



Justice in Auroville:

What's Your Opinion?

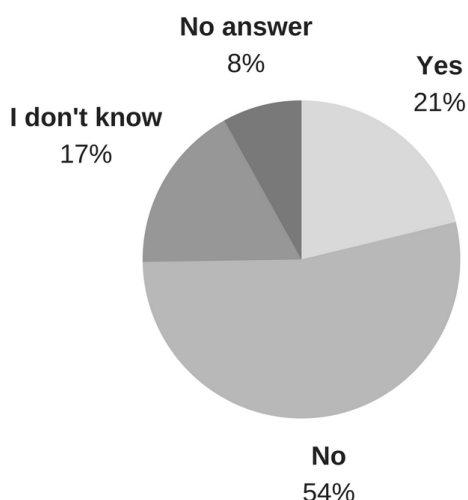
A questionnaire sent out to the Residents of Auroville in September 2017. Ninety-nine Aurovilians responded.

Here are the compiled results, both in short and full versions.

Restorative Auroville
(L'aura, Janet, Shanti, Kati, Rita)

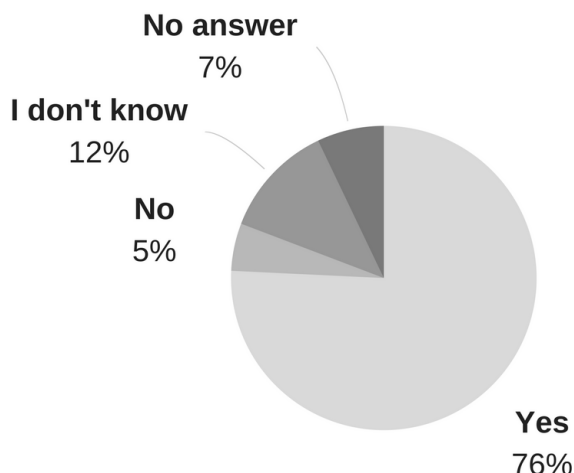
Short Version

1. Do you think we are able to serve justice adequately in Auroville (ie. restore balance and fairness after it has been disrupted)?



Yes: 21
No: 53
I don't know: 17
No answer: 8

2. Do you think we need to explore and improve our justice system (ie. develop and improve fair and effective modalities for restoring balance after a disruption)?



Yes: 75
No: 5
I don't know: 12
No answer: 7

Aurovilians were asked to explain their above choice (Q. 1 & 2). Below is a compilation of their comments, organized somewhat thematically.

i. There is no such thing as human justice.

We have to have Faith and Trust that the Divine will take care, and any attempt to bring justice on the human level will just take us further away from the Truth.

ii. Law and justice have no place in Auroville.

All systems are doomed to fail. We are here for progress, and for Mother and Sri Aurobindo, regardless whether the events are fair or not. We need to refer to the Charter and the Dream.

We don't need courts and law books; we simply need Human Unity and Love.

iii. We don't have enough unity.

We all have different ideas of what is right and wrong. We don't have agreed upon values, or codes of conduct, or what consequences are deemed appropriate for violations.

We are partial. The justice people get is based on their race, language, and connection to Working Groups, and we also deny this reality.

iv. Justice is a cultural concept.

We haven't reached a common cultural and spiritual ground yet in Auroville, from where we can develop a "just" system that works for all.

The modalities currently used are culturally biased and not fully understood by certain sectors of the community.

v. We have the tools, but we don't use them, or we don't use them adequately.

As our Auroville conflict resolution relies on goodwill only, it works sometimes, but not always. One party can stop a process from moving forward. Some processes can't proceed because people don't want to participate.

vi. There are so many examples of injustice in Auroville, and Aurovilians can get away with almost anything.

We have many "elephants in the room," which we simply choose to ignore, because we're afraid of being attacked in response (for example: the threat of losing our Indian visa). It's unhealthy to sweep discords under the rug.

vii. We have so much gossip, and this just creates harm.

We have a lot of anger and resentment from old stories, where no healing took place. We need to develop strategies to heal old wounds.

viii. Working Groups are unable to take an "ethical or inspired stance" in conflict situations.

Sometimes the Working Groups give consequences that are very hard to accept, and they make people feel rejected and excluded. So we have lost trust in them.

ix. We have no way to enforce outcomes and decisions, not even the conclusions arrived at through Arbitration. We need a firm executive body.

