

Auroville; Landscapes of Life, Living and Being

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Abstract : Auroville, a settlement in Tamil Nadu, India, is based on the principles of 'human unity' as defined by Indian philosopher Sri Aurobindo. The settlement was conceptualized on these principles by Sri Aurobindo's spiritual partner Mirra Alfassa, known as 'The Mother' to the Aurovillians. In common perception, the settlement is an experiment in achieving 'human unity' through sustainable living. Since its inception in late 1960s, the settlement has attracted people from a variety of nationalities, each understanding, seeking, and rendering 'human unity' in their own unique way. This multiplicity of inhabitation has created and continues to create complex and layered human and more-than-human geographies, which are collectively understood as Auroville. This essay builds on these multiple narratives of local metaphysical and every inhabitation of spiritual and philosophical ideas of Sri Aurobindo as rendered in materiality by the Mother. The research aims to assess how these forms of everyday spirituality conflict, interact, and engage with the principles of Auroville. The research further aims to understand how, if at all, the diverse landscapes of social, cultural, and infrastructural conflicts synthesize when perceived through the lens of spirituality. The research does so by detailing the different forms of the built environment which evoke the transcendental and its underlying processes. While doing so, it aims to understand how different manifestations of interiority within the Aurovillian landscape tie back to the self and its entanglements. By analysing the settlement through a spiritual lens, the research ultimately ties together questions relating to the built environment and ontology and asks how each facilitates a continuous synthesis with the other. Lastly, the paper enquires if these ongoing processes of synthesis of built space and ontological entanglements are what can be conceptualized as 'human unity' as perceived by Sri Aurobindo himself.

Keywords : sacrality, sacred, spirituality, philosophy, Indian philosophy, auroville, India

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