

Name of EDE: Comm4unity

Dates: 12th March – 29th April

Host site: YouthLink, Auroville

- **Course Overview:**

The Comm4unity (EDE) courses are organized by YouthLink in Auroville, South India. Auroville was founded in 1968 based on the philosophy of integral living by Sri Aurobindo and 'the Mother,' Mira Alfassa. Auroville is one of the biggest intentional communities in the world, with over 2700 residents. YouthLink is an organization run by young adults in Auroville who have set up a platform to support youth integration and empowerment in the community. YouthLink also provides a space for the sharing of Auroville ideals and spirit with young adults from the world at large.

What is unique about these courses is that it is 6 weeks long, and that young adults design the curriculum themselves – inviting older mentors from the community to come and teach in the various dimensions. The course itself has been renamed from 'EDE' to 'Comm4unity' as the curriculum has been adapted to suit the learning needs of young adults in this region. Comm-4-unity calls all those interested in the ideal of 'Human Unity' and 'Community'. The theme of the course is to "explore yourself, and do it together" and vice versa "explore together and do-it-yourself." YouthLink also supports graduates of the course to become facilitators in following courses.

The target audience of these courses are young adults between 18-40 years. The course invites participant diversity by having 1/3 space for Auroville, 1/3 from India and 1/3 International participants.

The course explores all modules of Social, Ecology, Economy, Worldview and Design, however it uses a different format. The weeks are organized into themes from Birth-Childhood-Adolescence-Adulthood-Parenthood, so that each participant can become aware of themselves and slowly understand their role in small teams, growing into larger groups to understand community life. The day schedule also follows a different structure 'Heart-Head-Hands' so that the group practices morning introspection activities (heart), followed by theory on sustainable living (head) and hands on do-it-yourself practice in the afternoons (hands).

What is also unique about Comm4unity EDEs is that YouthLink is experimenting with Gift Economy – meaning that we have set no fee for the experience. During the course we study alternative economy and through the

experience participants themselves decide if and how they would like to give back - in kind, through work, by fundraising for future students, etc. Therefore these courses are a site for research on the topic of Gift Culture and Human Unity.

We invite any participant interested in discovering their "offering" to join us on this journey together. YouthLink will continue to conduct a minimum one Comm4unity 6 week course annually, and will also provide shorter "Training of Trainers" and "Project Management" courses throughout the year.

- **Participants:**

15 Participants: 9 Female, 6 Male, 21 years – 32 years. Majority Indian Nationals (mixed backgrounds/cultures) and French, Indonesia, Swiss.

- **Course rhythms:**

Monday – Friday (Weekends off)

8:00-9:00 Introspection, Worldview (Heart)

9:00-9:30: Breakfast

9:30-10:00 Check In

10:00-12:30 Theory on Sustainable Living: Ecology/Economy/Social (Head)

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch Break, Cleaning, Journals

14:00 – 17:00 Hands on Activities on Sustainable Solutions (Hands)

17:00 – 17:30 Check Out

Fridays Social Evenings 18:00-22:00 Special Guest Speaker / Dance/ Movie Nights / Cooking Together etc.

Weekly themes: Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth, Ether

Weekly themes: Birth, Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, Parenthood, Grandparenthood.

- **Highlights & challenges of each dimension:**

- Social**

The Social dimension was spread out throughout the course. Here are some of the activities that were conducted:

- Non Violent Communication
- Restorative Circles
- Introduction to Auroville's Governance
- Value Based Self Development

- NextGEN Korea Members Presentation
- NextGEN Korea Members Session on Sound Healing
- Life Stories
- Deep Sharing
- Johari Window
- Team Building Games Weekly
- Camping (farm harvesting, cooking, swimming etc.)
- Friday Nights Pizza/Potluck/Bonfire/Dancing
- Improv. Theatre
- Sociometry Exercises
- Multipotentialites on TedTalk, and discussion
- Auroville's Integral Education Introduction
- Talks by 2 Aurovillian Elders about the Early Days
- World Dance Circle
- Local Cooking Session
- Mud Fights
- Beach Visit & Fun Games
- Learning Short Songs & Group Singing
- Movies Watching (example: Heritage Fight)

Lead Facilitator Kavitha: Kavitha grew up in Auroville and has worked in the fields of Community Governance, Alternative Education and Environment. Other Auroville facilitators were also invited to add to this dimension such as Sandhya, B, Aryamani, NextGEN Korea members, and Laura).