Most of the time, Koodam and Restorative Circles do a great job, but we don't have the power to implement the decisions.

x. Justice would only be served through a legal system. We need to respect the Indian law and take it more seriously.

A stronger justice system is needed for those who are too stubborn and don't abide by the alternative approaches. We don't have straightforward procedures to deal with simple non-compliance. We need more formalized processes that we adhere to. We should implement the Exit Policy more often.

xi. We need to define what justice means for Auroville.

All human beings want justice and want to be treated fairly.

We come from fear, so we're not able to stand for commitment, accountability, compassion and generosity. If we could shift from fear, we could move away from right/wrong and reward/punishment to a larger consciousness, and work with growth and inclusion.

xii. Justice is one of our obvious needs, and we will have to grow and develop towards improvement.

We need more collective involvement in the justice process, so that we can tap into a collective intelligence and develop strategies that are safe, and that can hold serious topics and support healing.

xiii. We need to look at ourselves, and not point the finger at the other.

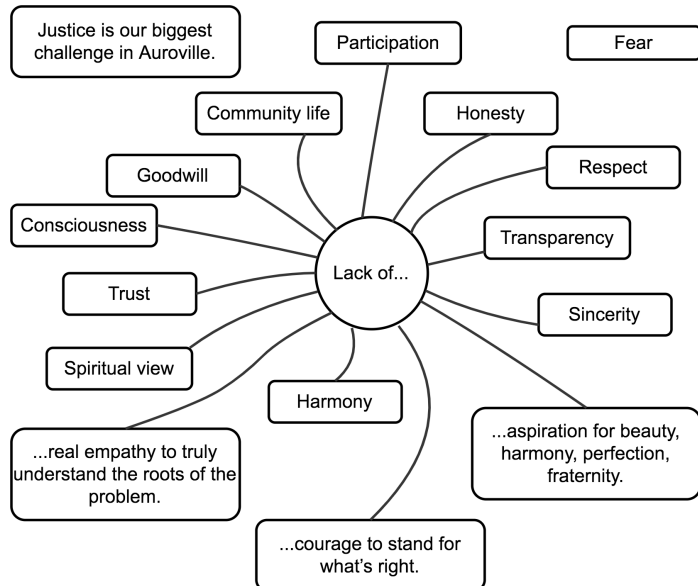
Our present human mind, development, and capacity can't see the full picture.

We need a system that appeals to our higher selves, and not to satisfy our desires.

xiv. We are all here to help each other grow, and this growth is our yoga.

Because we're a small group of people, and we have spiritual values, we're able to spend the time needed to serve justice.

3. What do you think is our biggest challenge in the field of justice (ie. being able to trust in our community's capacity to restore fairness and balance)?



4. What do you think would be an “ideal” way of responding when a justice challenge emerges?

Hear all parties, understand their needs, and look at how best to restore what has been broken or lost on all sides.

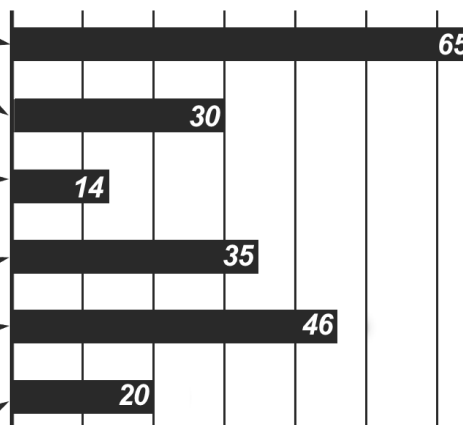
Have a more efficient “legal and authoritative” process in place, so that an outcome or consequence is decided upon, and can be enforced.

Call for a Meeting and allow the Residents to decide on an appropriate outcome.

Seek the wisdom of a Council of Elders (or such).

Strongly encourage the conflicting parties to find an amicable resolution (through a process like Mediation or Restorative Circle), and if no resolution is found, the dispute goes for Arbitration.

Let go of all processes and surrender it to the Divine.



Other suggestions given:

Because we're an aspiring society, but not yet realized, we should have a Silent Working Group, where they listen to the person in difficulty (like therapy), and if this is not enough, then they should support the person to find a healthier environment.

Open the space for brainstorming together, so more solutions may emerge.

We need more transparency about what is going on, so that the community is more aware. These discussions should be documented and available for public scrutiny, as rumours just tear us apart.

5. What do we already have in place (systems, groups, values, ideology, practices, etc) that works well and that could support us in developing this ideal response when the need for justice emerges?

