of Truth from the impulses of falsehood, unless one has received this special gift of discrimination that the Light of Truth has brought.

However, to help at the beginning, one can take as a guiding rule that all that brings with it or creates peace, faith, joy, harmony, wideness, unity and ascending growth comes from the Truth; while all that carries with it restlessness, doubt, skepticism,

sorrow, discord, selfish narrowness, inertia, discouragement and despair comes straight from the falsehood.” – The Mother

Also worth recalling in this context another words of the Mother.

“We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavoring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.” (*Collected Works of the Mother Vol. 13, pp. 129-30*)

**Appendix 2 – ARA or the Active Resident Assembly should meet at least once in a week, on a fixed day and time. This will then grow into a strong administrative body in Auroville and improve the governance significantly. There are many untold potentiality in this ARA including developing special Auroville brand constitution, Auroville brand Legislative Assembly etc. Any member who fails to attend minimum 25 meetings in a year is replaced by next in the 200 list. ARA will need its full time secretariat and one or two facilitators.**

**Postscript - Possible Time frame for implementing the proposal:**

- 1) 21 - 28 Feb - Community deciding to implement this proposal**
- 2) 1 - 10 March - RAS organising at least 1 collective gathering for people to speak, to be interviewed**
- 3) 10 - 15 March - Residents choosing 25 people based on 4 criteria**
- 4) 15 - 16 March - Names of top 200 or less announced**
- 5) 16 - 20 March - RAS ask these 200 Aurovilians if they would like to serve on ARA**
- 6) 21 - 24 March - RAS announces the 1st ARA for a period of at least 2 years**
- 7) 25 - 30 March - ARA chooses the WC, AVC and its own facilitators and leaders following the same process**
- 8) 1st April - New WC and AVC and ARA start functioning**