"Auroville is difficult to understand because it is quite big and has many groups working in ways it is difficult to grasp. However we got to see a little bit of how this place works and it was good to know that some people are managing to do this on this larger scale." Participant.

"The Auroville example for the social aspect is incredible and complex. The story we have here is very unique, when looking at the ideal of Human Unity and collective consciousness evolution through an 'integral life' perspective. Auroville is now 50 years old and has been supported and recognized by India's government. This unique situation has allowed for the community to

grow faster than usual and develop interesting organizational structures to study. The local Tamil culture is also fascinating. Just after winning independence from colonization in 1947, the locals welcomed foreigners back so soon in 1968 to start this intentional township, as perhaps their culture understood the spiritual significance of Auroville. As I am a third generation Aurovilian, of mixed nationalities/cultural backgrounds, I find it fascinating to witness a generation of individuals being born with identities linking to deeper values and community life, rather than just nationality or race.” Kavitha

Economic

The Economic dimension was spread out throughout the course. Here are some of the activities that were conducted:

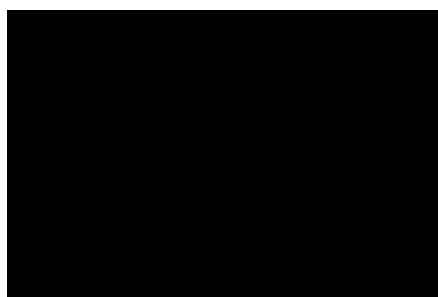
- Theory Global Economy
- Theory Personal Economy
- Theory EDE & YouthLink Economy
- Examples of Auroville enterprises and conscious products
- Theory Alternative Economy & the Auroville Example
- DIY Planning Event for Fundraising (led by participants)
- Final week tools for project design related to alternative economy.

Lead Facilitator Michael: Michael grew up in France and practiced tax law amongst other roles. He later came to Auroville and has been here since dedicating his life to the Auroville ideals and the vision of human unity through diversity. Michael is currently involved in several activities in Auroville such as 1) YouthLink and designing EDE courses, 2) the French Pavilion, 3) Designing alternative economy transition for Auroville and 4) Part of a team building a new community within Auroville called Anitya (joy of impermanence).

Other Auroville facilitators were also invited to add to this dimension such B, Ayramani who, as from an elder generation, also helped explain how the economic vision of Auroville..

“This course did not charge us any fees when we came. It was a strange thing as we saw many resources and people offering a lot of their time to make this possible. In the course we learnt more about Auroville’s way of dealing with money and work. It was very interesting to see a new perspective and that it is possible for people not to prioritise income. I was actually very touched. I don’t know yet if i understand this logically, but this experience helped me ‘feel’ what alternative economy can be like. It makes me want to find a way to give back.” participant.

"In my previous life, i was a tax lawyer by background. I came to Auroville and decided to join this community some years back, as i truly believe in the Auroville ideals and i am very passionate about community life. I know the difference between a conventional economy and an alternative economy. Auroville embodies both, but is also experimenting with several new approaches towards a new and alternative economy. It is very exciting for us to be part of this experiment. Even in YouthLink and in our EDE courses, we practice alternative forms of gift culture so that we can experience the joys of alternative economy based on the abundance of community life." Michael.