Values

Sincerity.

Our aspiration to do better.

Our collective acknowledgement that imposing justice on people doesn't work.

Our aspiration to heal our broken hearts and get closer.

Our elders with values and goodwill and experience.

Ideology

Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's writings

The Charter, The Dream, To Be a True Aurovilian

Integral Yoga -- to help us look deeply at the truth of the situation

Our Auroville values -- that we are here for something bigger than personal gain

Our ideology: Unity in Diversity

Groups/Systems

The Auroville Council

The Conflict Resolution Policy

Koodam and mediation

Arbitration

The Appeal Process

Restorative Circles

Aurovilians and facilitators who are developing our sense of justice

Police intervention in most serious cases

Practices

Nonviolent Communication

Silent listeners

Therapists

Listening groups

Workshops that support awareness in conflict resolution and personal growth

Family constellation and holoenergetic work

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Full Version **with all additional comments**

Questions 1 & 2

Do you think we are able to serve justice adequately in Auroville (ie. restore balance and fairness after it has been disrupted)?

Do you think we need to explore and improve our justice system (ie. develop and improve fair and effective modalities for restoring balance after a disruption)?

i. (There is no such thing as human justice.)

Life is not fair, and justice is a concept which would be impossible to apply.

Who knows what is fair? Divine Anarchy...

We should follow Mother's words: to become a warrior against all obstructions for the realization of the Ideal.

ii. (Law and justice have no place in Auroville.)

Justice can only emerge from an inner seeking for Truth.

We must remember our vision for Human Unity, instead of our self-centered concerns.

The only solution is to change ourselves, and follow the ideals given to us by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

When the collective is foremost and sincerely for unity, harmony and truth, we will live more from our higher selves, and the atmosphere will change.

iii. (We don't have enough unity.)

We each perceive things differently, depending on whether we're new to Auroville or have lived here for 10 or 20 years, or more.

Many people in Auroville today don't really know the purpose of Auroville, and they think Auroville is supposed to serve their needs.

Whoever is strong wins.

We need a strict definition for what "violence" (physical, emotional, psychological) means, and agreement on consequences for such violations. And these definitions need to integrate our cultural diversity and educational backgrounds.

Some groups and nationalities are skeptical about these approaches and reluctant to join.

We need to do a deep exploration to come up with something that is fair for people of diverse backgrounds. We need to come back to our core values, and decide on where we want to go, and then develop tools which will produce those results, instead of trying to solve things within our present system.

As a community, we should be more introspective and realize we're one family.

iv. (Justice is a cultural concept.)

Information is shared only in English, and not in other languages, so communicating with Working Groups is very scary.

Cultural background, power and the ability to deal with conflict have an impact on how we try to serve justice.

We need people of all cultural backgrounds to spend more time exploring what balance means and then to develop a means of rendering justice that's not biased in favour of any particular culture.

v. (We have the tools, but we don't use them, or we don't use them adequately.)

We do not have the required consciousness to satisfactorily use the processes that we have in place.

If we would live by our Auroville values and rules, we could sort out our problems.

We really struggle with sharing and listening to each other. We do our best, but with very mixed results.

Some issues are not dealt with fairly. We're not heard or listened to, and our difficulties are not acknowledged.

It depends on what process is offered, and depends on our willingness. Sometimes the mediation process doesn't resolve the problem, and even triggers new problems to arise that are then left hanging.

Our justice processes are too slow and inefficient.

We need wise people who are detached and fair.

Arbiters still make many mistakes on the practical level.

RAS meetings on problems are a dysfunctional emotional circus.

vi. (There are so many examples of injustice in Auroville, and Aurovilians can get away with almost anything.)

Some issues are not tackled at all, or we just deal with them on the surface and don't get to the root of the problem, so many incidents repeat themselves. We're left to our own resources to find ways of coming to terms with these injustices.

We have been incapable so far, and for the last 50 years.

Because we have high ideals and value freedom, we're afraid to have or enforce rules and standards. But given that we don't always all live by our values, we are still confronted with actions that are harmful, and we don't really have a way to deal with this. We lack an effective justice system that would limit unethical actions and support healing, but some people need rules in order to keep the basic harmony.

Excessive freedom has led to a misuse of power. We need stricter consequences for those who transgress our guidelines.

We need an ethical aspiration, so that the collective spirit isn't diminished by the lack of trust in one another.

