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World's First Moneyless City Thrives on a "Gift Economy"

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The 2800 citizens of Auroville, India, have thrived for 50 years without money, religion or government



Auroville – also known as the “City of the Dawn” – is an international city in South India founded in 1968. Currently, it has 2,800 citizens from 54 countries, with the capacity to grow to 50,000 citizens.

Auroville is a “collective experiment in human unity” based on the worldview of Indian yogi [Sri Aurobindo](#). The idea is if people from all cultures and castes can learn love each other in Auroville, maybe the rest of the world can follow suit.

The township was created with support from the Indian government, UNESCO and well-wishers around the world, but is becoming more and more self-sufficient over time.

The economy



Although the government of India owns and manages the Auroville Foundation, it finances only a small chunk of the city's budget. Auroville's Central Fund is mainly supplied by Auroville's commercial units, followed by private donations.

Auroville-made products for sale to the outside world include stationary, candles and incense, health foods and medicines, clothing, body care products, jewelry and wooden toys.



There are a wide variety of “careers” available for Auroville citizens in afforestation, organic agriculture, educational research, health care (a mix of Eastern and Western medicine), [appropriate technology](#) development, village development, town planning, cultural programs and hospitality.

But in Auroville [“work” is not done for pay](#), and there is no individual ownership of land, housing or businesses. Everyone is given a basic living “maintenance,” whether they work for one of the commercial units, doing community service or are unable to work.

When they go to the store, they take what they need, tell the clerk their account number and it’s deducted from the Central Fund.

It’s an economy designed to serve humanity, rather than the other way around, Aurovillians say.

“We give our work, and we are given what we need,” says citizen Jean-Yves Lung in the documentary below. “It’s very simple. If you give your work, and you are happy to give it, you don’t need money to evaluate the quality of your giving. We can still be productive, creative, innovative, and what happens is people discover that they feel better. We take what we need and that’s it.”



“People keep their own money to a degree,” he adds, “but the sense of ‘mine, mine, mine, I’m the owner’ – that should go.”

“We have to learn to produce more meaning and fewer objects to live an abundant life,” Lung continued.

“In the world you are not free to choose that. You have to work. You have to pay rent, taxes and so much. If you are obliged to earn your living just to survive, education cannot happen. You have to sacrifice yourself to become employable. You have to sacrifice your process of self-discovery and self-perfection to fit in the big machine that maintains you.”

Self-discovery and education



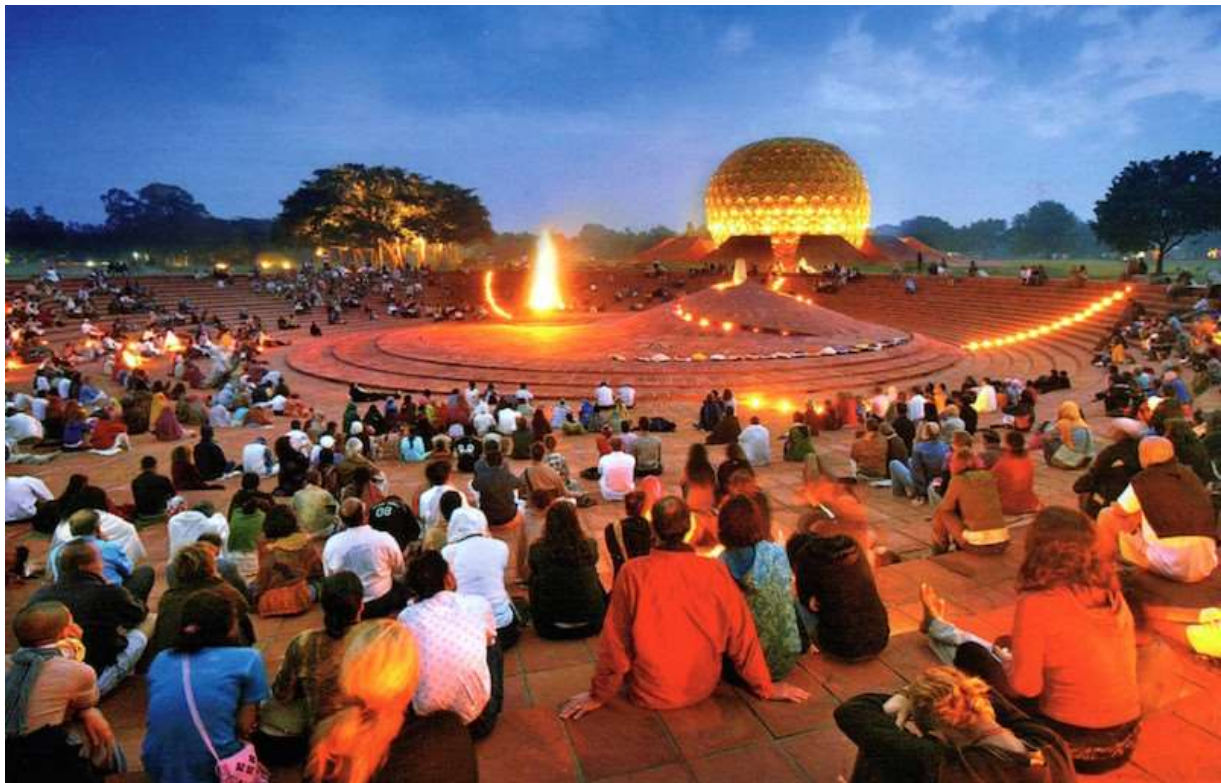
In Auroville education is about “the discovery of who you truly are behind your social, moral, national, cultural, religious identities,” says Auroville teacher Deepti Tewari. “All these are kind of patinas that get added on to the outer nature. The true self is free, vast, all-knowing.”

“The wish is that the children grow up without losing contact with their true selves.”

True education, Tewari says, is an unfolding and revealing of what is already present in the child.

Unlike in modern education, which she calls an invention of the industrial age, there is no need to mold or shape the children of Auroville. “They open themselves in joy, just like flowers open themselves to the sun.”

A living laboratory



Auroville is by no means perfect. It is not a utopia. In the feature-length film below, you will hear stories of struggle, heartache, disappointment and hope. But Aurovillians have a common dream – that through all of their mistakes and failures, they will find a better way.

“Auroville is a place where this new way of living is being worked out; it is a center of accelerated evolution, where humanity must begin to change the world through the power of the inner spirit.” ~ Mira Alafassa, “The Mother” of Auroville



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