Ecological:

The Ecologic dimension was spread out throughout the course. Here are some of the activities that were conducted:

- Site Visit Bamboo Centre Construction & Products
- Site Visit Sacred Groves Cob Construction
- Site Visit EcoService Waste Management
- Site Visit Upcycling Studio Creative Solutions
- Theory Water & Sanitation
- Site Visit Waste Water Treatment Plant
- Theory Ecosan Toilets & Effective Microorganisms
- Theory Probiotic Household Cleaning Products
- DIY Soap Making
- Theory on Natural Farming
- DIY Natural Farming
- Introspection Connecting to Bees in Nature
- Theory on Bees and Hives
- DIY Construction of Bamboo Hive
- Theory on Earth Bag House
- DIY Earth Bag House Plastering

Lead Facilitator Michael: Michael grew up in France and practiced tax law amongst other roles. He later came to Auroville and has been here since dedicating his life to the Auroville ideals and the vision of human unity

through diversity. Michael is currently involved in several activities in Auroville such as 1) YouthLink and designing EDE courses, 2) the French Pavilion, 3) Designing alternative economy transition for Auroville and 4) Part of a team building a new community within Auroville called Anitya (joy of impermanence). Michael was the central coordinator for the Ecological aspect, but also invited many other Aurovilian experts to teach on topics related to ecology.

Other Auroville facilitators were also invited to add to this dimension such as Marc, Oak, Erik, Ramanan, Mathilde, Lucas, Faith, and Jasper).

"We had so much ecology related stuff to do in Auroville. The 'hands on' part of this course was great. We made our own soaps, kitchen garden, bee hive, earth bag house plastering... it was so much fun to do things in nature and be in a place that is so green!" participant.

"Auroville is a place for Integral Yoga - which is about manifesting the divine in matter. The founders of Auroville were very clear about this, that we need to make something with the physical matter, and that this is a form of working for oneself and community and human evolution. So in our courses we added the Head, Heart and most importantly - the Hands. It is not easy for this next generation to work with their hands, many are not trained in this area anymore. However we find that it brings great joy and a empowerment to young adults to realize they can Do-It-Themselves!" Michael.



Worldview

The Worldview dimension was spread out throughout the course. Here are some of the activities that were conducted:

- Awareness Through the Body Tools
- Being in the Body Tools
- Be with Nature
- Work Love in Action
- Loving Oneself
- Ideal Life Guided Meditation

- Exploring Ayurveda in one's own Body
- Optional Growth Tracking on Camera Daily/Weekly

Lead Facilitator Kavitha: Kavitha grew up in Auroville attending Auroville school's alternative education with Integral Education and regular classes on things like 'Awareness Through the Body' tools and connecting to nature, animals, sports, team building games, project oriented learning. Other Auroville facilitators were also invited to add to this dimension such as Sandhya, Aryamani, Eugenie, Kalyani, Grace, Lison and Suryamayi).



"I learned how to be in my body. I learned how to sit again. I learned how to stand again, how to walk, how to breathe. Everything I had to learn again. Like a baby, we learned from the beginning. Now I am a new person. Now I can feel who I am." Participant

"I have grown up in Auroville schools, with the privilege of being immersed in alternative education based on free progress. I was privileged enough to have a intentional community context surrounding that, an extended family supporting my every need. However, I as a teenager and young adults I then discovered the world as a place of immense suffering and disconnect. My role in this journey has been to share with others what it can feel like to live a holistic life, where a sense of connection is the norm. My offering to this world has been to help create space in my community to welcome those who choose to heal and transform their own lives." Kavitha

Design:

The 6th Week of the course was dedicated to Self – Initiative, so the participants had time to develop their own project and request for sessions that may help. Various tools were offered and various tools were chosen by different members in the group. The last week the participants also wanted to 'give back' as they did not pay for the course they themselves organized together to plan to organize an event to help raise funds so that future Comm4unity EDE course participants also don't have to pay. In the last week they also prepared presentations on their growth and presented this to the Auroville community. The last week also included a deep sharing session

where we gifted one another with honest reflections about each one's observations of the other's growth. The Design dimension was spread out throughout the course. Here are some of the activities that were conducted:

- Dragon Dreaming Theory
- Dragon Dreaming 2 day Project Mission in Groups
- Sourcing Value Space for Project Planning & Management
- Business Tools: Canvas, SWOT, etc.
- Presentation Tools & Audience Feedback
- Theory on Fundraising and Tools
- Final Presentation to Community Open Invite

Lead Facilitator Michael & Kavitha: Michael and Kavitha are the executives of YouthLink Service in Auroville. They also work with various other projects in the community and therefore have good background about project design and implementation in an intentional community. Kavitha and Michael decided to introduce some conventional tools for business/project development, alongside offering more conscious tools for deeper reflection through Dragon Dreaming and through Auroville specific methods of developing projects.