We don't have adequate means to deal with those who break our unwritten code of ethics and values (basic integrity, honesty, sincerity). Everything goes in the name of "freedom to explore Integral Yoga."

vii. (We have so much gossip, and this just creates harm.)

We listen to stories and biased information, and we're taken by likes and dislikes.

Our egos hide behind nice words. We're not genuine.

viii. (Working Groups are unable to take an "ethical or inspired stance" in conflict situations.)

We have an emergency with justice, because we don't follow our guidelines and mandates, and decisions are taken for personal benefits, and they are not fair or transparent.

Our systems are manipulated, because people pull strings. Issues are being solved behind closed doors, so the community is left with rumours. It would be helpful to have more transparency about what is actually going on.

After being disrupted, we're simply forgotten by the Working Groups.

Some Working Group members have no idea what justice, confidentiality and impartiality is.

We have no provisions to protect Aurovilians from the decisions of Working Groups, especially the FAMC.

Bureaucracy and lack of coordination between Working Groups counters the fairness of the process.

The FAMC offends muscles its way through delicate issues, trying to systematize Auroville, but thereby changing the relationship between Aurovilians.

Auroville is becoming too institutionalized and bureaucratic. We are so busy fulfilling our roles, and we have forgotten the simplicity we had in our hearts when we first came here.

We need trained professionals to make decisions around justice, as being objective in such an overlapping community is very challenging.

ix. (We have no way to enforce outcomes and decisions, not even the conclusions arrived at through Arbitration. We need a firm executive body.)

We have no police, nor does Auroville want to "punish." But that means we have no executive power.

We have no consequences for transgressions, other than social ostracization. Because of this lack of consequences, we reinforce the idea that you can get away with "wrong" behaviour.

When someone does something "wrong" and consequences are applied, he/she doesn't take responsibility or feel sorry, but instead becomes righteous and behaves as if he/she has been wronged.

x. (Justice would only be served through a legal system. We need to respect the Indian law and take it more seriously.)

Our "restorative" approaches are too soft. We need something stronger.

To simply apologize is not enough, because something deeper has been disrupted.

We don't have any justice system in place, so how can we improve it?

xi. (We need to define what justice means for Auroville.)

"If the growth of consciousness were considered as the principal goal of life, many difficulties would find their solution." ~ The Mother

A group of fair-minded people should develop a system based on the Spirit of Auroville.

We need a new form of justice, one that we haven't yet discovered. We need to dig deep and go beyond typical definitions.

Justice doesn't always imply mental, emotional, and vital satisfaction. We get stuck on trying to serve at this level only.

We need to realize that justice is very complex. We need systems like mediation and communication techniques, so that the parties can see the challenge from a higher perspective, and in addition to finding practical solutions also use it as an opportunity for spiritual growth. But this requires a lot of inner work and discipline.

A bit more justice would be good, but a justice that doesn't punish or abuse anyone. We need justice that's fraternal, that restores balance and tries to reconcile.

Justice is a big word, but put simply, it's each person's right to live his/her life with all that he/she deserves and that cannot be taken away.

We need to acknowledge that in some cases, we have no solution. What do we do then?

xii. (Justice is one of our obvious needs, and we will have to grow and develop towards improvement.)

We don't put enough effort (study, research) into conscious jurisprudence. We need to experiment in all fields!

As an experimental community, we should look into this further. And it's great that we have qualified people in this field to do it. We need to explore new systems that are properly documented and assessed, so that the community and Working Groups can benefit.

We need better communication and tools.

We need processes that include the transformative strength of deep listening, have the presence of all those called directly impacted or not, and that allow for the emergence of self-responsibility, and the creativity of an action plan that could bring a sense of customized justice.

We should explore the restorative justice system and its philosophy more. And our residents need to be made more aware of our existing justice system.

We need to develop an alternative justice system, beyond laws, where parties can be supported through mediation and such to restore, both on the material and psychic levels.

We need to talk about this topic more as a community, share what's available, share anecdotes and learnings, so that we progress, instead of go round and round.

We need to respect community processes and decisions that are for the larger community benefit, and not for individual benefit.

It's part of our collective yoga to explore how to collaborate and restore in a non-punitive way. As we know, our freedom is our greatest responsibility.

The community needs to be responsible for the disruption in people's lives caused by unfair and unconscious behaviour.

We should use more preventive measures, like therapy.

Follow-up is needed, even after a conflict resolution process has taken place, because there can still be pain.

We need different ways of dealing, depending on when we intervene in the wrong-doing, whether it's simply an argument or has escalated to murder.