Design Studio Case Studies:.

- Example 1: Adapting EDE curriculum for Local Schools in Pondicherry - currently in process with Anvita & Vasanth.
- Example 2: Designing a Process for Developing a Piece of land in Punjab, by Dheeraj.
- Example 3: Working with Horses, re-organizing her father's activity with horses in Auroville to invite more volunteer participation and organize more workshops, by Priyamvada.
- Example 4: Adapting EDE curriculum ideas to see if they could start such courses in France, by Julia and Romain.
- Example 5: Planning my Life: Usha, our youngest participant wanted to gain independence in her life, so her project was to find a job in forestry/farming, to schedule a Vipassana course for herself, and to find a place for herself in Auroville so that she could move out of her parents house. A few weeks following the end of the course, she already achieved many of her goals.

- Example 6: Ankita realized she wanted to join Auroville, by offering to start a Wellness/Physical Activity Center somewhere near Auroville. She is still in the initial stages of dreaming, but through the design week significant steps were taken on an inner level regarding commitment and clarity regarding her direction.

• **LESSONS LEARNT**

We practiced Gift Culture and it really touched people a lot deeper. We plan to continue to experiment with different forms of Gift Economy in future courses. We will harvest feedback from these participants and re-design the course based on that. However the feedback was mostly positive so not much changes to be made. We will also survey the applicants joining next course well in advance so that we can engage them in the design of their own course even before they arrive.

Describe your EDE in terms of the know-how and learning obtained, the stories and inspiration that happen to the participants and the organisers during the EDE or a good summary of a project or activity carried out during the program.

We are a small group of young adults in Auroville interested in what higher education, or what unending education may look like. EDE has helped us in YouthLink to understand what Auroville is to us, by exploring our own community through these dimensions. Ecologically our parents and grandparents in Auroville have done very well, with immense watershed management and reforestation. In terms of Worldview, Auroville is also a unique example with many sources of inspiration for various inner activities and ideals that shift perspective. However, in terms of our social aspects we have a lot to develop - with human unity being one of our central ideals, with over 2700 residents, it is one of the world's biggest ecovillages and the social landscape can be challenging. Economically as well, we have taken considerable steps towards alternative forms of transaction, but it is great to work with young adults to explore this with more fresh idealism. YouthLink and EDE fit well together, and it is helping us now to re-design the EDE courses in a more localised flavour, in a way that it is helping Auroville youth to research, discover and re-design community life themselves. It is also a place where youth from the world can join us in these courses to share ideas and to be inspired. We are very grateful to the support from Gaia Education in recognizing this education in Auroville - so that we can make it relevant to the world.

- **Key trends from the Gaia Education Survey Monkey evaluations**

We had a lot of Indian participants due to the shortage of time to register applicants. However, in the future we plan to open applications well in advance so that we can help facilitate visas for international young adults to participate. We had more women than men, this imbalance was not too bad, but it was felt and next time we will ensure more gender balance. Overall, when we evaluated the course with spoken feedback from participants many did say that when they came they expected a more conventional set of educational tools to be delivered. However, on completion, many said they had been happily surprised that they transformed much deeper – not just on a theoretic/academic level. They said that it didn't matter so much what topic the content/sessions were on but they understood now the meaning and value of just 'being' or 'doing' things 'together' through consciousness. This was great feedback to receive as we could also 'feel' this in the air. We felt connected, we felt the human unity resonating stronger. We felt the optimism and we felt full of energy again to go out and change the world. Overall the survey demonstrates feedback on a scale on 5 being 4 or 5... which is very encouraging. Also many participants want to help us design the next course, and some want to join our team to train themselves to teach, which is truly amazing to see the immediate commitment to our work. This time we placed participants in different Auroville youth communities, however our intention in the future will be to try and accommodate them in the same place to experience a more intense community life.

- **Summary of projects/activities participants intend to engage in, inspired by their attendance in the course**

- Anvita and Vasanth are working together now to create a curriculum to teach in schools in Pondicherry. They will be attending our TOT and they will be integrated as 'facilitators in training' in our next EDE.
- Romain and Julia came to Auroville as short term volunteers, now they have decided to go back to France for a short time but they are already planning their trip back as they want to continue to work with YouthLink and especially with Comm4uity EDE courses.
- Dheeraj has a piece of land he plans to develop with organic agriculture as a model for sustainable solutions in an area overtaken by Pesticides and Farmer suicides.
- Aurelie has committed to her passion in photography and decided to pursue that more seriously than before.
- Priyamvada has committed to working with her horses and developing a plan to organize her activity with horses better, so that she can generate enough income for herself and to care for the horses, and so that she can help people connect deeply to animals.
- Usha our youngest member's project has been to move out of her parent's house and to find a job in forestry/farming she loves in

Auroville – following the course she went for a Vipasana course, and now she has already found options for housing and work in the field of her interest.

- Ankita is thinking of joining Auroville and starting a centre nearby related to fitness, wellbeing, food ... she is still exploring ideas.
- YouthLink Hive Project: YouthLink is in the process of designing a Hive as a larger space for Education, Events and Projects for Young adults. Almost all participants from the course were very inspired to offer their time and skill to this place as a sense of 'community/family' is now felt between YouthLink team members and the participants of the last course.
- YouthLink Joy of Impermanence Project: this project to build a community ourselves in Auroville is already in construction, and many participants are eager to offer their skills to participate in helping it manifest.

It is difficult to put into words just how much each one has transformed. The energy is now high and the group is active in manifesting change. We will follow up support the graduates and in 6months – 1 year we will see what blossoms.

• **Concise financial information showing income/expenditure.**

YouthLink expenses for the course (6 weeks) in Indian Rupees:

Monthly costs:

Manpower-Members (3):	25 590rs
Manpower-Volunteers (3):	7 890rs
Office-Internet:	1 500rs
Office-Rent:	1 000rs
Office-Stationary:	2 000rs
Communication-Social:	5 000rs

Total : 40 980 * 1.5 (6weeks) = **61 470rs**

Workshop fixed costs (6weeks) :

Facilitators: 700/h - 108h =	75 600rs
Food: 100/day(30)/student(15) =	45 000rs
Material: 1 000/student =	15 000rs
Tools:	5 000rs

Total : **140 600rs**

Grand Total: 61 470 + 144 600 = **202 070 rs**
13 471 rs /student

*no fixed fees were set, so the total amount was not yet received from participants, but they are making other efforts to help YouthLink raise funds over the next months/years.

- **PARTICIPANT QUOTES:**
Quotes from Participants

Anwar:	Ankita	Meenal
<p>"In this course I learned how to keep learning and growing to be a better human being."</p>	<p>"Comm4unity was a remarkable experience. Where else in the world could I have met 16 amazing strangers, stayed with them for 42 days and each of them taught me all those little things that matter; Honesty, perseverance and oneness being the top three learnings for me in these 6 weeks. We shared a journey of knowing how and what it really means to embark on our spiritual quest and to seek the higher truth."</p> <p>'On a personal level Comm4unity has helped me how to recognise and break the toxic patterns that hinder my progress. Coming together and building a temporary community with 15 other people, from scratch, made me realise how the collective works and what it means to give and gain strength from the collective, for a better tomorrow.'</p>	<p>"This course was brilliantly designed and served its purpose, even over delivering on some aspects promised! It enabled me to gain useful insights into living in a community and helped me develop a thought process required for such a scenario. Additionally, it granted me access to skills that are absolutely imperative to have in life."</p>

- end-