We could publish a regular educative newsletter and develop a website to the work of Restorative Justice, along with Sri Aurobindo's illuminating words.

Those working in this field need to be supported by the community and given a budget.

xiii. (We need to look at ourselves, and not point the finger at the other.)

We need to first be happy and compassionate ourselves, before we can expect others to be so.

The first way to improve our justice system is for people to make a conscious and individual commitment to "rise above" the conflict and find a solution in another light. A truly working justice system should come from personal growth, not from rules, and until that happens many of us will be treated unjustly.

When we are confronted by our karma, the problem can't be solved by outside processes. We need to look within.

We don't realize enough that conflict is actually an opportunity for individual and collective growth, and an opportunity to connect with our values. In addition to trying to find a solution that satisfies all, we need to also aim for something to emerge from a higher place that can support community growth.

Our assessment of situations is always biased, and never completely fair. Spiritually, there's no right and wrong, and we need to look inside why things are happening to us, and take responsibility at that level.

Working Groups and professionals in this field need to have a lot of wisdom and invest a lot of time in making their assessment and trying to find a solution. They have to create an atmosphere that encourages self-reflection, instead of punishing and judging. And individually, we need to get out of our victim and perpetrator patterns.

We shouldn't rush into resolving conflicts that aren't violent. We should let the parties have a good chance to find their own solution.

Time brings justice.

xiv. (We are all here to help each other grow, and this growth is our yoga.)

We have a lot of informal methods of sorting things out that work because we know each other's idiosyncrasies. If we access our True Being, we have justice.

Being able to resolve a conflict is proportionate to our level of sincerity. It depends on our willingness to get rid of ego, so it's an ongoing process.

We are fully capable of "serving justice" in Auroville, because if we live according the Integral Yoga, "life evolves through the growth of Consciousness and Consciousness evolves through the greater organization and perfection of life."

By having faith in Mother, she takes care.

Evolution is urging us to an unending growth of consciousness and organization.

Auroville is the cradle of *surhomme*, a place to support the emergence of the transitional being. All of humanity is represented here, and the sub-consciousness and ego are also at work. And there's pressure from Above for this evolution, and it can create strange reactions. So we need to be kind to each other during this transitional process.

Most of us can change our limiting patterns after some reflection. Those who cannot need professional help.

Question 3

What do you think is our biggest challenge in the field of justice (ie. being able to trust in our community's capacity to restore fairness and balance)?

Too many rules.

Applying guidelines as if they're rules.

Inability to implement tough decisions.

Too many of us don't abide by our Auroville rules and the Indian law.

We don't know what kind of justice we want, one that is imposed or one that naturally manifests.

It's impossible to please everyone.

Too much lying.

Not speaking the truth, or having discernment and ethics.

Not enough bonding and connection between us.

We judge each other based on rumours and/or partial information.

We don't really listen to each other or try to understand.

Too much manipulation.

Respected people can get away with bad behaviour, whereas other people without much support get judged harshly for minor misdeeds.

People act only out of self-interest (money, property), instead of being willing servitors of the divine.

Making decisions based on nationality, friends, family, status.

We're too focused on being efficient and having results.

We're too busy with our own projects, and so therefore don't have time for the collective.

Various and diverse cultural backgrounds.

Not willing to grow as individuals, to see the conflict as a reflection of something within oneself.

Not enough people with a wider understanding and capable of inclusiveness.

No group of people or elders who are trusted by the entire community.

We don't choose the right people for Working Groups, and we don't encourage and support them enough.

Question 4

What do you think would be an “ideal” way of responding when a justice challenge emerges?

Additional suggestions given:

On an individual level, letting go of all processes and surrendering to the Divine is possible, but as a collective we need to have a system in place.

The Mother said that we should have no police in Auroville. But at the same time, she said we should seek help from the police when necessary. Humans have developed systems over the centuries that serve a purpose, and we need not reject everything blindly.

We must try, together, to contact the inner truth.

Get to the root of the conflict.

We don't know all the forces at play. It may take a very long time to see the good that has come of some evil, or vice versa. We must do our best, using any and all appropriate restorative tools.

Apply the Indian Law.

We really need to apply the Exit Policy, and have guidelines for those people who aren't willing to resolve their conflicts through conversation and apologies. We need to deal with behaviour that is not acceptable and bordering on criminal.

In cases of psychopathic behaviour, we need ways to protect and minimize any danger to others.

It may need to be a combination of different tools, on a case by case basis.

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